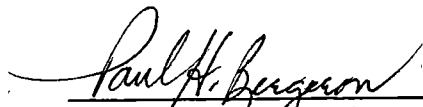
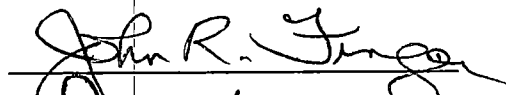


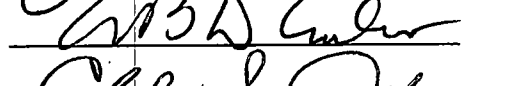
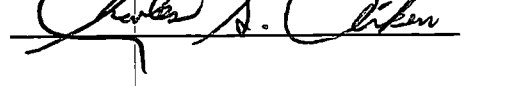
To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a dissertation by Joseph Clinton Clift entitled "The Politics of Transition: Virginia and North Carolina and the 1824 Presidential Election." I have examined the final copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy with a major in History.


Paul H. Bergeron, Major Professor

We have read this dissertation
and recommend its acceptance:



Accepted for the Council:


Associate Vice Chancellor and
Dean of The Graduate School

**THE POLITICS OF TRANSITION: VIRGINIA AND NORTH CAROLINA
AND THE 1824 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION**

A Dissertation
Presented for the
Doctor of Philosophy
Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Joseph Clinton Clift
December 1999

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DEDICATION

To Lisa, Will, and Rachel

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ABSTRACT

Although James Monroe stood unopposed for the presidency in 1820, many political observers knew that the next election would not be so placid. Monroe's failure to designate a successor split the Republican party into factions, as a new generation of political leaders eagerly aspired to take their place at the head of national affairs. In 1824, John Quincy Adams, John C. Calhoun, Henry Clay, William H. Crawford, and Andrew Jackson all vied for the presidency. This election marks a key transition in American political development, for it splintered the Republican party of Thomas Jefferson, ended the influence of the congressional caucus, and launched the coalitions that later developed into the second party system.

This study examines the transition from factional politics to coalition politics in Virginia and North Carolina within the framework of the 1824 and 1828 presidential campaigns. An investigation of the elections in these states yields a clearer understanding of the complexities of the coalition-building process. Moreover, an analysis of support in Virginia and North Carolina for the various candidates illustrates the importance of their character and philosophy of government in attracting followers. This dissertation surveys public meetings, campaign rhetoric, the construction of electoral tickets, and voter turnout to ascertain the depth of popular support for the candidates and the means used to garner that backing.

In this era of transition, various factions sought to form coalitions to solidify their support and relied upon an aggressive democratic rhetoric to amass popular enthusiasm.

In the post-1824 factional realignment, conservative Crawfordites in Virginia and North Carolina reluctantly backed Jackson and became a crucial component of the newly emerging Jacksonian alliance that defeated the Adams-Clay coalition in 1828. The factional discord of 1824 unleashed new methods of campaigning, sparked the shift to coalition politics, and transformed Jackson from a popular military figure to a symbol of the common man, the champion of democracy and reform, and protector of southern Old Republican conservatism.

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Chapter 1

The Era of Transition

Shortly after his election in 1828, Andrew Jackson described his triumph as a declaration to the world “that the people are virtuous, and capable of self government, and that the liberty of our beloved country will be perpetual. This is a victory indeed of the virtue of the people over corruption.”¹ Old Hickory’s concern for the virtue of the people was not empty rhetoric. Jackson echoed the fears of his times and the political culture of the period. He, and many others, were steeped in the language and philosophy of a republican ideology that viewed politics “as a struggle between good and evil, expressed as the eternal warfare between liberty and power, virtue and corruption.”²

The 1824 presidential campaign and election validated this view. In the political free-for-all that was the 1824 election, partisans of the various candidates attacked their opponents with charges of intrigue, corruption, and bargaining. They labeled the congressional caucus undemocratic, arguing that it usurped the people’s right to select their president. The hard-fought campaign, the inconclusive national election, and the subsequent elevation of John Quincy Adams over the more popular Jackson sparked cries for reform and charges of corrupt bargain. Such pleas and accusations set the tone for Jackson’s victory in 1828 and transformed him from an admired military figure to the

¹Andrew Jackson to John Coffee, December 11, 1828, in John S. Bassett, ed., *Correspondence of Andrew Jackson* (7 vols., Washington, 1926–35), 3:452–53.

²Harry L. Watson, *Liberty and Power: The Politics of Jacksonian America* (New York, 1990), 47.

symbol of change and the agent of the people's will.

The 1828 campaign had been intensely bitter on both sides and yet many citizens hailed Jackson's victory as "a demand for the restoration of morality and virtue to civic life" and an opportunity to reclaim a government corrupted by ambitious men.³ When Jackson took office, he viewed himself as the people's president, and he focused his energy and iron will to bring about transformation. This momentum for political reform in the late 1820s shifted the emphasis of republicanism "toward majoritarian democracy."⁴ The Jacksonian focus on democratic rhetoric and the need for reform came out of the chaos of the 1824 election. This contest demonstrated to Jackson, and many others, the need for vigilance to protect the virtue of the republic.

After the conclusion of its second war with Great Britain in 1815, the young nation experienced a boom in national pride and confidence. Under James Monroe, the nation entered an "Era of Good Feelings." This time span was, however, short lived and barely survived Monroe's first term. The following decade of the 1820s was a period of transition in the United States. This shift involved all aspects of society and brought about "a profound set of changes." For example, the explosion in canal building in the early 1820s and the introduction of railroads inaugurated a transportation revolution. An increase in the number of newspapers in the early antebellum period contributed to the development of a "popular mass culture." As society took its first faltering steps toward

³Robert V. Remini, *Andrew Jackson and the Course of American Freedom, 1822-1832* (New York, 1981), 148.

⁴Watson, *Liberty and Power*, 51.

industrialization, the various economic changes led to a "market revolution" that altered the political, economic, and social structure of society.⁵

Not all of these changes were positive. As historian George Dangerfield points out, the "Era of Good Feelings" was mortally wounded by the Panic of 1819 and finished off by the contentious debates over Missouri's entrance into the Union. According to Dangerfield, one could term the 1820s as an "Era of Suspense" as the young nation struggled to come to grips with its growing pains.⁶ There is no doubt these were suspenseful times, but the period may be more properly termed an "Era of Transition." In the 1820s the nation underwent an important political shift. Monroe's last term ended the "Virginia dynasty" and the rule of the Revolutionary fathers. The first party system had all but disappeared during Monroe's tenure in office and nothing had emerged to take its place. Monroe had hoped to unify the nation and reconcile party animosities. He sought to build a consensus and avoid party warfare and institute "policies on the basis of national, not party interests."⁷

Monroe's nearly unanimous victory in 1820 seemed the epitome of consensus.

⁵Ibid., 26–41. For a broad overview of these changes and their effects on American development, see Charles G. Sellers, *The Market Revolution: Jacksonian America, 1815–1846* (New York, 1991).

⁶George Dangerfield, *The Era of Good Feelings* (New York, 1952; New York, 1963), 421.

⁷Harry Ammon, *James Monroe: The Quest for National Identity* (New York, 1971), 366–67.

This brief period of one-party politics quickly gave way, however, to a period of factions.⁸ Monroe's effort at reconciliation, though seemingly successful, had actually made his job more difficult, since he could not rely on a unified party organization for support in Congress. It is ironic that Monroe's "Era of Good Feelings" resulted "in a chaos of contending factions."⁹ For Monroe and the rest of his generation, political parties were considered the bane of republican government. Yet the turmoil of the 1824 presidential election illustrated to politicians, such as Martin Van Buren, the necessity for party organization and discipline at the national level.¹⁰ By the early 1830s, parties would become necessary instruments to protect the republic and elections would become "surrogate battles to preserve republican government, as each party fought valiantly to save the republic from its iniquitous foe."¹¹

Although Monroe stood unopposed for the presidency in 1820, many political observers knew that the next election would not be so placid. For example, "Virginius" declared in the *Richmond Enquirer* that "the war of the Giants" was merely postponed until 1824, when Secretary of State John Quincy Adams, Secretary of the Treasury

⁸McCormick, *The Presidential Game: The Origins of American Presidential Politics* (New York, 1982), 4-6.

⁹Ammon, *James Monroe*, 380-85, ix.

¹⁰Richard Hofstadter explores the development of the party system in *The Idea of a Party System: The Rise of Legitimate Opposition in the United States, 1780-1840* (Berkeley, 1969).

¹¹Marc W. Kruman "The Second Party System and the Transformation of Revolutionary Republicanism" *Journal of the Early Republic* 12 (1992): 520-23.

William H. Crawford, and others would battle for the presidency.¹² Adams and Crawford were part of a new generation of political leaders who eagerly aspired to take their place at the head of national affairs. Others included Secretary of War John C. Calhoun, Henry Clay, and Martin Van Buren. Monroe's failure to designate a successor split the Republican party into factions as these second generation leaders competed for dominance in the 1824 presidential election.¹³ This large number of candidates forced their partisans to seek out new strategies to garner support and present their favorite as the legitimate successor to Monroe. These strategies included an unrelenting attack on the congressional caucus, nominations by state legislatures and public meetings, and the use of campaign biographies to inform the public of the candidates' character, principles, qualifications, and accomplishments.

The 1824 election was a key event in the decade, for it revived interest in the contest for the presidency and refocused national politics that had been blurred by the Monroe years. This election destroyed the unity of the Republican party and ended, once and for all, the influence of the congressional nominating caucus. With the large number of potential presidential candidates from all sections of the country, no faction could gather the necessary support to win the presidency. In this era of factional and personal rivalry, the various groups would have to form coalitions to build support and would rely on an aggressive democratic rhetoric to amass popular backing.

¹²*Richmond Enquirer*, November 7, 1820.

¹³George Dangerfield, *Era of Good Feelings*, 100; Robert V. Remini, *Martin Van Buren and the Making of the Democratic Party* (New York, 1959), 24-25.

This shift from the politics of *faction* to the politics of *coalition* can be seen in Virginia and North Carolina. Conservative reaction to the changes of the times perhaps not surprisingly brought about a resurgence of the Old Republican philosophy that called for strict construction of the Constitution, a firm belief in states rights, economy in public expenditures, and a limited federal government. Prominent politicians in both states adhered to this philosophy and these two states represented the heart of conservative Southern Old Republicanism. The political establishment in Virginia and North Carolina supported Crawford in 1824 as the candidate most likely to adhere to these principles. But some politicians in these states backed other candidates, such as Adams, Calhoun, Jackson and, to a lesser extent, Henry Clay.

That campaign in Virginia and North Carolina provides an example of the factional competition and the problems of coalition building that plagued presidential politics. These two states, as did ten others, used the general ticket mode of choosing electors.¹⁴ This system necessitated a centralized effort to designate a slate of electors for the state. In Virginia and North Carolina, the state legislatures, meeting in a caucus, had traditionally recommended an electoral ticket. But once the legislatures officially sanctioned Crawford's candidacy in 1824, the partisans of the other candidates moved to offer competing tickets, in some cases called "People's tickets." A vibrant democratic rhetoric emerged out of this competition that attacked all caucus nominations as undemocratic, a defiance of the popular will, and an attempt to usurp the people's rights. In North

¹⁴Six states used a district method and in the remaining six states, legislatures designated the electoral tickets. See Charles O. Paullin, *Atlas of the Historical Geography of the United States*, (New York, 1932), 89, 96.

Carolina, Calhoun partisans and Jacksonians, as well as those who backed Adams, formed an anti-Crawford coalition and combined their efforts in behalf of a fusion ticket. In Virginia, however, Crawfordites dominated the state and the efforts by the opposition to construct a similar coalition failed because of a lack of cooperation.

When the national election failed to produce a winner, the election devolved upon the House of Representatives. There, each state had one vote in the contest. Virginia, North Carolina, Georgia, and Delaware supported Crawford as the candidate most faithful to Old Republican principles. An alliance between Adams and Clay gave the former the necessary votes to prevail in the House decision in February 1825. After Adams's election, the Crawfordites in Virginia and North Carolina initially remained aloof from his administration. But Adams's nationalist agenda alarmed these conservatives. By 1827, the former Crawford supporters had reluctantly joined Jacksonians and Calhoun men and contributed a vital component to the new anti-Adams coalition. The Adams-Clay alliance and the Jacksonian coalition formed the basis of the proto-parties often identified as "National" and "Democratic" Republicans.

Historians have frequently emphasized the role of personalities in this period of factional politics, an interpretation that rests upon contemporary observations. For example, in early 1820, Adams complained that the old party differentiations between Federalists and Republicans had broken down and that "personal has taken the place of principled opposition."¹⁵ Adams was undoubtedly influenced in this observation by his

¹⁵ Charles Francis Adams, ed., *Memoirs of John Quincy Adams, Comprising Portions of His Diary from 1795-1848* (12 vols., Philadelphia, 1874-77), 4:497.

distrust of Crawford, who, he thought, was sparing no effort to position himself more favorably for the 1824 presidential election. For Adams, the contest *was* personal, for he viewed Crawford's, and later Calhoun's, maneuvers as motivated primarily by ambition. In conversations with others, Adams derided Crawford as a first-rate intriguer who would stop at nothing to achieve the presidency.¹⁶ For example, Adams was sure that Crawford had devised the Tenure of Office Act of 1820 solely to strengthen his patronage power and build a base of support for his future candidacy.¹⁷ This law "established a four-year term for every federal official whose duties involved financial responsibilities" and thereby placed enormous patronage power in Crawford's hands as the secretary of the treasury.¹⁸

Adams's journals and carefully preserved letters have been a tremendous asset to historians and have influenced generations of scholarship. Therefore, it is not surprising that many scholars have adopted Adams's assessment of politics in the 1820s and his opinion that the 1824 presidential election primarily involved personalities rather than issues. For example, Henry Adams declared that "never in the course of our history has any presidential election turned so exclusively on purely personal consideration; never has there been one in which all parties were so helpless."¹⁹ Historian William O. Lynch

¹⁶William Plumer, Jr., to William Plumer, November 24, 1820, in Everett S. Brown, ed., *The Missouri Compromises and Presidential Politics, 1820–1825, from the Letters of William Plumer, Junior, Representative from New Hampshire* (St. Louis, 1926), 56–58.

¹⁷Adams, ed., *Memoirs of John Quincy Adams*, 7:424–25.

¹⁸Ammon, *James Monroe*, 494–95.

¹⁹Quoted in William O. Lynch, *Fifty Years of Party Warfare (1787–1837)* (Indianapolis, 1931), 275.

concedes this point but asserts that there could not have been a contest of principles between parties, because “this was impossible with one of the parties defunct.” In his study of the period, Lynch suggests that the decade after 1823 was a “stage of transition” in American politics where the absence of viable parties necessitated the central role of the candidates’ personalities in presidential politics. According to Lynch, the presidential election in the House was the crucial event in this transition.²⁰ While on the right track, Lynch’s transition thesis must include the period prior to the election to assess the importance of this shift.

The election certainly involved the personalities of the candidates, but when does a candidate’s personality not play a role in democratic elections? The 1824 presidential election is too complex to be dismissed as merely a popularity contest. The character of the various candidates was important for voters trying to decide whom to support, because it indicated how each man might address the concerns facing the nation. Many older works on the period do not look beyond the role of personality in this election. For example, in his book, *The Age of Jackson*, Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., studies the nature of “Jacksonian democracy” but does not fully examine the events, such as the 1824 election, that set the stage for Jackson’s victory in 1828. He does, however, briefly note that the contest “dealt much more in personalities than in issues.”²¹

Dangerfield’s well-known works on the period, *The Era of Good Feelings* and *The Awakening of American Nationalism*, generally adhere to the interpretation that the

²⁰Ibid., 276.

²¹Schlesinger, *The Age of Jackson* (Boston, 1945; Boston, 1953), 19.

election centered around personalities. He does concede, however, that if the election “had a meaning, it was an attack upon the old political machines.”²² The contest did destroy the “old political machines,” but it also pointed to the necessity of organized action to achieve political ends. Unfortunately, some historians continue to dismiss the election as simply a contest of personalities that had little relation to the larger scheme of political development.

Other historians, however, have examined the 1824 presidential election more carefully and considered it within the context of the period. In his work, *The Second American Party System*, Richard P. McCormick notes that any investigation of the formation of the second party system must begin with this election. As he points out, the revival of interest in the presidential contest marked the beginning of “a new era of party formation.” Thus, 1824 signals a transitional point between the first and second party systems. McCormick is careful to add, however, that a true two-party system did not develop in the South until the early 1830s, when conflict over Jackson’s successor instigated this development.²³

Yet McCormick does not provide an in-depth examination of the 1824 presidential election and the shift from factional to coalition politics. For example, he acknowledges that political leaders in Virginia, North Carolina, and Georgia favored Crawford, but he does not investigate the motivations behind this support. One could conceivably dismiss

²²Dangerfield, *Era of Good Feelings*, 345; Dangerfield, *The Awakening of American Nationalism, 1815–1828* (New York, 1965).

²³McCormick, *The Second American Party System: Party Formation in the Jacksonian Era* (Chapel Hill, 1966), 3, 178.

Georgia's support as a case of a state backing its favorite son, but why did Virginians and North Carolinians support Crawford? Furthermore, McCormick also does not examine the period of coalition building that occurred as a result of the contest. After Crawford's failed candidacy, McCormick contends the Crawfordites "moved easily into the Jackson camp" though "not without some misgivings, especially in Virginia."²⁴ How "easily" did the Virginia and North Carolina Crawfordites take up Jackson in the next election? What motivated them to overcome their "misgivings?" Admittedly, these questions might be beyond the parameters and intent of McCormick's study, but they are important questions to consider.

Remini takes a broader view of the 1824 presidential contest in his book, *Andrew Jackson and the Course of American Freedom, 1822-1832*. In this work, he persuasively argues that the campaign "abounded in discussion over principles." For example, Remini contends that "liberty, public virtue, and centralized power in the federal government were only some of the most important precepts argued and debated."²⁵ Thus, according to this interpretation, the election involved a mix of personalities and issues. While Remini examines some of the underlying questions in the campaign, he does not adequately address the formation of the Jacksonian coalition that occurred after the so-called "corrupt bargain" and Jackson's defeat in 1825. For example, he briefly discusses the alliance between the Jacksonians, Calhoun backers, and Crawfordites and, unsurprisingly, focuses

²⁴Ibid., 249; McCormick, *Presidential Game*, 121.

²⁵Remini, *Andrew Jackson and the Course of American Freedom*, 80.

on Van Buren's role in persuading the Southern Crawfordites to join the coalition.²⁶ In his earlier work, *The Election of Andrew Jackson*, Remini investigates the 1828 campaign at the national level. Since this study begins with Adams's victory in 1825, it does not examine the complex events that set the stage for Adams's election.²⁷

Others have analyzed the role of larger issues in the campaign and election. For example, in her work, *The Presidency of John Quincy Adams*, Mary W. Hargreaves argues that the contest not only revived interest in presidential elections but also "revived political ideology as yet another criterion of partisan differentiation." The nationalism of the Monroe administration sparked a reinvigoration of the states rights ideology of the conservative Southern Republicans.²⁸ While many historians have discussed the conservative reaction to the nationalism of the Monroe administration, Hargreaves links this discontent to the 1824 campaign.²⁹ The contest involved more than personalities. It confronted the nation with the question of which direction to go: should the republic

²⁶Ibid., 113–15.

²⁷Remini, *The Election of Andrew Jackson* (Philadelphia, 1963).

²⁸Hargreaves, *The Presidency of John Quincy Adams* (Lawrence, Kans., 1985), 25.

²⁹For discussion of this conservative reaction, see Charles S. Sydnor, *The Development of Southern Sectionalism, 1819–1848* (Baton Rouge, 1948); Norman K. Risjord, *The Old Republicans: Southern Conservatism in the Age of Jefferson* (New York, 1965); and Harry L. Watson, *Liberty and Power*. Other scholars have examined this reaction specifically in relation to Virginia politics. For example, see Lynwood M. Dent, Jr. "The Virginia Democratic Party, 1824–1847" (2 vols., Ph.D. diss., Louisiana State University, 1974) and Kathryn R. Malone "The Virginia Doctrines, the Commonwealth, and the Republic: The Role of Fundamental Principles in Virginia Politics, 1798–1833" (Ph.D. diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1981).

adhere to the nationalist course set by Monroe or pull back in a conservative reaction to the times? Other scholars have considered the election in the broader developments of the antebellum period. For example, Charles Sellers, in his work *The Market Revolution*, argues that this election marked the beginning of modern presidential politics and the “mobilization of democratic discontent.”³⁰ Harry L. Watson has noted that “the very words ‘corrupt bargain’ concisely conveyed the dual threat of an immoral and overly commercialized society.”³¹

Though some scholars pay more attention to the harsh 1828 presidential contest as the starting point for modern electioneering, the 1824 election produced important campaign innovations. Crawfordites had hoped that a nomination of their man by the congressional caucus would unify the Republican party behind his candidacy and make him the legitimate successor to Monroe. But in reaction to this strategy, the backers of other candidates looked to other means to garner support. Michael J. Heale provides an interesting examination of these efforts in his work, *The Presidential Quest*. He discusses the introduction of “grassroots sentiment” into the campaign as politicians sought to build popular enthusiasm for their candidate. Heale asserts that in this election, “presidential politics acquired a popular dimension which it was never to lose.”³² The various campaigns also relied heavily on the press to reach the public and on editors for

³⁰Sellers, *The Market Revolution*, 200.

³¹Watson, *Liberty and Power*, 84.

³²Heale, *The Presidential Quest: Candidates and Images in American Political Culture, 1789–1852* (London, 1982), 35–38; see also McCormick, *Presidential Game*, 147–48.

organizational work in an era when political parties were still suspect.³³ The contest also marked one of the earliest uses of primitive straw polls to gauge public opinion of the various candidates. For example, partisans of the presidential contenders took informal surveys at militia musters, grand juries, and in taverns.³⁴

An examination of the election in Virginia and North Carolina illustrates the use of these campaign techniques. The political leadership in both states relied on the traditional mechanism of caucus nominations and the designation of an electoral ticket by members of the state legislature to legitimize Crawford's candidacy. Partisans of the other candidates used an aggressive democratic rhetoric that exhorted "the people" to protect their right to choose their own president. Moreover, in this contest, newspapers were important vehicles to generate this popular support. Anti-Crawfordites also encouraged public meetings to demonstrate backing for their favorite candidate.

Studies of Virginia and North Carolina in the antebellum period usually cover the 1824 presidential election with varying degrees of emphasis. For example, in his book, *Democratizing the Old Dominion*, William G. Shade contends this time span of Virginia's history "has gone practically unstudied except as the backdrop for biographies of sometimes powerful, generally flamboyant and idiosyncratic, but essentially second-rate men." Furthermore, Shade laments that "the antebellum period of Virginia history remains terra incognita, concealed by half-truths concerning political impotence and agricultural

³³Gerald J. Baldasty, "The Press and Politics in the Age of Jackson" *Journalism Monographs* 89 (1984): 1-28.

³⁴Tom W. Smith, "The First Straw? A Study of the Origins of Election Polls." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 54 (1990): 21-36.

decline.”³⁵ Generally, Shade observes that the Old Dominion experienced a process of democratization that largely coincided with the pace in the nation, though, at perhaps a “slightly less swift” pace than its most advanced neighbors.³⁶

Although a long needed contribution to Virginia historiography, Shade’s work emphasizes the interval from Jackson’s presidency to the eve of the secession crisis and thus provides only brief coverage of the 1824 presidential election. He asserts that the period between the first and second party system, dominated by Jackson, “represented a transitional phase” that led to an era in which the “political culture came to accept, even revel in, the politics of conflict and an affirmation of party affiliation as an essential element of American democracy.” According to Shade, Jackson’s 1828 and 1832 campaigns “brought a new level of organization and a good deal more popular excitement than any previous presidential election in the Old Dominion.”³⁷ The 1824 election, however, was the event that set the stage for Jackson’s subsequent candidacy and represented the last stand of old style politics in which politicians would dismiss the importance of the popular will to legitimize their candidate.

Other studies have examined the role of ideology in Virginia political development. For example, Kathryn R. Malone analyzes the roots and evolution of the central principles that guided Virginia politics in the early republic. She argues that the “Virginia doctrines”

³⁵Shade, *Democratizing the Old Dominion: Virginia and the Second Party System, 1824–1861* (Charlottesville, 1996), 3, 18.

³⁶*Ibid.*, 5–6.

³⁷*Ibid.*, 82, 113.

of states rights and a strict construction of the Constitution derived from the Virginia Bill of Rights in the state's 1776 constitution and the Virginia Resolutions of 1798.

Furthermore, the Panic of 1819, the Missouri Crisis, and the expansion of federal power, represented by Supreme Court decisions such as *McCulloch v. Maryland* in 1819, provoked a period of "reaction, re-evaluation, and readjustment in Virginia politics."³⁸

Unfortunately, her discussion of the 1824 presidential election focuses solely on the candidates' characters.³⁹ A more recent dissertation on Virginia politics, "Virginia Is Now Divided: Politics in the Old Dominion, 1820–1833," declares the election as "one of momentous portent for Virginians" but offers little analysis of the realignment of factions in the state after 1824.⁴⁰ Horace L. Bachelder's "The Presidential Election of 1824 in Virginia" provides a brief study of the election, but concludes his examination just after the election and does not investigate the subsequent movement of the Virginia Crawfordites into the Jacksonian coalition.⁴¹

Scholars of antebellum political history have produced many studies detailing North Carolina's experience. These works, such as Harry L. Watson's *Jacksonian Politics and Community Conflict* and Thomas E. Jeffrey's *State Parties and National*

³⁸Malone, "The Virginia Doctrines, the Commonwealth and the Republic," 184–85, 231–39.

³⁹*Ibid.*, 244, 256–57.

⁴⁰Trenton E. Hizer, "Virginia Is Now Divided: Politics in the Old Dominion, 1820–1833" (Ph.D. diss., University of South Carolina, 1997), 123.

⁴¹Bachelder "The Presidential Election of 1824 in Virginia" (M.A. thesis, Duke University, 1942).

Politics, provide broad overviews of party development. Watson's book is a community study that examines "the social and cultural origins of the second party system."⁴² Watson posits that the period from 1828 to 1836 marks an important shift "in patterns of political leadership" in which public officials had to be cognizant of the popular will.⁴³ Jeffrey's study concentrates on party development over the course of the antebellum period in the state beginning in the 1830s.⁴⁴

Perhaps the best known book on the election is Alfred R. Newsome's study, *The Presidential Election of 1824 in North Carolina*. In this monograph, Newsome examines the supporters of the various candidates and provides a detailed description of the campaign. He focuses on the efforts of the Calhoun supporters to defeat the Crawfordites and the construction of the anti-Crawford "People's ticket." Partisans of Calhoun, Jackson, and Adams attacked the legitimacy of the congressional caucus and later relied on a series of public meetings to generate popular support for the fusion ticket. Newsome hails this turn of events as "a democratic upsurge which repudiated political methods and leadership well-entrenched by a generation of dominance."⁴⁵

Newsome's coverage, however, stops in November 1824 with the overwhelming

⁴²Watson, *Jacksonian Politics and Community Conflict: The Emergence of the Second American Party System in Cumberland County, North Carolina* (Baton Rouge, 1981), 8–9.

⁴³*Ibid.*, 149, 242, 320.

⁴⁴Jeffrey, *State Parties and National Politics: North Carolina, 1815–1861* (Athens, Ga., 1989).

⁴⁵Newsome, *The Presidential Election of 1824 in North Carolina* (Chapel Hill, 1939), v.

victory of the People's ticket over the Crawford ticket. Thus, he does not place the campaign and election in a larger context of political transition in which coalitions emerged out of the various political factions before and after the election. William S. Hoffman's work, *Andrew Jackson and North Carolina Politics*, examines North Carolina politics in the Jacksonian era starting just after the 1824 presidential election. He briefly discusses the crucial period from 1825 to 1827 but then focuses primarily on the events of the 1830s.⁴⁶

Many scholars have discussed the 1824 presidential election in varying detail and analysis. Studying the contest in a broader context is necessary, however, in order to understand more fully the later emergence of the second party system. As the Virginia dynasty came to a close, citizens had to ponder the upcoming "presidential question": who would lead the nation and in what direction? As the champions of the various factions readied for combat in the political arena, the presidential question had no clear resolution. The caliber of these second generation leaders prompted more than one political observer to remark that the contest seemed to be between "a choice of evils."⁴⁷

There were no more Revolutionary heroes to lead the nation. The first party system had crumbled during the "Era of Good Feelings" and the country had no organized means for designating a consensus candidate other than the congressional caucus. The election of a president, a rather lifeless event in 1820, became a melee of multiple

⁴⁶Hoffman, *Andrew Jackson and North Carolina Politics* (Chapel Hill, 1958), 1-15.

⁴⁷*Richmond Enquirer*, May 20, 1823.

contenders in 1824. Yet, four years later the situation had changed once again. In the 1828 contest, the two coalitions that emerged out of the 1824 election faced off in one of the more rancorous campaigns in American history. In the 1830s, these coalitions became organized political parties. The 1824 election bridges the gap between the placidity of 1820 and the ferocity of 1828. The factional discord of 1824 unleashed new ways of campaigning, sparked the transition to coalition politics, and sowed the seeds of the second party system. This tumultuous contest and the subsequent election of Adams through an alleged corrupt bargain set the stage for Jackson's victory in 1828 and the launching of the Jacksonian era.

Chapter 2

Measures and Men: The Presidential Question and the Politics of Faction

James Monroe's presidency marked the end of the Virginia dynasty and symbolized the passing of the Revolutionary generation from the political leadership of the nation. The transition to a new generation splintered the unity of the Republican party as these new leaders positioned themselves to ascend to the presidency. Many historians cursorily dismiss the presidential election of 1824 as simply a contest of personalities in which the various factions of the Republican party sought to promote their favorite with little regard for substantive issues. Other scholars, however, have called for a closer look at the election and have contended that the contest involved more than the candidates' personalities. Some of the issues of the campaign included sectional interests over the tariff and internal improvements, concerns over the balance of state and federal power, and fears of corruption within the political system that threatened the nation's liberty.

Candidates of the period did not release policy statements in the modern sense, draft platforms, propose programs, or make promises. Instead, those who stood for office, assisted by their partisans, demonstrated their fitness for office by referring to their political principles and philosophy of government. In this respect, personality or rather character became intertwined with one's stand on the important concerns of the day. The electorate wanted to know a candidate's opinions on critical issues such as the tariff, internal improvements, and the candidate's construction of the Constitution. The 1824

presidential campaign illustrates this interplay of character and principles as contestants vied for the office.

Speculation about Monroe's successor commenced shortly after his election to a second term. In July 1821, for example, a series of articles by "Trio" appeared in the *Milledgeville Gazette* of Georgia that generally criticized Monroe's administration and urged Republicans to rally around the standard of states rights and hostility to implied powers. "Trio" noted that William H. Crawford would be a suitable successor to Monroe, but also complimented Senator Nathaniel Macon of North Carolina as a consistent republican in principle and practice.¹ Yet not everyone greeted this early agitation of the presidential question with enthusiasm. For example, the *National Intelligencer* commented that the early appearance of the presidential question was "premature and ill advised."²

The discussion of the number of potential presidential candidates sometimes reached as high as sixteen or seventeen.³ Nevertheless, by the end of 1821, William H. Crawford, John Quincy Adams, and John C. Calhoun had emerged as the three most prominent contenders in the field.⁴ Many political observers recognized these men as the main competitors, but the discussion of the presidential question continued to bring forth

¹*National Intelligencer*, July 27, 1821.

²*Ibid.*, September 1, 1821.

³*Niles' Weekly Register*, 23 (April 27, 1822): 129-30.

⁴John H. Eaton to Andrew Jackson, December 30, 1821, in John S. Bassett, ed., *Correspondence of Andrew Jackson* (7 vols., Washington, 1926-35), 3:141.

the pretensions of others as well. Other names mentioned for the presidency, for instance, included Spencer Roane of Virginia.⁵ Roane had published several pieces in the *Enquirer*, defending states rights against the expansion of federal power under the Marshall court. Yet Roane never achieved status as a viable candidate outside Virginia and his death in September 1822 nullified the question anyhow.

Others presented as possible competitors included William Lowndes of South Carolina, Andrew Jackson of Tennessee, and Nathaniel Macon. A caucus of sixty South Carolina legislators nominated Lowndes in December 1821, and the Tennessee legislature nominated Jackson in July 1822.⁶ Discussion of Lowndes's candidacy, however, ended with his death in October 1822. Nathaniel Macon's long career of public service, integrity, and firm commitment to republican values, such as states rights, placed his name under consideration.⁷

In addition to these possible nominees, in 1823 Robert Anderson, a Virginia Federalist, published a circular letter to voters in the eighth congressional district urging them to consider the need for a virtuous and patriotic statesman for the presidency to combat the "alarming corruption, so long subsisting in our official departments" and

⁵Francis Walker Gilmer to John Randolph, January 27, 1822, Francis W. Gilmer Papers, Library of Virginia, Richmond.

⁶*Richmond Enquirer*, January 3, 1822; James F. Hopkins, "The Election of 1824," in Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., et al., eds., *History of American Presidential Elections* (4 vols., New York, 1971), 1:361.

⁷*The Star and North Carolina State Gazette* (Raleigh), May 9, August 29, 1823; *Richmond Enquirer*, June 13, 1823; also John Randolph to Weldon N. Edwards, July 7, 1823, Weldon N. Edwards Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

suggested Chief Justice John Marshall for the presidency. Anderson praised Marshall's long tenure with the one branch of government that had remained uncorrupted.⁸ Still other potential candidates mentioned included DeWitt Clinton and Vice President Daniel D. Tompkins, both of New York, and Speaker of the House Henry Clay. The abundance of prospective contenders prompted John Quincy Adams to confide to his journal in late February 1821 that it seemed unlikely any aspirant would garner a majority in the Electoral College and thus the House of Representatives would have to decide the election.⁹

Of all the potential candidates, many considered William H. Crawford to be Monroe's likely successor. Indeed, in 1816 his supporters had put him forth as an alternative to Monroe but he stepped aside to preserve Republican unity. As Monroe's secretary of the treasury Crawford had followed a program of debt retirement and fiscal economy that appealed to many Republicans in the South. As a result, he gained many advocates in Congress who considered him Monroe's heir apparent. There, his support came primarily from the Virginia, North Carolina, and Georgia delegations. He also received crucial backing from Martin Van Buren, senator from New York. Crawford reportedly used the patronage of his office to shore up political support with an eye to congressional alliances to enhance his prospects for the 1824 presidential election. Many condemned his employment of Senator Jesse B. Thomas of Illinois to inspect land offices

⁸"To the Freeholders of the Congressional district, composed of the counties of York, Warwick, Gloucester . . .," *Richmond Enquirer*, April 1, 1823.

⁹Charles Francis Adams, ed., *Memoirs of John Quincy Adams, Comprising Portions of his Diary from 1795-1848*, (12 vols., Philadelphia, 1874-77), 5:304.

and banks in some Western states, while he canvassed for Crawford.¹⁰ Crawford also used his influence to endorse various congressmen. For example, during the Congressional recess in 1822 Crawford spent nearly four months in his native state of Georgia helping at least one legislator, Alfred Cuthbert, get reelected and worked to secure the election of others favorable to his presidential pretensions.¹¹ Congressmen opposed to Crawford derided his use of treasury patronage and electioneering, practices that many contended had been in operation seemingly since 1816.¹²

With three cabinet secretaries vying for the presidency, intra-administration feuding became inevitable. Crawford often appeared at odds with Monroe as he tried to establish his commitment to republican principles *vis-à-vis* the “amalgamationist” policies of the president. Adams confided to his journal that the congressional partisans of Crawford, Clay and Clinton depended on the failure of Monroe’s policies to further their own success. He considered Crawford the prime mover of machinations in Congress that resulted in criticism of the administration’s handling of Jackson’s Seminole campaign and in attacks on Calhoun’s supervision of the War Department. Adams and others viewed the Senate’s rejection of Monroe’s nominations of Nathan Towson and James Gadsden to posts in the army as a maneuver orchestrated by Senator John Williams of Tennessee, a

¹⁰E. Wayne Cutler, “William H. Crawford: A Contextual Biography” (Ph.D. diss., University of Texas, 1971), 156, 182–84; Adams, *Memoirs of John Quincy Adams*, 5:482–83.

¹¹William Plumer, Jr., to William Plumer December 27, 1822, in Everett S. Brown, ed., *The Missouri Compromises and Presidential Politics, 1820–1825, from the Letters of William Plumer, Junior, Representative from New Hampshire* (St. Louis, 1926), 82–83.

¹²Adams, ed., *Memoirs of John Quincy Adams*, 5:482–84.

Crawford supporter, to embarrass both Monroe and Calhoun, and thereby indirectly promote Crawford's interests.¹³ In a letter to Andrew Jackson in late 1821 Gadsden reported that Crawford's partisans were "intriguing deeply and in some quarters with success," and warned that Crawford's election to the presidency would undoubtedly "produce a chain of evils and entail a series of misfortunes on our country that will require a century to remedy."¹⁴

Newspapers constituted a vital element in the presidential campaign. The three cabinet secretaries each had the support of a newspaper in Washington, as well as other presses in other states. In the capital, the *Washington City Gazette* backed Crawford, as did the more restrained *National Intelligencer*. Calhoun helped set up the *Washington Republican and Congressional Examiner*, edited by Thomas L. McKenney. The *National Journal* favored Adams. Two Pennsylvania papers, the *Columbian Observer* and the *Franklin Gazette* backed Jackson's candidacy, and the *Western Argus of Kentucky*, edited by Amos Kendall, supported Clay.¹⁵ Newspapers in Virginia and North Carolina entered the fray at various times and played a key role in advocating the cause of their favorites. The *Richmond Enquirer* supported Crawford but other newspapers in the state, such as the Lynchburg *Virginian* advocated Adams's candidacy. In North Carolina, the *Raleigh*

¹³Ibid., 5:315, 488; Chase C. Mooney, *William H. Crawford, 1772-1834* (Lexington, 1971), 197-200.

¹⁴James Gadsden to Andrew Jackson, November 20, 1821, in Bassett, ed., *Correspondence of Jackson*, 3:132-33.

¹⁵Culver H. Smith, *The Press, Politics, and Patronage: The American Government's Use of Newspapers, 1789-1875* (Athens, Ga., 1977), 57-58.

Register diligently backed Crawford while its in-town rival the *Star and North Carolina State Gazette* supported Calhoun and later Jackson.

In the early stages of the presidential contest in the spring and summer of 1822, the *Richmond Enquirer* presented itself as neutral and contended that it was too early to discuss the question. Nevertheless, the *Virginian*, edited by John H. Pleasants, called for the *Enquirer* to drop its pretenses of impartiality and come out for a candidate. The *Virginian* asserted that Thomas Ritchie, co-editor of the *Enquirer*, supported Crawford and that he therefore ought at least to be open about it.¹⁶ The *Enquirer* responded, however, that discussion of the presidential question was premature and that the public needed more time to study the acts and character of the various candidates. After all, the election was still two years away. Yet the *Enquirer* did admit that different modes of designating a candidate should be investigated to avoid an election in the House of Representatives. Possible means suggested by the editors included a congressional caucus, a caucus of delegates from the state legislatures, or the actual decision reached at the congressional district level.¹⁷

While Crawford had at least the tacit support of the *Enquirer* in Virginia during the early stages of the contest, the efforts of Calhoun's partisans in North Carolina concerned Crawfordites in that state. Initially, the strongest candidates in the state were Crawford and Calhoun. In late August of 1823 the *Raleigh Register* came out for

¹⁶*The Virginian* (Lynchburg), August 9, 1822.

¹⁷*Richmond Enquirer*, August 13, 1822.

Crawford, while its rival the *Star* vigorously supported John C. Calhoun.¹⁸ The *Star* later noted that out of the twelve newspapers in North Carolina only two supported Crawford: the *Milton Gazette*, edited by a relative of Crawford, and the *Register* whose editor, Joseph Gales, Sr., was the father of one of the editors of the *National Intelligencer*. Thus the *Star* argued that these two papers conveyed only Washington, not North Carolina, sentiments.¹⁹

Nathaniel Macon thought that though several of North Carolina's congressional representatives favored Crawford, others leaned toward Calhoun. Hence it might require more exertion than previously thought necessary to secure the state for the secretary of the treasury. In March 1822 Macon warned Bartlett Yancey, a leading North Carolina politician, that the opposition to Crawford would "be determined and violent"; and he therefore urged Crawford's friends in North Carolina to support his cause actively. Macon also noted that the members of North Carolina's General Assembly "ought to be selected with a view to the presidential election," since the state legislature traditionally recommended a slate of presidential electors.²⁰

Crawford's opponents termed him an intriguer who used his position as secretary

¹⁸*Star and North Carolina State Gazette* (Raleigh), August 29, 1823.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, August 29, October 3, 1823. The *Warrenton Reporter* and *Wilmington Recorder* eventually supported Crawford. See David M. McFarland, "North Carolina Newspapers, Editors and Journalistic Politics, 1815-1835," *North Carolina Historical Review* 30 (1953): 378.

²⁰Nathaniel Macon to Bartlett Yancey April 17; March 17, 1822, in Kemp P. Battle, ed., "Letters of Nathaniel Macon to John R. Eaton and Bartlett Yancey," *James Sprunt Historical Monographs* 2 (1900): 61-63.

of the treasury and its patronage to bolster his own political fortunes. As the partisan warfare continued, the "A.B. plot" checked Crawford's momentum momentarily. This controversy appeared in January 1823, when Senator Ninian Edwards of Illinois published charges in the *Washington Republican*, under the pseudonym "A. B.," asserting that Joseph Gales, Jr., and William Seaton of the *National Intelligencer* had suppressed public documents that might reflect unfavorably on Crawford. The accusations brought forth by "A. B." focused on the Treasury department's handling of public money from the sale of public lands. A congressional investigation subsequently cleared Crawford and Gales and Seaton of any misconduct.²¹

In another effort to discredit Crawford, his opponents accused him of having supported John Adams's policies in 1798, including the Alien and Sedition acts. In July of that year Crawford had joined with others in Augusta, Georgia, to voice their endorsement of Adams's foreign policy toward France. Anti-Crawfordites used this "Augusta Address" to illustrate Crawford's political opportunism and flirtation with Federalism. But his supporters argued that he had only minor involvement in the address and that it had endorsed Adams's foreign policy, not the infamous Alien and Sedition acts.²²

Under increasing attack by Calhoun partisans and others, Crawfordites looked for ways to bolster their candidate's position. In the summer of 1823 rumors circulated that Clay and Crawford, both of whom had been at odds with Monroe's administration, might

²¹For a detailed examination of the "A.B. plot" see Wayne Cutler, "The A.B. Controversy," *Mid-America* 51 (1969): 24-37.

²²*Richmond Enquirer*, February 28, 1823.

reach an accord. One of the allegations indicated that Crawford sought Clay's support in order to augment his strength in the West.²³ By this time the *Enquirer* had openly advocated Crawford but still endeavored to present all views and printed items for and against all the major candidates, including Crawford. The newspaper noted that while there were "blots on Crawford's escutcheon," the other candidates were tarnished as well. According to the *Enquirer*, the primary principle to consider was a candidate's defense of the Constitution, and on that account the editors found themselves in agreement with Crawford's firm republicanism.²⁴

In September 1823, an attack of erysipelas or possibly a stroke dealt a severe setback to Crawford's presidential aspirations. The initial illness may have been aggravated by an overdose of lobelia.²⁵ The *Enquirer* carried a small notice on September 26 that Crawford had taken ill with "bilious fever" for several days and was resting at the house of James Barbour.²⁶ But Crawford's affliction lingered and left him greatly debilitated. Pro-Crawford newspapers played down the severity of his disability. On the other hand, the *Washington Republican* condemned the "artful delusion" kept up regarding Crawford's health, and warned against the pernicious consequences of such a practice. It further asserted that Crawford had been unable to attend to his official

²³John C. Calhoun to Andrew Jackson July 31, 1823, in Robert L. Meriwether et al., eds., *The Papers of John C. Calhoun* (24 vols. to date, Columbia, 1959-), 8:201.

²⁴*Richmond Enquirer*, August 5, 1823.

²⁵Mooney, *Crawford*, 240-242. See also Cutler, "William H. Crawford," 189.

²⁶*Richmond Enquirer*, September 26, 1823.

duties.²⁷ Despite such reports and allegations, many continued to support Crawford as the candidate with the best chance of winning the presidency.²⁸ His partisans adhered to the philosophy of states rights and limited government and to them a Crawford victory would ensure the success of this view.

Though often reported as recovering and in improved health, Crawford did not return to cabinet meetings until April 2, 1824.²⁹ One month later Crawford's advocates were somewhat cheered by the report of the congressional committee that had investigated the "A.B." affair but were worried about the continued poor state of his health. At this point, Crawford supporters considered the possible necessity of shifting to another candidate but were averse to Jackson and emphatically against Calhoun. Martin Van Buren's trip to Virginia in the summer of 1824 was rumored to be a consultation among Crawford's friends regarding his health and flagging candidacy.³⁰ Congressman Hutchins G. Burton of North Carolina advised Adams to remain on good terms with the Crawfordites.³¹

Adams was the second choice of many Crawford supporters by default. Though

²⁷*Star and North Carolina State Gazette* (Raleigh), July 2, 1824.

²⁸Nathaniel Macon to [James] Turner, December 22, 1823, in William E. Dodd, ed., "Macon Papers," *John P. Branch Historical Papers* 3 (1909): 80–81; Robert V. Remini, *Martin Van Buren and the Making of the Democratic Party* (New York, 1959; 1970), 51–52.

²⁹Adams, ed., *Memoirs of John Quincy Adams*, 6:275.

³⁰*Star and North Carolina State Gazette* (Raleigh), June 18, 1824; Donald B. Cole, *Martin Van Buren and the American Political System* (Princeton, 1984), 127.

³¹Adams, ed., *Memoirs of John Quincy Adams*, 6:355–56.

Adams did not adhere to the rigid philosophy of states rights, strict construction, and limited public expenditures espoused by Crawford's "Old Republican" followers in Virginia and North Carolina, he had not come out actively against it. Many Crawfordites doubted Jackson's fitness for the presidency, based on his history of rashness, and disliked Calhoun's expansive interpretation of the power and responsibilities of the federal government.

Adams maintained a disinterestedness in the campaign and held himself aloof from the machinations within the cabinet. While the partisans of Crawford and Calhoun in Congress attacked each other and jockeyed for advantage in late 1821, Adams lamented that the only thing the two sides could agree upon was to attack him as a potential rival.³² Adams, however, determined not to answer these abuses, as any response would be interpreted as actively canvassing for the presidency. He had determined early in life never to solicit office but stood ready to answer the public's call to duty.³³ Besides, Adams thought that the challenge of addressing accusations in the press "would be an endless task . . . and I have not time to spare from public business to the vindication of myself."³⁴

Adams saw three active factions in Congress: Crawfordites, Calhoun supporters, and partisans of Clay. Of these three, Adams estimated that Calhoun's was the weakest and that the partisans of Crawford and Clay would coalesce and continue their attacks on

³²Ibid., 5:514–15.

³³John Q. Adams to John D. Heath, January 7, 1822, in Worthington C. Ford, ed., *The Writings of John Quincy Adams* (7 vols., repr., New York, 1962), 7:192–93.

³⁴Adams, ed., *Memoirs of John Quincy Adams*, 5:468–69.

Monroe's administration as a means to further their ambitions. At one point, Adams doubted whether Monroe would keep the cabinet through the next session of Congress. He thought that Calhoun, or probably himself, would be compelled to resign, and steeled himself with the admonition that he should "be prepared for my political decease at a moment's warning." Adams thought that as the presidential election drew closer it would develop into a contest between the Crawford and Calhoun factions in Congress "which is now an open market for the purchase of votes."³⁵ In a letter to Robert Walsh, Adams outlined his stand and declared, "I make no *bargains*. I listen to no overtures for *coalition*."³⁶

Calhoun and Adams had been on friendly terms; but as the presidential question heated up, Adams withdrew from the Secretary of War. He increasingly saw himself as the target of Crawford, Calhoun, and Clay partisans and complained of the "caballing" in Congress, in the state legislatures, in newspapers, and among the people. Although Calhoun professed friendliness toward Adams and had initially made it known that he preferred a Northern man for the presidency, Adams thought Calhoun inordinately ambitious and treated him with civility but not with confidence.³⁷

In late 1822 and early 1823 Adams became involved in a newspaper controversy with Alexander Smyth, representative from Virginia's eighteenth district. Smyth issued a

³⁵Ibid., 6:7-8; 5:524-25.

³⁶John Q. Adams to Robert Walsh, June 21, 1822, in Ford, ed., *Writings of John Quincy Adams*, 7:272.

³⁷Adams, ed., *Memoirs of John Quincy Adams*, 6:42-43.

circular letter to his constituents in which he offered his continued services as their representative and praised Monroe's administration. He also urged his constituents to keep the presidential question in mind when they cast their votes in the next congressional election, because the House of Representatives would likely decide the presidential election. Smyth stated that, if elected to Congress, he would vote dispassionately to preserve the liberty, peace, safety, and happiness of the people and that he would not vote for Adams, on the grounds that Adams was no statesman and would adopt an "enlarged and liberal system of policy." As proof, Smyth outlined Adams's votes in the Senate, such as his vote against the Louisiana bill in 1803, and his condemnation of Thomas Paine's *The Rights of Man* under the pseudonym "Publicola" in 1791.³⁸ Adams responded to Smyth on December 28 in his own circular letter to Smyth's constituents. In the letter Adams noted that Smyth did not know the grounds for his votes in the Senate and admitted that he did not think much of Paine's work after *Common Sense*. He then proceeded to give the reasons behind those votes in the Senate cited by Smyth.³⁹

Smyth countered that the election of the president was an important duty and that it was the obligation of U.S. Representatives to warn the people of the dangers of electing an unqualified man. He further cautioned against the dangers of "hereditary pretensions" to the presidency and cited the example of Julius and Augustus Caesar. The editors of the *Enquirer* weighed in on the controversy by declaring that Adams had vindicated himself

³⁸"To the Freeholders of Washington, Wythe, Grayson . . .," *Richmond Enquirer*, December 3, 7, 1822.

³⁹"To the Freeholders of Washington, Wythe, Grayson . . .," *ibid.*, December 28, 1822; January 4, 1823.

on his Senate votes. But they did question his commitment to a limited construction of the Constitution and the "Virginia doctrines," which they defined as opposition to the Bank of the United States and to a general system of federally financed internal improvements. The editors asserted that Adams's opinions on the issues were liable to fluctuate and, indeed, they feared that his construction of the Constitution would be too flexible.⁴⁰

Adams did have the support of some newspapers in Virginia. For example, in November 1822, the *Virginian* announced its advocacy of Adams. The *Virginian* later reiterated its preference for Adams but stated its willingness to support Crawford or any other candidate presented by the Republican party.⁴¹ In response to criticism of Adams's position on the tariff, the *Virginian* noted that Adams had not expressed a favorable opinion on that topic. The newspaper pointed out that Clay actively supported manufactures and the tariff but that Crawford's position remained unclear due to his reluctance to take a firm stand.⁴²

John H. Pleasants, formerly editor of the *Virginian*, established the Richmond *Constitutional Whig* in January 1824. In the latter paper, Pleasants continued to support Adams, though he declared that the contest was essentially "a choice of evils," since Virginia's apathy had rendered Nathaniel Macon's prospects hopeless. Adams, according to Pleasants, was the best candidate available. In the prospectus for the *Constitutional*

⁴⁰Ibid., January 14, 1823.

⁴¹*Virginian* (Lynchburg), November 15, 1822; January 21, 1824.

⁴²Ibid., April 11, 1823.

Whig, Pleasants noted that the paper would not be partisan in nature, though he favored Adams as the most qualified and likely "to harmonize sectional sentiment" and continued to support him.⁴³ When Adams later expressed a favorable opinion of Congress's ability to promote internal improvements, Pleasants was quick to point out that Adams had not advocated Congressional authority to construct roads and canals but had merely admitted the right of the people to grant that power to Congress.⁴⁴

In North Carolina, Adams supporters never organized effectively to further his candidacy. With Crawford the favorite of the political establishment and Calhoun's aggressive partisan support, Adams failed to generate much enthusiasm. The secretary of state was also handicapped in North Carolina due to his New England background. For example, in the fall of 1823 the *Star* published "Orlando's" remarks that North Carolina could not support Adams, because he was from a non-slave holding state. The editors denounced this line of reasoning as one that would pit state against state and would result in anarchy and civil war. The *Star* declared that it supported Calhoun, not because he was from the South, but because of his "patriotism, unimpeachable integrity, and the consistency of his political course."⁴⁵

Though eminently qualified by his training and intellect, Adams lacked the necessary qualities of leadership and personality to garner much enthusiastic support. Many political observers thought that Adams could not succeed against a Southern man;

⁴³*Richmond Enquirer*, December 4, 1823.

⁴⁴*Virginian* (Lynchburg), June 25, 1824.

⁴⁵*Star and North Carolina State Gazette* (Raleigh), September 19, 1823.

therefore, those anxious to prevent the election of Crawford looked to Calhoun, who, they thought, could draw backing from the South, West, and North.⁴⁶ Calhoun's campaign went through two stages. His supporters sought to capture the caucus machinery in Congress in order to put forth Calhoun's pretensions; but when this failed, they attacked Crawford and his party organization. Calhoun and his partisans concentrated on the larger states that had no favorite sons in the race, such as New York, Pennsylvania, North Carolina (North Carolina had the South's highest number of electoral votes behind Virginia), and Maryland.⁴⁷

By the end of 1821, Calhoun thought that there would be two potential candidates in the upcoming presidential contest, one from the North (Adams) and one from the South (Crawford). But Calhoun believed that neither Adams nor Crawford could have a successful administration, and he probably already felt the pull of his own ambition. Calhoun expressed concern that his age and position within Monroe's cabinet made it necessary to promote his candidacy with discretion in order to encourage public support. He confided to his friend Lewis Cass that the path to his candidacy should be prepared by conversation and correspondence in states such as Ohio, Pennsylvania, and New York.⁴⁸ Adams viewed Calhoun's efforts as an attempt to obtain what strength he could and to use

⁴⁶James C. Bronaugh to Andrew Jackson, December 30, 1821, in Sam B. Smith et al., eds., *The Papers of Andrew Jackson* (5 vols. to date, Knoxville, 1980–), 5:125.

⁴⁷Charles S. Sydnor, *The Development of Southern Sectionalism, 1819–1848* (Baton Rouge, 1948), 162–63.

⁴⁸John C. Calhoun to Lewis Cass, December 9, 1821, in Meriwether et al., eds., *Calhoun Papers*, 6:560–61.

it as leverage advance his political standing. According to Adams, Calhoun endeavored either to obtain a choice office in the next administration or to position himself as the head of the opposition.⁴⁹

In late December of 1821, a delegation of Pennsylvania congressional representatives visited Calhoun on December 28, 1821 and invited him to stand for the presidency at the next election.⁵⁰ From that moment Calhoun put his intense energy into the contest. Calhoun's home state of South Carolina had initially supported Lowndes's candidacy. Calhoun termed the support for Lowndes in the South Carolina legislature "rash and foolish." He did, however, see a positive side to Lowndes's nomination: it would demonstrate to the North Crawford's lack of popularity in the South.⁵¹

Having earlier openly expressed friendship and support for Adams, Calhoun may have gotten into the race primarily to keep Crawford from taking the prize. Calhoun had reportedly agreed to stand against any Southern man, particularly Crawford, "whose principles and character he could not approve."⁵² As Calhoun further considered the presidency, the idea, according to one seasoned political observer, "had taken full possession of his mind, [and] the question with him was whether at the next or the

⁴⁹William Plumer, Jr., to William Plumer December 3, 1823, in Brown, ed., *Letters of William Plumer, Jr.*, 86-87

⁵⁰Adams, ed., *Memoirs of John Quincy Adams*, 5:466.

⁵¹John C. Calhoun to Virgil Maxcy, December 31, 1821, in Meriwether et al., eds., *Calhoun Papers*, 6:595-596.

⁵²Adams, ed., *Memoirs of John Quincy Adams*, 5:477-78. See also Charles M. Wiltse, *John C. Calhoun, Nationalist, 1782-1828* (Indianapolis, 1944; New York, 1968), 238-42.

following election.” Calhoun had determined to push for the presidency now, so Calhoun claimed, but would withdraw if circumstances required “with an intention to come forward at some future [and] more auspicious juncture.”⁵³

As Calhoun moved to counter Crawford’s partisans and to promote his own presidential ambitions, he viewed the conflict as a “struggle between cunning and wisdom [and] political virtue and vice” that would ultimately draw a line between Crawford’s “radical” partisans and true “republicans.” In Calhoun’s view, these two factions would become the national parties.⁵⁴ Calhoun perceived Crawford and his followers’ opposition to Monroe’s administration as unprincipled and thus believed himself to be Monroe’s logical successor and defender of the administration’s policies.

The *Enquirer* admired Calhoun’s talents but thought him too inexperienced. He had been on the national scene only ten years and should wait patiently for opportunities to ripen subsequently. The *Enquirer* dismissed Calhoun’s support in various newspapers throughout the nation as only so much “puffing.” The newspaper declared that of the five regularly mentioned candidates he had the least chance in Virginia due to his advocacy of the Bank of the United States, his stand on internal improvements, and his pro-tariff views. Furthermore, the *Enquirer* contended, many considered Calhoun “ultra” on the Constitution, too expansive in his interpretation.⁵⁵ Despite this critique of his principles,

⁵³William Plumer, Jr., to William Plumer, January 3, 1822, in Brown, ed., *Letters of William Plumer, Jr.*, 70–73.

⁵⁴John C. Calhoun to Ninian Edwards, October 5, 1822, Calhoun to Virgil Maxcy, October 28, 1822, in Meriwether et al., eds., *Calhoun Papers*, 7:294–96, 319.

⁵⁵*Richmond Enquirer*, December 11, 1823.

Calhoun remained optimistic and thought that he might gain the support of Virginians such as Senator John Taylor of Virginia, who seemed decidedly friendly to his ambitions, though the two men differed on constitutional views.⁵⁶

In fact, Taylor thought Adams or Calhoun preferable to Crawford. In a letter to James Monroe, Taylor discussed the efforts to obtain the presidency through craft and intrigue as a corrupting influence within the republic which would "lay the foundation of lasting evils." Taylor criticized the rise of a "monied aristocracy" that might occur as a result of these machinations favoring the "capital interest." Taylor considered Crawford the more dangerous candidate, as he thought neither John Quincy Adams nor Calhoun would form a coalition "between political craft and pecuniary speculation with a power of making presidents." Regarding states rights, Taylor did not fully know Adams's position but suspected that Calhoun favored a more expansive federal government. But he believed that both men held the "republican virtues of uncrafty moral rectitude, and wise frugality."⁵⁷

In North Carolina, Calhoun found a strong supporter in Charles Fisher. Fisher's Salisbury newspaper, the *Western Carolinian*, championed him and Calhoun encouraged this movement on his behalf. Calhoun thought that North Carolina would be important to the presidential contest and that it was absolutely necessary that the state not be influenced by Virginia or by old school politicians like Nathaniel Macon, who followed the Virginia

⁵⁶John C. Calhoun to Ogden Edwards, May 2, 1823, in Meriwether et al., eds., *Calhoun Papers*, 8:45.

⁵⁷John Taylor to James Monroe, April 29, 1823, in William E. Dodd, ed., "John Taylor Correspondence," *John P. Branch Historical Papers* 2 (1908): 349-52.

Republicans. He urged Fisher to take a decided stand in the *Western Carolinian* to rally his friends in the state and added that he hoped they would be active in the state's congressional and legislative elections in an effort to counter Crawford's support in North Carolina. As Calhoun sought to muster his followers in North Carolina, he declared that he cared little for his own success but wished for the triumph of the principles and policy "for which I have ever contended."⁵⁸

Calhoun actively solicited help from his partisans for "the cause." He urged Virgil Maxcy of Maryland to write on his behalf and to see to it that a few short articles appeared in the Annapolis paper to rally support in Maryland. He also asked Maxcy to write to North Carolina Federalists William Gaston and John Stanly to obtain their backing and influence.⁵⁹ In mid-June 1823 Calhoun assured Fisher that his prospects were encouraging in New England and in the West and that, while he was not the first choice in some regions, he was clearly the second choice of many and "at this early period, no position can be more safe."⁶⁰

In August 1823 the editors of the *Star* announced that while they had heretofore abstained from commenting on the presidential question, because they deemed such agitation disrespectful to Monroe as well as premature, they were now ready to engage

⁵⁸John C. Calhoun to Unknown, March 18, 1823, in Meriwether et al., eds., *Calhoun Papers*, 7:530-31; Albert R. Newsome, *The Presidential Election of 1824 in North Carolina* (Chapel Hill, 1939), 51.

⁵⁹John C. Calhoun to Maxcy, March 25, 1823, in Meriwether et al., eds., *Calhoun Papers* 7:542-43.

⁶⁰John C. Calhoun to Charles Fisher, June 11, 1823, in *ibid.*, 8:108.

the issue and publish “respectable and temperate essays” in favor of the various candidates. The *Star* also endorsed Calhoun as the choice of the western portion of the state. The *Western Carolinian* called for “a full and fair examination of the pretensions and qualifications of the several candidates” and declared that Crawford was the “Virginia candidate” but that Virginia no longer could influence North Carolina politics. Calhoun did benefit from this anti-Virginia sentiment in North Carolina that arose from the belief that the state had followed too long in Virginia’s shadow. The *Elizabeth City Star* also backed Calhoun as the friend to the navy and internal improvements and denounced the *Raleigh Register*’s claim that North Carolina uniformly adhered to Crawford.⁶¹

Calhoun observed that he and Clay were the only two candidates openly in favor of a system of internal improvements. Furthermore, as he was from the South, a section of the nation that most opposed such a system, Calhoun believed that he was the one candidate who could most effectively encourage Southern support for internal improvements.⁶² He sought to portray himself as the one candidate most capable of maintaining republican principles while also backing policies to develop both the “physical and moral” resources of the country.⁶³

Calhoun’s opinions on the subject of domestic manufactures were well known and he maintained that he would not conceal his position on “great points of national policy,”

⁶¹*Star and North Carolina State Gazette* (Raleigh), August 15, September 5, 26, 1823.

⁶²John C. Calhoun to Virgil Maxcy, September 17, 1823, in Meriwether et al., eds., *Calhoun Papers*, 8:271.

⁶³John C. Calhoun to James Tallmadge, [Jr.], September 28, 1823, in *ibid.*, 8:292.

even for the presidency. His support of domestic manufactures, he realized, gave the Crawfordites grounds to attack him, but he steadfastly maintained his position.⁶⁴ Though Calhoun possessed clearly nationalist opinions, he was careful to reassure others, such as Robert S. Garnett, representative of Virginia's ninth congressional district, that he respected the separation of powers between the federal and state governments and that his views on states rights had "been grossly misrepresented to the people of Virginia." Regarding internal improvements, he asserted that Congress had jurisdiction over the issue but maintained that the power "should not be exercised without a clear necessity."⁶⁵

The North Carolina *Milton Gazette*, a Crawford paper, criticized Calhoun for his support of internal improvements and charged that he favored a large standing army. The *Star* countered that Calhoun did not, in fact, advocate a large standing army in time of peace and that his acknowledged support of internal improvements, commerce, and manufactures indicated his wisdom and "good policy." Furthermore, the *Star* argued that Calhoun's openly declared convictions would motivate his fellow citizens to elect him to the presidency. Calhoun's candor, the *Star* declared, contrasted markedly with Crawford's vagueness. The newspaper proclaimed that "it would puzzle any one" to define Crawford's positions.⁶⁶ Calhoun characterized the press war in North Carolina as illustrative of the political struggle between the people and "the would-be leaders and

⁶⁴John C. Calhoun to Virgil Maxcy, November 2, 1823, Calhoun to Micah Sterling January 30, 1824, in *ibid.*, 8:343-45; 513-14.

⁶⁵John C. Calhoun to Robert S. Garnett July 3, 1824, in *ibid.*, 9:198-201.

⁶⁶*Star and North Carolina State Gazette* (Raleigh), October 17, 1823.

dictators" who sought to secure the old presses such as the *Raleigh Register*, the *Richmond Enquirer*, and the *National Intelligencer* to bring North Carolina in line to support Crawford and the "Radical party."⁶⁷

In the initial stages of the presidential contest, rumors circulated that Andrew Jackson favored DeWitt Clinton for the presidency. Jackson denied these reports, however, and asserted that Adams, a first-rate man and scholar, was an agreeable alternative to Crawford, if no other Southern candidate emerged. He would support Adams for the presidency, unless Calhoun entered the race. Personally, Jackson thought that Calhoun was the only Southerner who could concentrate the votes of the South and the West.⁶⁸ Jackson later welcomed Calhoun's entry into the contest and hoped that Calhoun's growing popularity would "put down that arch fiend" Crawford. A victory by either Adams or Calhoun, Jackson contended, would ensure that "our republican government in its purity agreeable to our constitution may be perpetuated."⁶⁹ Jackson resented Crawford and Clay and held them responsible for Congressional criticism of his actions in the 1818 Seminole campaign. Jackson's subsequent candidacy was probably motivated in part to block Crawford and Clay from the presidency.⁷⁰

⁶⁷John C. Calhoun to Charles Fisher, December 2, 1823, in Meriwether et al., eds., *Calhoun Papers*, 8:390.

⁶⁸Andrew Jackson to James Gadsden, December 6, 1821, in Smith et al., eds., *Jackson Papers* 5:120-21.

⁶⁹Andrew Jackson to George Gibson, January 29, 1822, in *ibid.*, 5:139.

⁷⁰For Clay's and Crawford's role in the criticism of Jackson, see Robert V. Remini, *Andrew Jackson and the Course of American Empire, 1767-1821* (New York, 1977), 370-77; Hopkins, "Election of 1824," in Schlesinger et al., eds. *American Presidential*

As the presidential contest dragged on, Jackson grew frustrated with James Monroe, who, according to Jackson, sat idly by while intrigue for the approaching election crippled his cabinet. Jackson thought that Adams and Calhoun were straightforward and correct in their conduct and that Crawford was the malevolent force disrupting Monroe's administration. He confided to Richard K. Call that "the voice of the people I am told would bring me to the Presidential chair . . . but I have long since determined to be perfectly Silent. I never have been a candidate for office, I never will." According to Jackson, the people had the right to summon any one's service in a republican government, and it was the duty of the individual to obey.⁷¹ It is interesting that Jackson, like Adams, at least outwardly kept faith with the earlier political tradition of disinterested public service, while Crawford, Calhoun, and Clay actively sought ways to promote their political interests.

In 1822 the Tennessee legislature's nomination of Jackson as a presidential candidate had more to do with state politics than national politics. This action set the stage for a pro-Jackson candidate for the Senate seat held by John Williams, a Crawfordite.⁷² Unable to field someone strong enough to defeat Williams, however, Jackson's friends put forth his name and the state legislature elected Jackson to the Senate

Elections, 1:365–66.

⁷¹Andrew Jackson to Richard K. Call June 29, 1822, in Smith et al., eds., *Jackson Papers*, 5:197–99.

⁷²Andrew Hynes to Henry Clay [July] 31, 1822, in James F. Hopkins et al., eds., *The Papers of Henry Clay* (11 vols., Lexington, 1959–92), 3:265; George C. Thompson to Henry Clay August 12, 1822, in *ibid.*, 3:275.

in October 1823.⁷³

The *Enquirer* noted that Jackson had been occasionally mentioned as a possible candidate for the presidential chair but never thought the proposal serious. Commenting on Jackson's nomination by the Tennessee legislature, the *Enquirer* stated that "Jackson was cut out for a hero . . . but his rapidity of feelings disqualifies him for the slow deliberation of an Executive Cabinet." The editors contended that the example of South Carolina's advocacy of Calhoun and Tennessee's support of Jackson led one to expect Kentucky would nominate Clay, Georgia Crawford and Massachusetts Adams and asked, "How shall we designate one of them, on whom the electors may so concentrate their vote as to save us from the cabals of a H[ouse] of R[epresentatives]?"⁷⁴

In the fall of 1823, William B. Lewis worked to garner allies for Jackson in North Carolina. Lewis visited William Polk, an old North Carolina Federalist, and showed him a copy of Jackson's 1816 letter to Monroe advocating including Federalists in his first cabinet. According to Lewis, Polk pledged to back Jackson. Lewis also called on his father-in-law Monfort Stokes, a leading politician, to seek his support for Old Hickory. Stokes informed Lewis that he favored Calhoun, but when pressed by Lewis for a

⁷³For a discussion of the events that inspired Jackson's nomination, see Charles G. Sellers, "Jackson Men with Feet of Clay," *American Historical Review* 62 (1957): 537-51.

⁷⁴*Richmond Enquirer*, July 30, August 16, 1822. In fact, various states did nominate their favorite, usually through a legislative caucus. For example Kentucky nominated Clay in November 1822, Massachusetts nominated Adams in January 1823, and Georgia nominated Crawford in December 1823. See Hopkins, "Election of 1824," in Schlesinger et al., eds. *American Presidential Elections*, 1:349-410; and *Richmond Enquirer*, January 1, 1824.

commitment to back Jackson if Calhoun withdrew, Stokes agreed.⁷⁵ Yet if Jackson could be assured of adherents in North Carolina, he also had opponents of long standing.

Congressman Lewis Williams, a Crawfordite and brother of Tennessee Senator John Williams, had established himself as a critic of Jackson as early as 1819 in a circular letter to his constituents in which he asserted that Jackson's invasion of Florida violated the Constitution.⁷⁶

As Jackson's candidacy gained momentum, his good friend John H. Eaton advised him to act with caution and prudence. Eaton further urged Jackson to "Commit not your opinions; nor let malevolence, whatever insinuating shape it may assume, drag you into any *news paper* controversy." He also warned Jackson that, if "any man of character and standing" asked Jackson about his pretensions to office, he should answer that he had never sought office, "but had ever felt it your duty to act, where by the voice [and] wishes of your country, you had been called to do so."⁷⁷ Jackson kept to this advice and in a widely-published response to an endorsement by a Dauphin County, Pennsylvania, meeting, Jackson claimed that he was not an active candidate but that "My undeviating rule of conduct through life . . . has been neither to seek, or decline public invitations to

⁷⁵John S. Bassett, "Major Lewis on the Nomination of Andrew Jackson," *American Antiquarian Society Proceedings* 33 (1923): 21-26.

⁷⁶"Lewis Williams to the Citizens of the Thirteenth Congressional District of North Carolina," February 20, 1819, in Noble E. Cunningham, ed., *Circular Letters of Congressmen to Their Constituents, 1789-1829* (3 vols., Chapel Hill, 1978), 3:1048-1054.

⁷⁷John H. Eaton to Andrew Jackson, January 11, 1823, in Smith et al., eds., *Jackson Papers*, 5:237-38.

office.”⁷⁸

Eaton also supported Jackson's cause through the publication of the “Wyoming Letters,” a series of twelve letters that first appeared in the Philadelphia *Columbian Observer* in mid-March of 1823, and later republished in pamphlet form.⁷⁹ As noted by historian Robert P. Hay, the “Wyoming Letters” focused on the Revolutionary past and Jackson's ties to that period. Eaton also lamented the intrigue for political office and the nation's drift away from the principles of the Revolutionary era. He portrayed Jackson as an upholder of republican virtue and as George Washington's “moral successor.” The comparison with Washington illustrated that military men could make effective civilian leaders. In short, Jackson reflected the virtues of the Revolution and he was above the intrigue and corruption that threatened the republic.⁸⁰

Jackson's election to the Senate in 1823 provided the occasion for him to establish himself as possessing presidential qualities. Jackson took the opportunity to mend old quarrels with his enemies and carried himself with dignity. He reported his success to George W. Martin, informing him that he had “become friendly with all here” and that his deportment had negated efforts of his enemies to depict him “as a man of revengeful Temper and of great rashness.” Jackson commented that many in Washington “were

⁷⁸Andrew Jackson to H. W. Peterson, February 23, 1823 in *ibid.*, 5:252–54.

⁷⁹Andrew Jackson to Andrew J. Donelson, April 4, 1824, in *ibid.*, 5:388–89.

⁸⁰Robert P. Hay, “The Case for Andrew Jackson in 1824: Eaton's ‘Wyoming Letters,’” *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 29 (1970): 139–51. For a discussion of Eaton's role as Jackson's campaign manager, see Gabriel L. Lowe, “John H. Eaton, Jackson's Campaign Manager,” *ibid.*, 11 (1952): 99–147.

prepared to see me with a Tomahawk in one hand, [and] a scalping knife in the other” but he had succeeded in changing their minds as he was “getting on very smoothly” in Washington society.⁸¹

Although counseled by Eaton to “commit not your opinions,” Jackson believed that, as a candidate for the presidency, he had to declare his opinions frankly on national political questions when asked. In reply to a letter from Littleton H. Coleman of North Carolina asking for his views on the tariff, Jackson stated that he favored “a judicious examination and revision” of the measure and that he supported tariffs in principle, if they were designed to protect and preserve the nation’s defense and independence. Jackson also indicated that revenues from a tariff could be used to discharge the national debt, for in his opinion, debt was a curse to a republic.⁸² Regarding the issue of internal improvements, Jackson asserted that Congress could appropriate funds for improvements, if they were national in nature, such as fortresses, roads, or canals. He maintained, however, that the federal government could not exercise an exclusive jurisdiction that would infringe upon the sovereignty of the states. In other words, Congress needed the consent of the state or states involved in any proposed undertaking. Jackson held that the sovereignty of the general government and the states must be properly balanced and that this balance “is the pivot on which must rest the freedom [and] happiness of this

⁸¹Andrew Jackson to George Washington Martin, July [January] 2, 1824, in Smith et al., eds., *Jackson Papers*, 5:334.

⁸²Andrew Jackson to Littleton H. Coleman, April 26, 1824, in *ibid.*, 5:398–400. Jackson reiterated his view on the tariff and his support of it in upcoming Senate votes in letters to Andrew J. Donelson, April 27, and to William B. Lewis, May 7, in *ibid.*, 5:401 and 404–05.

Country.”⁸³

As one of the leading politicians of the day, Henry Clay also harbored presidential ambitions. Clay had declared that he was content to delay a quest for the presidency, if a Northern candidate emerged, who, in his opinion, demonstrated an ability to unite the general confidence of the electorate. As no such contender had come forth, he placed himself in the fray. Furthermore, he noted that younger and less experienced men, such as Calhoun, were springing up in the South. Looking to New York for support, Clay informed one of his friends there that he thought New York had great ties to the West and if it supported New England or the South in the presidential race, New York would “not advance its own pretensions one inch.” Clay realized that the cabinet secretaries possessed advantages in patronage and their influence over the press.⁸⁴ Some of Clay’s supporters thought the contest between the various administration secretaries benefitted him. The partisan warfare waged by their followers in Congress and the repeated calls for information and investigations of the three main departments could potentially hurt the secretaries and turn the public eye toward Clay.⁸⁵

Clay eagerly sought to get into the game but was also cautious in placing his name before the public. He thought that a candidate ought not be prematurely presented but acknowledged that one’s friends ought not delay too long, so as to expose one to the

⁸³Andrew Jackson to James W. Lanier [cMay 15, 1824], in *ibid.*, 5:409–10.

⁸⁴Henry Clay to Peter B. Porter, April 14, 1822, in Hopkins et al., eds., *Clay Papers*, 3:190–92. See also Henry Clay to Adam Beatty, April 30, 1822, in *ibid.*, 11:109–10.

⁸⁵John Speed Smith to Henry Clay, April 30, 1822, in *ibid.*, 3:203.

danger of being forgotten or obscured. Clay did not want the Kentucky legislature to be the first state to nominate him but looked instead toward other western states, such as Ohio, as a probable starting point. Clay also decided, after consultation with his friends and partisans, to present again himself for Congress in 1822.⁸⁶ The Missouri legislature nominated Clay on November 7, 1822; shortly thereafter, a legislative caucus in Kentucky seconded Clay's candidacy. In December the Ohio legislature decided a recommendation at that time was "inexpedient." But a second legislative caucus met in early January 1823 and formally nominated the Kentuckian.⁸⁷

Clay initially received encouragement from his allies in Tennessee, such as the state's governor William Carroll and from John Overton and Andrew Hynes. However, Hynes warned Clay that if Jackson did become a candidate, it would completely alter the situation in Tennessee. Pro-Clay Tennesseans would not willingly oppose Jackson under any circumstances. After all, Hynes noted, state pride alone dictated support for the General if he had a chance of winning.⁸⁸ Clay reassured his friends that Jackson's nomination in 1822 was nothing more than a compliment for the Hero's previous service or a product of political maneuvering in the state. Clay thought the election would devolve on himself and Crawford. He reasoned that Crawford's strength lay in the South, because of his views on internal improvements and the tariff and because of his control of

⁸⁶Henry Clay to Return Jonathan Meigs, June 8, 1822, in *ibid.*, 3:226–27.

⁸⁷Hopkins, "Election of 1824," in Schlesinger et al., eds. *American Presidential Elections*, 1:362–63.

⁸⁸John W. Overton to Henry Clay, January 6, 1822; Andrew Hynes to Henry Clay, June 30, 1822, in Hopkins et al., eds., *Clay Papers*, 3:156–57, 243.

patronage as head of the Treasury department. These factors would place him at the forefront of the other "cabinet competitors."⁸⁹ Thus Clay saw the contest as one that would present a clear choice between Crawford's conservative stance, based on Southern Old Republican principles, and his own more progressive nationalist outlook.

Adams watched Clay's maneuvering with suspicion and confided to William Plumer, Jr., that he thought Clay's course was designed to get what support he could and prevent a choice by the Electoral College. This strategy would place the election in the House of Representatives where Clay could "make his bargain." Adams remained convinced that Clay had been behind Jonathan Russell's attack on his role in the Ghent negotiations. He also theorized, in an ironic bit of foresight, that Clay might consent to Crawford's becoming president "upon the condition that he should himself be made Secretary of State."⁹⁰

Clay received encouraging news in early 1823 regarding his candidacy in Virginia from Francis T. Brooke, who opined that support for Crawford in that state was vague and undefined. Brooke informed Clay that many "western gentlemen" in Virginia's legislature had implied a preference for Clay. However, Brooke continued, at that early stage it was doubtful who would be the favorite of next year's legislature.⁹¹ Brooke later

⁸⁹Henry Clay to Return Jonathan Meigs, August 21, 1822; Henry Clay to John Sloane, October 28, 1822, in *ibid.*, 11:117-18; 120-22.

⁹⁰William Plumer, Jr., to William Plumer, December 21, 1822, in Brown, ed., *Letters of William Plumer, Jr.*, 80-81.

⁹¹Francis T. Brooke to Henry Clay, February 19, 1823, in Hopkins et al., eds., *Clay Papers*, 3:384.

wrote Clay that great apathy still existed in Virginia in regard to the presidential election but assured Clay that he had many friends in the state. Brooke advised him that his prospects might be furthered, if the opportunity arose in which he could give some pledge to take care of the great interests of the South and the West.⁹²

Edwin S. Duncan, an unsuccessful candidate for Congress in Virginia's twenty-first district, advocated Clay's candidacy and declared that the presidential election was an important question and would probably go to the House of Representatives; thus, the voters ought to know the course of their representative. Duncan proclaimed that he would vote for Clay and that Virginia ought to support the Kentuckian, as he had no patronage power to abuse and he was the choice of the Western states. Furthermore, his role in the construction of the Cumberland road "is of a character that furnishes him a right to expect your support."⁹³ In contrast to the support he received in Virginia, Clay's candidacy never generated much enthusiasm in North Carolina and he drew no noticeable support in the state. Voters in North Carolina, inclined to back a progressive nationalist, had already taken up Calhoun.

Though all five of the candidates claimed to belong to the same political party, voters in Virginia and North Carolina had to settle on one. Crawford was the favorite of the established political leadership in both states, largely because of his adherence to "Old Republican" principles. Even Virginians who endorsed Adams sought to portray him as essentially a Republican of the old school but with more integrity than Crawford. Calhoun

⁹²Francis T. Brooke to Henry Clay, August 14, 1823, in *ibid.*, 3:468-69.

⁹³*Richmond Enquirer*, April 4, 1823.

and Clay did not garner much support in the Old Dominion, and many in the state feared a Jackson presidency. In North Carolina, Crawford and Calhoun offered two distinct views of national policy articulated by their followers. Initially, Adams and Jackson did not generate much interest in the state, though Jackson's candidacy later garnered widespread backing.

In Virginia, the *Enquirer* lamented in October of 1821 that Monroe had been "scarcely warm in his seat" before other newspapers began skirmishing on the topic of the presidential question. The editors of the *Enquirer* firmly noted that they did not encourage this early discussion of the next presidential election, but, nevertheless, they expected an active canvass. A congressional caucus was questionable and "would damn any cause which should adopt one."⁹⁴ In 1821 the public mind on the presidential question in Virginia remained unsettled. Some thought that there was a "powerful party" in the state that was dissatisfied with the Monroe administration's divergence from "Old Republican" principles as evidenced by the accumulation of government patronage, expenditures of the public money, and the increase in the national debt.⁹⁵

The *Enquirer* regretted that the presidential contest had become so early a subject of discussion, as it diverted attention from other subjects. Moreover, the editors expressed concern that such premature agitation of the question might lead to intrigues and political irritation. In January 1822 the *Enquirer* outlined its policy to refrain from

⁹⁴Ibid., October 23, November 20, 1821.

⁹⁵Thomas G. Watkins to Andrew Jackson, March 13, 1822, in Smith et al., eds., *Jackson Papers* 5:155-56.

discussing the contest but felt bound to report what was in other newspapers in order to keep its readers informed.⁹⁶ The newspaper continued to urge restraint in regard to the presidential question and hoped that the Congress would refrain from partisan activities, intrigue, and harassment of the cabinet secretaries.⁹⁷ The *Virginian* chided the *Enquirer* for its pretense of aloofness and predicted that the *Enquirer*'s policy would not preserve harmony, since the question already stirred considerable interest. Furthermore, the *Virginian* contended that the *Enquirer* would inevitably throw its weight behind Crawford.⁹⁸

The *Lynchburg Press* also stated a reluctance to engage the question; but as other papers had joined the fray, it expressed its sentiments in mid-January of 1822. Of the candidates then under consideration the *Lynchburg Press* noted that Lowndes was out, because he had supported the national bank, and dismissed Calhoun for his "far fetched construction of the Constitution." The newspaper admitted that Crawford had a reputation for talent and character but had not, in its estimation, demonstrated any proof of such claims. Given that it was too early for Clay to entertain presidential pretensions, the paper commented, the preferable choice was therefore Adams. Despite this stance, the *Lynchburg Press* actually preferred Virginia's own Judge Spencer Roane, for he "comprehends the true intent and meaning of our political institutions."⁹⁹

⁹⁶*Richmond Enquirer*, January 10, 1822.

⁹⁷*Ibid.*, December 5, 1822.

⁹⁸*Virginian* (Lynchburg), August 9, 1822.

⁹⁹Quoted in the *Richmond Enquirer*, January 26, 1822.

The upcoming presidential election caused some to look upon the 1823 congressional elections in Virginia and North Carolina as crucial factors in the presidential question. For example, in March 1822 John Randolph of Roanoke announced in a circular letter to his constituents that he would stand for reelection in 1823 and that Congress would probably decide the character of the executive branch for the following four years, and perhaps for the foreseeable future. Randolph cautioned that Calhoun, the "army candidate," would probably receive the support of the Bank of the United States and he warned against this potential union between the purse and the sword.¹⁰⁰

As the discussion of the presidential question wore on in the summer of 1822, the *Enquirer* urged that the "trifling mists" of the various congressional attacks made on the secretaries not obscure the principles on which the 1824 presidential election should turn. The key qualifications for the office, the *Enquirer* asserted, echoing the words of Jefferson, are "Is he honest? Is he the most capable in every sense of the word? Is he most faithful to the constitution?"¹⁰¹ In July 1822, the *Enquirer* responded to a piece in the *National Intelligencer* that claimed a cabal was in the making between Pennsylvania and New York to support a candidate, in order to keep the election out of the House of Representatives. The *Enquirer* declared that it was against all cabals and welcomed any plan consistent with the Constitution to avoid the scenes of 1801.¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰John Randolph, "To the Freeholders of Charlotte, Buckingham, Prince Edward and Cumberland," *ibid.*, March 26, 1822.

¹⁰¹*Ibid.*, June 21, 1822.

¹⁰²*Ibid.*, July 23, 1822.

In early January of 1823, John Taylor proposed a Constitutional amendment to require the Electoral College to vote a second time on the two highest vote recipients getters, if the first ballot failed to produce a winner. This amendment clearly aimed at keeping the election out of the House of Representatives. The *Enquirer* praised this measure and declared that a decision in the House opened the door to intrigue and corruption in which the integrity of the heads of the departments and the congressional representatives would be sorely tested.¹⁰³

When the Virginia legislature began its annual session in late December 1822, public sentiment in the state on the presidential question was not fixed but many in the legislature reportedly favored Crawford.¹⁰⁴ In March 1823, the *Enquirer* commented on a letter published in the *Franklin Gazette* of Philadelphia on February 25 that had reported the existence of a "Richmond party" which supported William H. Crawford. The writer alleged that this "junto" opposed those in Virginia who had backed Madison and Monroe. The editors of the *Enquirer* responded that they had no knowledge of these two alleged parties and insisted that the charge was a shallow artifice attributable to the partisans of Calhoun to slander and vilify Crawford. The newspapers dismissed the allegation as "electioneering impudence."¹⁰⁵

The *Virginian* later claimed that a "junto" at Richmond, with Thomas Ritchie as a

¹⁰³Ibid., January 16, 1823.

¹⁰⁴David Campbell to Mary Campbell, December 26, 1822, Campbell Family Papers, Duke University.

¹⁰⁵*Richmond Enquirer*, March 7, 1823.

conspicuous member, endeavored to influence public opinion on the presidential election. The *Enquirer* denied these allegations and repudiated the statement as inaccurate.¹⁰⁶ The *Washington Republican* later published a series of "Letters on the Richmond Party" in November 1823, republished later in pamphlet form, that detailed the presumed influence of the "Richmond junto."¹⁰⁷ A copy was sent to every member of the Virginia legislature, one observer theorized, to influence legislators' views on the presidential election, though the pamphlet's author did not openly advocate a particular candidate.¹⁰⁸

In March 1823, "Virginius" in the *Enquirer* urged voters to give serious attention to the upcoming election for the state legislature, since that body would establish the electoral ticket through a caucus. "Virginius" further argued that the people ought to call forth "men of talents and integrity" and demand to know their opinions on the various candidates "and instruct them to whom they are to give their support in the caucus of the

¹⁰⁶*Virginian* (Lynchburg), April 18, 29, 1823; *Richmond Enquirer*, May 6, 1823.

¹⁰⁷*Washington Republican*, November 11, 13, 15, 18, 20, 22, 25, 1823.

¹⁰⁸David Campbell to James Campbell, December 5, 1823, Campbell Family Papers, Duke University. Most historians accept the existence of the so-called "Richmond Junto" but others, such as Thornton F. Miller, question the evidence for this belief. See Harry Ammon, "The Richmond Junto, 1800–1824," *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 61 (1953): 395–418; also Thornton F. Miller, "The Richmond Junto: The Secret All-Powerful Club or Myth," *ibid.*, 99 (1991): 63–80. A more recent work, Wade L. Shaffer's "The Richmond Junto and Politics in Jacksonian Virginia," (Ph.D. diss., William and Mary, 1993), argues that the Junto existed but does not adequately address Miller's points. Trenton E. Hizer's study, "Virginia Is Now Divided: Politics in the Old Dominion, 1820–1833" (Ph.D. diss., University of South Carolina, 1997), also examines the issue and reasonably concludes that an informal junto existed and was politically influential in the state.

[state] legislature.”¹⁰⁹ Other political observers also commented on the importance of the political situation, for the 1824 presidential election represented the passing of the “spirits of 1776” and the beginning of a new era of party formation in which Virginia needed men of talent in its state legislature.¹¹⁰

Crawford viewed the results of the April 1823 legislative contests in Virginia with favor and confided to Martin Van Buren that the election had increased his known friends in the legislature.¹¹¹ Afterwards it appeared that Virginia would indeed support Crawford for the presidential chair, as Charles P. Tutt informed Jackson, not because Virginia held a great love for Crawford, “but because he had pleased in some way her delegation in Congress.” Tutt assured Jackson that “you are universally esteemed by the people and if the election was by districts the result would be different.” According to Tutt, Jackson’s friends in Virginia were not enough in number to turn the scale and that his enemies were “very industrious.”¹¹²

By early April 1823 the *Enquirer* acknowledged that, although it had hoped to put off the discussion of the presidential contest, it had received several applications to publish original communications on the subject. The *Enquirer* announced on April 4, 1823, that it

¹⁰⁹*Richmond Enquirer*, March 21, 1823.

¹¹⁰*Virginian* (Lynchburg), March 7, 1823.

¹¹¹William H. Crawford to Martin Van Buren, May 9, 1823, in William H. Williams, ed., “Ten Letters from William Harris Crawford to Martin Van Buren,” *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 49 (1965): 68.

¹¹²Charles Pendleton Tutt to Andrew Jackson, June 24, 1823, in Smith et al., eds., *Jackson Papers*, 5:283.

would accept and print essays for or against the candidates written in a tolerant spirit. It further noted that it would continue to present facts as they appeared in other newspapers and would use discretion in giving its own opinions on the contest.¹¹³

Crawford did appear to be the favorite of many in Virginia. An anonymous writer, bearing the pseudonym "The Constitution," reviewed the presidential contenders and declared Calhoun and Clay as "ultras" on the construction of the Constitution, and warned that Adams probably still held Federalist tendencies. "Constitution" preferred a steady republican like Nathaniel Macon, but noted that of the available candidates, Crawford, though not without his faults (such as his early support of the Bank of the United States), was the one with the least charges against him and as such remained the "choice of evils."¹¹⁴

When asked in late 1821 whom North Carolina would support, Nathaniel Macon would only answer that he did not know, but he thought that his state would adhere to the most "republican and economical" of the candidates.¹¹⁵ While some North Carolina newspapers, such as the *Raleigh Register* and the *Star*, expressed reluctance to engage actively the presidential question too early, some North Carolinians looked forward to a discussion of the various contender rather than wait for Monroe or a congressional caucus to designate a successor. Those inclined toward this opinion held that all the potential

¹¹³*Richmond Enquirer*, April 4, 1823.

¹¹⁴*Ibid.*, May 20, 1823.

¹¹⁵Nathaniel Macon to Bartlett Yancey, December 12, 1821, in Battle, ed., "Letters of Nathaniel Macon," *James Sprunt Historical Monographs* 2 (1900): 58-60.

candidates should be named at once so that the people would have the opportunity to decide who was the "fittest to rule over their destinies."¹¹⁶

In a circular letter to his constituents in April 1823, John Long, Jr., representative from North Carolina's tenth congressional district, noted that the issue of the presidential election excited considerable interest and the number of contestants made it likely the contest would devolve on the U.S. House. With that in mind, Long informed the voters that he was not committed to any particular candidate but favored a Southern president and would "promote the most prominent, well qualified Southern man."¹¹⁷ At that juncture, the "Southern candidate" most likely to succeed was Crawford. In western North Carolina, Calhoun appeared to be the favorite, while Crawford's strength lay in the section bordering the "Ancient Dominion."¹¹⁸

The *Star* asserted that Crawford had never been popular in North Carolina, except among the members of the congressional delegation. To bolster this claim, the newspaper declared that of the twelve newspapers in North Carolina, the *Raleigh Register* and the *Milton Gazette* were the only ones backing Crawford.¹¹⁹ In fact, according to the *Fayetteville Observer*, one paper was not engaged in the question, four were for Calhoun,

¹¹⁶James Somervell to Weldon N. Edwards, January 21, 1821, Weldon N. Edwards Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

¹¹⁷John Long, Jr., "To the Citizens of the Tenth Congressional District of North Carolina," April 29, 1823, in Cunningham, ed., *Circular Letters*, 3:1192.

¹¹⁸Isaac T. Avery to William B. Lenoir, August 3, 1823, Lenoir Family Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill..

¹¹⁹*Star and North Carolina State Gazette* (Raleigh), September 5, 1823.

one for Adams, two for Crawford, and two were simply anti-Crawford and would possibly both support Adams. Of the two remaining papers, the *Wilmington Recorder's* sentiments were not known and the *Observer* admired Calhoun but advocated Adams because of his knowledge of foreign and domestic matters and his "sterling integrity."¹²⁰

The *Register* and the *Milton Gazette* argued that the presidential question was the pivotal issue in some districts in the congressional elections of August 1823. Thus, according to these newspapers, North Carolina favored Crawford, since the state legislature and the congressional delegation largely backed him.¹²¹ However, it is unlikely that the upcoming presidential election held that much sway over the elections. In fact, the *Star* contested the *Register's* claim that the contest was a test in the state and congressional elections. The *Western Carolinian* also declared that the presidential question was not an issue in the state contests and that the Crawfordites had agreed at the last legislature to bring forth as many of the treasury secretary's partisans as possible who kept quiet and electioneered on other grounds.¹²² When the North Carolina legislature met in the fall of 1823, legislators reportedly favored Crawford by a two-to-one majority over any other candidate. This majority sparked rumors that the partisans of Calhoun and

¹²⁰*Ibid.*, October 31, 1823. Newsome lists the *Register*, *Milton Gazette*, and *Cape Fear Recorder* of Wilmington as pro-Crawford; the *Western Carolinian*, *Star*, *Carolina Sentinel*, *Elizabeth City Star* as pro-Calhoun; and the *Carolina Observer* of Fayetteville, the *Hillsborough Recorder* and the *American Recorder* of Washington, (N.C.), as pro-Adams. See Newsome, *Presidential Election of 1824*, 59.

¹²¹*Raleigh Register*, August 22, 1823. See also Newsome, *Presidential Election of 1824*, 56-58.

¹²²*Star and North Carolina State Gazette* (Raleigh), August 29, September 19, 1823.

Adams might act in concert.¹²³

By late 1823 the presidential question had five possible answers. With no clear heir apparent and no designated successor, the transition from the Revolutionary generation to a new generation of leaders splintered the Republican party into factions lined up behind the five candidates. This fragmentation made it clear that the presidential election would probably end in the House of Representatives, for no candidate could command a majority in the Electoral College. Crawford and Calhoun actively sought the presidency and offered two distinct views of the direction the nation should follow. Crawford adhered to the "Old Republican" creed of states rights and limited government, while Calhoun articulated a sort of progressive nationalism. Clay also promoted himself as a progressive nationalist who favored internal improvements and the tariff, but his candidacy suffered from weak organization and never generated widespread support in Virginia and North Carolina. Adams and Jackson, though both ambitious, generally followed the tradition of disinterestedness in which a candidate stood ready to serve if called upon. For the most part, both men avoided a direct declaration of their views but did admit to a moderate nationalism and voiced support, with restrictions, for progressive measures such as the tariff and internal improvements.

As the nation considered the presidential question, many politicians in Virginia and North Carolina decided to support Crawford as the best choice from the available candidates. The legislatures in both states largely favored Crawford for his stand on

¹²³Thomas Ruffin to Romulus M. Saunders, December 20, 1823, Robert Marion Papers, Duke University.

conservative principles favored in the South. Though the legislatures in Virginia and North Carolina traditionally recommended an electoral ticket for presidential elections, supporters of other candidates saw an opportunity to advance their favorites through aggressive attacks on Crawford's character and principles, and by taking their case directly to the people to garner popular support. Character was an issue in the presidential campaign but it was not the only issue. A candidate's construction of the Constitution and opinions on issues, such as the tariff and federally funded internal improvements, also factored into the equation of presidential politics, and the advocates of each tried to portray their man as above partisan politics.

Chapter 3

Caucuses, Intrigue, and the Rhetoric of Corruption: Campaign Politics and the Voice of the People

With the Republican party split into competing factions, the presidential election of 1824 posed a troublesome dilemma. Supporters of the five contenders sought to establish the legitimacy of their favorite as the best candidate for the presidency. Crawfordites looked to the traditional congressional caucus, in use since 1800, as the best means to secure support for the treasury secretary. They asserted that Republicans must unite behind Crawford to prevent the election from going into the House of Representatives. Others argued, however, that the caucus was a dangerous device that allowed politicians in Washington to dictate the choice of a president to the people. The election of 1824 marks a transition in American political development from the congressional caucus to a reliance on more democratic means of nominating presidential candidates. Events in North Carolina and Virginia demonstrate this shift and also show how this new form of politics relied on rhetoric that focused on the specters of corruption and intrigue.

Despite the claims of the congressional caucus opponents, it had never been as powerful as they portrayed it. Instead, the caucus was largely an informal gathering that had a history of poor attendance and had never developed procedural rules. Actually, the only serious question about the caucus nominee occurred in 1816, when friends of William H. Crawford placed him in competition with James Monroe. In the 1820 caucus only about forty members of Congress even bothered to attend and those who showed up

passed a resolution stipulating that a caucus nomination was inexpedient.¹ As the last vestiges of the first party system faded away, the congressional caucus fell victim to the emerging politics of faction. Backers of the five candidates maneuvered in advance of the 1824 election to put their favorites before the people and legitimize them thorough state nominations or by public expressions of support. As the number of contenders made it unlikely that anyone could obtain the requisite support for a victory, partisans of the various factions in North Carolina and Virginia looked to the people for support.

Unfavorable views of the caucus were not solely expressions of partisanship. Indeed they often drew on perceptions of the caucus as an actual threat to the republic and a dangerous precedent that would gain strength over time and place the choice of the president into the hands of Congress and disrupt the balance of powers within the government.² One pamphleteer who characterized the congressional caucus as a "secret conclave" insisted that if it did convene, it should do so in a location other than Washington, where intrigue, management, bargaining, and corruption "would be in full operation." He urged the people in every state to instruct their representatives in Congress to oppose a caucus.³

When the Eighteenth Congress commenced in early December 1823,

¹James S. Chase, *The Emergence of the Presidential Nominating Convention*, (Urbana, 1973), 19–25.

²Peter Johnston to David Campbell, January 15, 1822, Campbell Family Papers, Duke University.

³"A Citizen," *The Election of the President of the United States, Considered*. (Boston, 1823), 10–11.

representatives and senators frequently discussed the upcoming presidential election. Members who identified with the "principles of '98" complained that the Republicans of '23 had strayed from the "good, old, orthodox, democratic republican faith."⁴ When Henry Clay overwhelmingly defeated Philip P. Barbour, a Virginia Crawford supporter, in the election for speaker of the House, some observers contended that this contest illustrated Crawford's poor standing in that chamber. But Crawford partisans denied this and instead declared that the presidential question had no influence on Clay's victory. The Kentuckian, they argued, had merely commanded more popularity than Barbour.⁵

One seasoned political observer reported that few members favored a congressional caucus and that in fact many were inclined to wait and see what actions the state legislatures would take. Crawford's adherents advocated an early caucus meeting to influence the state legislatures, especially those of New York and Pennsylvania. The initial plan was to wait for those two states to come out in favor of a caucus, then the Crawfordites would convene a caucus with the backing of a majority of the delegations from those states. The expected support would then provide the needed momentum for Crawford's candidacy.⁶

⁴Willie P. Mangum to Duncan Cameron, December 10, 1823, in Henry T. Shanks, ed., *The Papers of Willie Person Mangum* (5 vols., Raleigh, 1950-56), 1:82-84.

⁵Romulus M. Saunders to Bartlett Yancey, December 4, 1823, in Albert R. Newsome, ed., "Letters of Romulus M. Saunders to Bartlett Yancey, 1821-1828," *North Carolina Historical Review* 8 (1931): 435.

⁶William Plumer, Jr., to William Plumer, December 10, 22, 1823, in Everett S. Brown, ed., *The Missouri Compromise and Presidential Politics, 1820-1825, from the Letters of William Plumer, Junior, Representative from New Hampshire* (St. Louis, 1926), 88, 90; Romulus M. Saunders to Bartlett Yancey, December 20, 1823, Bartlett

As Crawford's partisans sought to organize a congressional caucus to shore up support for their candidate, those opposed to the caucus generally, and to Crawford in particular, contended that a caucus would be ill advised. For example, John C. Calhoun viewed the upcoming presidential election as a great struggle over principle, reminiscent of 1798, and warned of the political intrigue behind the efforts to hold a caucus.⁷ He objected to the congressional caucus out of principle, asserting that the conflict was between those who trusted the election to the people and those who sought to govern the people through political intrigue. Indeed, accusations of such intrigue circulated throughout Washington and contributed to an atmosphere of suspicion. One such report held that Crawford's friends had offered to back Clay for the presidency, if Crawford withdrew from the contest, in exchange for Clay's support for a caucus. Another rumor maintained that the Crawfordites had proposed the same deal to Adams's supporters.⁸ Crawford's most aggressive opponents, Calhoun and his followers, led the attack on the congressional caucus. They argued that the Republican party had called earlier caucuses to unify its members on the choice of a nominee, but a caucus in the present situation would be an effort to "counteract an existing provision of the Constitution," since there

Yancey Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

⁷John C. Calhoun to John G. Jackson, December 29, 1823, in Robert L. Meriwether et al., eds., *The Papers of John C. Calhoun*, (24 vols. to date, Columbia, 1959-), 8:430.

⁸William Plumer, Jr., to William Plumer, December 31, 1823, in Brown, ed., *Letters of William Plumer, Jr.*, 92-93.

was no threat to the Republican party.⁹

Other contenders, such as Adams, did not support the caucus, but did not attack it outright. He considered it "one of the least obnoxious modes of intrigue."¹⁰ Jackson, on the other hand, regarded the congressional caucus with suspicion and thought it the last hope of Crawford's friends to bolster his prospects, but such intrigue would not benefit Crawford's cause. Furthermore, Jackson thought that a recommendation by a caucus in the present circumstances "would politically Dam any name put forth by it."¹¹ The Crawford men dismissed opposition to the caucus as merely an effort to weaken Crawford's support in Congress by "dividing and conquering through combinations, promises and advantageous contracts."¹² There may have been an element of truth in this assertion, as George McDuffie, a South Carolina representative and Calhoun lieutenant, informed Charles Fisher of North Carolina that the friends of Calhoun, Clay, Jackson, and Adams had a "perfect understanding and are united in the determination to give the Caucus a death blow" and end Crawford's hopes forever.¹³

⁹John C. Calhoun to Samuel D. Ingham June 1, 1823, in Meriwether et al., eds., *Calhoun Papers*, 8:81.

¹⁰Charles F. Adams, ed., *Memoirs of John Quincy Adams, Comprising Portions of His Diary from 1795-1848* (12 vols., Philadelphia, 1874-77), 6:191.

¹¹Andrew Jackson to Andrew J. Donelson, January 21, 1824, in Sam B. Smith et al., eds., *The Papers of Andrew Jackson* (5 vols. to date, Knoxville, 1980-), 5:344.

¹²Romulus M. Saunders to Bartlett Yancey December 4, 1823, in Newsome, ed., "Letters of Saunders to Yancey," *North Carolina Historical Review* 8 (1931): 437.

¹³George McDuffie to Charles Fisher, December 14, 1823, Fisher Family Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

By early January 1824 prospects for a successful caucus looked grim. McDuffie estimated caucus backers at about forty-nine members, but certainly not more than sixty, and concluded that only the delegations from Virginia, North Carolina, and Georgia had a majority in favor of it and Crawford. McDuffie reported that about half of Virginia's twenty-two delegates favored a caucus and that all but two of North Carolina's thirteen representatives approved of it.¹⁴ The hopes of the Crawfordites rested on New York, as that state's support for a caucus would probably bring Pennsylvania on board as well. Supporters of the treasury secretary theorized that Calhoun's partisans were active against Crawford and would seek to force the election into the House, rather than submit to a caucus and that Clay's friends would probably unite with them in this effort.¹⁵

The presidential question also occupied the attention of the state legislatures in the winter of 1823–24. When the North Carolina General Assembly convened in November, that topic distracted the proceedings. Partisans of the various candidates used any opportunity to illustrate that their man was the choice of the people.¹⁶ For example, when Alfred Moore, who did not favor Crawford, defeated Robert Strange, a Crawford supporter, in the contest for speaker of the House of Commons, Crawford's opponents seized on Moore's victory as proof that a majority of the legislature did not back

¹⁴George McDuffie to [Charles Fisher], January 7,[1824], *ibid.*

¹⁵Romulus M. Saunders to Bartlett Yancey, January 2, 1824, Yancey Papers, Southern Historical Collection.

¹⁶William H. Haywood, Jr., to Willie Mangum, December 20, 1823, in Shanks, ed., *Mangum Papers*, 1:93.

Crawford.¹⁷ Crawford partisans, however, disputed this interpretation and asserted instead that many of Crawford's friends had actually voted for Moore over the younger and less experienced Strange.¹⁸

On December 2, Charles Fisher introduced resolutions into the House of Commons against the congressional caucus. His proposals declared that the caucus was a practice contrary to the spirit of the Constitution and that history illustrated that "the institutions of the people are less in danger from open violence, than from secret and insidious encroachments." Fisher also argued that a caucus was unnecessary, as there was no need to unite the Republican party against an opposing party. He proposed that North Carolina's senators and representatives in Congress should move to prevent a caucus nomination and that they should submit an amendment to Congress to establish a nationwide district system for the election of president and vice president. Also, to garner wider support, Fisher advocated that the North Carolina governor transmit copies of these resolutions to the governors of the other states to lay before their respective legislatures.¹⁹

The House of Commons took up Fisher's resolutions on December 9 but caucus proponents moved to kill them by an indefinite postponement. The House adjourned that day, however, before considering that motion, and the discussion continued over the next two days. The motion for postponement eventually succeeded by a vote of eighty-two to forty-six. Opponents of a congressional caucus took solace in the fact that many who

¹⁷*Star and North Carolina State Gazette* (Raleigh), November 21, 1823.

¹⁸*Raleigh Register*, December 5, 1823.

¹⁹*Star and North Carolina State Gazette* (Raleigh), December 5, 1823.

voted for the postponement did so, not because they supported a caucus, but because they believed that the state legislature lacked the right to instruct representatives. Therefore, caucus opponents reasoned, the failure of Fisher's resolutions did not indicate support for the congressional caucus.²⁰ Nevertheless, Crawford partisans expressed gratification at the defeat of Fisher's resolutions and viewed it as a setback for Calhoun's supporters in North Carolina who vehemently opposed the caucus.²¹

On December 20, caucus opponents tried again when James Iredell, Jr., presented a more precise anti-caucus preamble and resolution in the House of Commons. Iredell argued that the congressional caucus was inconsistent with republican principles and contrary to the spirit and intention of the Constitution. He proposed therefore that the General Assembly disapprove of any caucus nominations. But, caucus supporters successfully moved for an indefinite postponement of the resolution. Crawfordites hailed this victory as a clear sign that the legislature would not interfere with the congressional caucus and demonstrated Crawford's support in North Carolina.²²

Consequently the Crawfordites felt emboldened enough to extend an invitation on December 24 to "the members of the General Assembly favorable to the election of William H. Crawford as president" to attend a meeting in the Senate chamber. That

²⁰Ibid., December 12, 19, 1823.

²¹Lewis Williams to Bartlett Yancey, December 15, 1823, in Joseph G. de Roulhac Hamilton, ed., "Letters to Bartlett Yancey," *James Sprunt Historical Publications* 10 (1911): 38-39; and Romulus M. Saunders to Bartlett Yancey, December 17, 1823, in *ibid.*, 39-40.

²²*Star and North Carolina State Gazette* (Raleigh), December 26, 1823; see also *Raleigh Register*, December 26, 1823.

gathering nominated an electoral ticket endorsing Crawford and established a committee of correspondence.²³ While the *Register* asserted that “a large number” had attended the Christmas Eve conclave, the *Star* estimated that only seventy to eighty-five members, out of a total of 196, participated in the “Raleigh caucus.” Calhoun supporters and those generally opposed to Crawford proclaimed that the poor showing indicated the lack of Crawford’s popularity. In response, the *Register* declared that “upwards of 100” had attended the meeting. The editors of the *Star* chided the *Register* for not providing the names of the participants and later announced that a list compiled by “lookers on” indicated that only seventy-nine members had been present that evening. The *Register* then countered that its sources vouched for about ninety-three members in attendance. In response to the formation of the Crawford electoral ticket, the *Star* announced that a “people’s ticket” would be formed. This “people’s ticket,” according to the *Star*, would be selected by the voters, not dictated by the legislature, and pledged “to vote for a Republican as President of the United States.”²⁴

Crawford opponents derided the so-called “Raleigh caucus” as an example of intrigue among politicians that usurped the right of the people to choose their presidential electors. Even some Crawford supporters thought that the meeting had been ill advised and impolitic. One Crawfordite complained that the invitation should have at least been to all “republicans,” rather than limited to the “friends of Crawford.” That way those who

²³*Raleigh Register*, December 26, 1823; see also Albert R. Newsome, *The Presidential Election of 1824 in North Carolina* (Chapel Hill, 1929), 73–74.

²⁴*Star and North Carolina State Gazette* (Raleigh), December 26, 1823, January 2, and April 9, 1824; *Raleigh Register*, January 2, 1824, April 23, 1824.

attended could have indicated a preference for Crawford, but expressly made clear their willingness to abide by a congressional caucus nomination for the sake of Republican unity.²⁵

As the North Carolina General Assembly readied to end its session, Governor Gabriel Holmes transmitted a copy of the "Tennessee resolutions" on December 27 to the House of Commons for consideration and expressed his support for them in "strong and impressive language." The *Star* carried the debate concerning the Tennessee resolutions and criticized the *Register* for not publishing Governor Holmes's endorsement of these resolutions. *Star* editors asserted that the Crawfordites wanted to keep any opposition to the congressional caucus out of public view. But the *Register* defended its silence and emphasized that the legislature had twice defeated anti-caucus measures and that telling the tale of "family disagreements" abroad was "indecorous." Finally, on January 9, 1824, the *Register* did print Holmes's message.²⁶ The presidential question cast a shadow over the proceedings of the legislature and therefore the session accomplished little of significance. Even the passage of a bill to build a bridge over the Roanoke River at Halifax took on partisan tones as Crawford backers opposed the measure, largely because

²⁵Romulus M. Saunders to Bartlett Yancey, December 31, 1823, in Newsome, ed., "Letters of Saunders to Yancey," *North Carolina Historical Review* 8 (1931):440-41.

²⁶Felix Grundy introduced the "Tennessee Resolutions," in the Tennessee legislature in September 1823. They declared that the congressional caucus violated the spirit of the Constitution and was inexpedient and impolitic. The measures also called for the legislature to instruct senators and request representatives to prevent a caucus nomination and for the governor to transmit a copy of the preamble and resolutions to the other states. *Star and North Carolina State Gazette* (Raleigh), January 9, 1824; *Raleigh Register*, January 9, 1824.

Calhoun supporters favored it.²⁷

When the Virginia legislature convened on December 1, 1823, a majority of the membership favored Crawford for the presidency and many considered him a "Republican of the old school."²⁸ On December 11, Governor James Pleasants, Jr., transmitted a copy of the Tennessee resolutions to the House of Delegates without comment. Five days later John Tyler moved that the measures be referred to a select committee. That committee, headed by Tyler, issued a report on the resolutions, on December 23, declaring that Virginia disagreed with her sister state and viewed the congressional caucus not as a threat but as a safeguard of liberty. Believing that the number of possible candidates threatened a sectional conflict, the committee argued that there was a necessity for unity of action in the upcoming presidential election and the caucus provided the mechanism for that unity. Its report further claimed that the caucus was the only practical means to preserve the wishes of the majority and keep the election from going to the House of Representatives, where the smaller states would possess an unfair advantage over the larger states.²⁹

When the House of Delegates took up Tyler's statements on December 30, a motion to postpone consideration of the pro-caucus report narrowly passed by one vote, seventy-seven to seventy-six. Though the legislature failed to voice strong support for a congressional caucus, Crawfordites and caucus proponents pointed out that many who

²⁷James Mebane to Willie P. Mangum, December 19, 1823, in Shanks, ed., *Mangum Papers*, 1:91-92.

²⁸David Campbell to Edward Campbell, December 10, 1823, Campbell Family Papers, Duke University.

²⁹*Richmond Enquirer*, December 13, 18, 27, 1823.

opposed Tyler's report did so on grounds that it was inexpedient for the state legislature to voice its opinion on what was essentially a party matter. Furthermore, they argued, a majority of the seventy-seven who voted against the report no doubt favored Crawford.³⁰

On January 1, 1824, a small notice appeared in the *Enquirer* inviting the "Republican members" of the General Assembly to convene on January 5 in the house chamber "to confer upon the subject of a congressional caucus." One hundred fifty-seven members attended the two-hour meeting and resolved to act to secure unity among "the Republicans of the Union" and thus prevent the presidential election from going to the U.S. House. The assembled legislators voiced support of the New York legislature's April 22, 1823, resolution in favor of a congressional caucus nomination, and called for Virginia's congressional representatives to procure a nomination "of fit persons to fill the office of president and vice-president." The *Enquirer* explained that the meeting was not intended to support a particular candidate, though a majority no doubt favored Crawford. Rather, the gathering was an expression of approval for the congressional caucus as a means to protect the Union.³¹

In Washington, while Crawford's supporters in the House readied for the caucus, they expressed concern among themselves over Crawford's health. Because of his illness, the secretary of the treasury had been unable to meet with the new members of Congress, whereas the other candidates advanced their interests through social gatherings and

³⁰Ibid., January 1, 1824; *Virginian* (Lynchburg), January 5, 1824; Horace L. Bachelder, "The Presidential Election of 1824 in Virginia" (M.A. thesis, Duke University, 1942), 19-20.

³¹*Richmond Enquirer*, January 1, 6, 1824.

parties. Although Nathaniel Macon had long expressed his dislike of congressional caucuses and had determined not to attend, he urged Crawford's friends not to delay and contended that they should have held a caucus at the beginning of the session in December. Ironically, Macon had not attended a caucus in twenty years; and though he supported Crawford, the probable caucus nominee, he thought that his attendance now would possibly create the impression of machinations and intrigue. Despite Crawford's health problems and the uncertainty about the probable success of the caucus, the Crawfordites remained confident of their man's popularity in Congress.³²

On February 7 two notices, both dated the previous day, concerning the congressional caucus appeared in the *National Intelligencer*. Eleven congressmen issued an invitation to the "Democratic Members of Congress" to meet on February 14 to recommend suitable candidates to the people for the presidency and vice presidency. The other notice, signed by twenty-four members who professed to represent 181 others, maintained that it was inexpedient to nominate presidential and vice presidential candidates in the caucus.³³ When the long-discussed caucus finally met on the 14th, only sixty-six members of Congress, out of 261, attended though two others sent their proxy votes. Four states, New York, Virginia, North Carolina, and Georgia, accounted for more

³²Nathaniel Macon to Bartlett Yancey, December 12, 1823, in Kemp P. Battle, ed., "Letters of Nathaniel Macon," *James Sprunt Historical Monographs* 2 (1900): 67-70; Macon to Yancey, January 31-February 1, 1824, in Hamilton, ed., "Letters to Bartlett Yancey," *James Sprunt Historical Publications* 10 (1911): 42-43; Willie P. Mangum to Seth Jones, February 11, 1824, in Shanks, ed., *Mangum Papers*, 1:115-16.

³³*National Intelligencer*, February 7, 1824.

than two-thirds of those present; ten states were unrepresented.³⁴ Of the sixty-eight participants in the caucus, sixteen were from Virginia (out of twenty-four) and nine from North Carolina (out of fifteen).

On a motion by James Barbour of Virginia, the assembled members elected Benjamin Ruggles of Ohio to the chair. Philip S. Markley of Pennsylvania submitted a preamble and resolution declaring that while a concentration of support was necessary to preserve and maintain the ascendancy of the Republican party and to avoid sectional jealousy, those in favor of a caucus nomination needed more time to build greater backing. Thus, the meeting should adjourn and reconvene on March 20; this resolution, however, failed. The caucus then proceeded to decide on a presidential nominee with the result that Crawford received sixty-four votes, Adams two, Jackson and Nathaniel Macon one each. Concerning a vice-presidential nomination, Albert Gallatin received fifty-seven votes, while the remaining votes were scattered among other nominees. Ruggles then issued an address to the "Republicans of the United States" asserting that the participants had acted as members of the Republican party but expressing regret that other Republicans had chosen not to cooperate. Ruggles warned that the divisions within the party provided an opportunity for the Federalist party to reassert itself and he emphasized the need for unified support on one candidate.³⁵

In North Carolina the *Star* gleefully hailed the anti-caucus notice that had appeared in the *National Intelligencer* on February 7 as a sign of triumph for the cause of the

³⁴Chase, *Presidential Nominating Convention*, 60.

³⁵*National Intelligencer*, February 16, 1824.

people and ran an obituary for "his Satanick Majesty King Caucus," who died February 6 "after a lingering complaint." Efforts to resuscitate and raise him from the grave, the paper predicted, would occur on the 14th.³⁶ In response, the *Register* derided the "ridiculous obituary notice" and dismissed the sparse participation by pointing out that the congressional caucuses that recommended James Madison in 1808 and James Monroe in 1816 had consisted of only eighty-three and sixty-five participants, respectively. Later, the *Register* charged that those against the congressional caucus had opposed Jefferson and sought to take advantage of the "impolitic divisions" in the Republican party and probably held Federalist leanings.³⁷

The reaction to the congressional caucus in North Carolina varied. Some observers viewed it as irrelevant, though others fretted that Albert Gallatin weakened the ticket. In other parts of the state some not only disapproved of the caucus but also praised representatives who did not attend.³⁸ Crawford supporters held to the notion that those clamoring for Calhoun and Jackson in the state were largely misinformed, whereas those who favored Crawford were generally men of influence and standing. They generally thought that once members of Congress returned from Washington and explained their reasons for attending the caucus through the "proper circulars," the people

³⁶*Star and North Carolina State Gazette* (Raleigh), February 13, 1824.

³⁷*Raleigh Register*, February 20, May 7, 1824.

³⁸James Mebane to Willie P. Mangum, February 29, 1824; John F. Brevard to Willie P. Mangum, March 10, 1824, both in Shanks, ed., *Mangum Papers*, 1:122-23.

would accept the caucus nomination.³⁹

Five of the nine North Carolina representatives who attended the Washington caucus publicly addressed their constituents in defense of the congressional caucus. Romulus M. Saunders, for instance, contended that sanctioning the recommendation of a caucus was better for the people than voting for a scattering of candidates and having the election decided in the U.S. House.⁴⁰ He warned that sectional interests would influence an election in the House; therefore, the people should endorse the congressional caucus. Saunders also maintained that those who opposed the caucus did so, not out of principle, but out of the knowledge that the meeting would not have nominated their favorite. He urged his constituents to "unite upon the candidate least objectionable, and most likely to concentrate in his favor a general support" and thereby prevent an election in the House.⁴¹

Other defenders of the caucus and Crawford emphasized that the congressional caucus had been in use for twenty-four years and was at most an expression of opinion that was not binding on the people and therefore did not deprive them of their rights. The goals of the caucus, they contended, were to unite public sentiment, preserve harmony within the Republican party, and avoid the House deciding the election. Crawfordites

³⁹William Robards to Unknown, March 17, 1824, Hutchins G. Burton Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill; Romulus M. Saunders to Bartlett Yancey, March 30, 1824, in Newsome, ed., "Letters of Saunders to Yancey," *North Carolina Historical Review* 8 (1931): 444-45.

⁴⁰Romulus M. Saunders to his constituents, extract, *Enquirer*, April 8, 1823.

⁴¹Romulus M. Saunders, "To the Freemen of Stokes, Guilford, Rockingham, and Caswell," June 27, 1824, in Noble E. Cunningham, ed., *Circular Letters of Congressmen to Their Constituents, 1789-1829* (3 vols., Chapel Hill, 1978), 3:1241-1243.

avowed that the treasury secretary was honest and honorable and would impose a strict economy on the government and would accelerate payment of the public debt.

Furthermore, they asserted, Crawford's views on tariff protection and government supported internal improvements were compatible with the South's interests and he would govern by the original principles set forth in the Constitution. Finally, they opined that opposition to the secretary of the treasury resulted from the intrigue of his enemies.⁴²

Not every representative, however, met with success advocating the necessity of the congressional caucus and promoting Crawford's candidacy. For example, John Long, Jr., sent circular letters to county grand jury meetings in his district explaining his reasons for having attended the caucus. Long declared that he supported Crawford because the other candidates supported internal improvements and the tariff. Furthermore, Long warned that if the election went to the House, the election would present "a fearful scene of cabal" where votes would be "bargained away" and the majority would lose their influence because the less populous states would have as much weight in the election as the larger states. Rowan County grand jury members responded that although they supported a judicious revision of the tariff, as Crawford apparently had in his last annual report to Congress, they would not presume to nominate or approve presidential candidates.⁴³

⁴²Richard Dobbs Spaight, Jr., "To the Freemen of the Counties of Carteret, Craven, Jones, Lenoir, Greene, Wayne, and Johnston," June 21, 1824, in *ibid.*, 3:1257; Alfred M. Gatlin, [circular letter], April 30, 1824, in *ibid.*, 3:1204–1206; *Raleigh Register*, August 13, 1824.

⁴³*Star and North Carolina State Gazette* (Raleigh), April 30, 1824; John Long, Jr., "To the Citizens of the Tenth Congressional District, composed of the counties of

Long met with similar embarrassment in Davidson County, where the grand jury regretted that members of Congress would “combine to influence an election that peculiarly belongs to the people,” rather than confine themselves to the duties marked out by the Constitution. The grand jury professed esteem for Crawford but declared that it could not support a man recommended by a congressional caucus. The election of a chief magistrate belonged to the people, the jurors emphasized, and Jackson was the favorite of the people.⁴⁴

Crawfordites had hoped to generate support for their candidate by caucuses in the state legislatures and in Congress. It is ironic that the means they viewed as a unifying factor in the multi-candidate race served only to coalesce the opposition in North Carolina and hand them a ready-made rallying cry. Those opposed to Crawford, be they for Adams, Calhoun, Clay, or Jackson, seized on the caucus as an issue illustrative of the intrigue and corruption in government.

The invitation to “the friends of Crawford” to meet in the so-called “Raleigh Caucus” to designate an electoral ticket galvanized Crawford opponents. Though they were split on whom to support, Adams, Calhoun, or Jackson (Clay had little if any support in the state), they agreed upon the necessity to reach an understanding. With Calhoun partisans such as Charles Fisher leading the way, the anti-Crawford amalgam organized a “People’s ticket.” In the initial phases of its organization the People’s ticket was to have a

Chatham, Randolph, Davidson, and Rowan,” May 15, 1824, in Cunningham, ed., *Circular Letters*, 3:1210–1211.

⁴⁴*Star and North Carolina State Gazette* (Raleigh), May 7, 1824.

majority of Calhoun men, followed by Jackson supporters and perhaps one elector friendly to Adams. To garner the endorsement of the Jackson partisans, the Calhounites made it clear to them that should Calhoun withdraw, they would back Jackson.⁴⁵

From its inception, the People's ticket was a Calhoun vehicle, though his supporters took pains to present it as a spontaneous popular movement.⁴⁶ The formation of the ticket began in early January, when a meeting in Washington, Beaufort County, nominated William A. Blount as an elector pledged to Calhoun. Meetings in other counties quickly followed and designated other candidates committed to the most popular anti-caucus candidate for slots on the ticket. The *Star* pointed out that a minority of the legislature had designated the so-called "caucus ticket" cloaked with "the robe of office that gives effect to their nomination, and enables them to usurp an undue influence over the minds of their fellow citizens" and deprive them of their rights.⁴⁷ Thomas G. Polk, a member of the legislature from Mecklenburg County, echoed this theme and argued that the "Raleigh caucus" had violated the spirit of the Constitution and was an attempt to rob the people of their right to choose a president. He further warned that if the congressional caucus acquired the power to select a president, the executive branch would "become the passive agent of Congress."⁴⁸

⁴⁵[Charles Fisher] to Joe Carson, January 6, 1823 [1824], Fisher Family Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

⁴⁶Newsome, *Presidential Election of 1824*, 83–86.

⁴⁷*Star and North Carolina State Gazette* (Raleigh), January 16, 23, 30, 1824.

⁴⁸*Ibid.*, February 6, 1824.

Crawford partisans feared that the use of public meetings to generate enthusiasm for the People's ticket gave their opponents an advantage in the presidential contest.⁴⁹ Some Calhounites, however, expressed mixed feelings about the public meetings as a means to construct the People's ticket. Meanwhile B. B. Smith, Raleigh postmaster, encouraged Charles Fisher to publicize the People's ticket via weekly articles in the newspapers announcing the addition of new electors until the ticket was complete. Even though he admitted that the meetings, such as the one in Washington, North Carolina, "had a wonderful effect," Smith cautioned against an over reliance on such gatherings. He feared that if the movement were started in earnest, other candidates, such as Jackson and Crawford, might garner too many recommendations. Smith also voiced concern over Jackson's growing popularity and the confidence of Old Hickory's supporters "who seem to be *intoxicated with military glory*," so much so that they might move to form an independent ticket.⁵⁰

As the anti-caucus ticket began to take shape, Calhoun devotees and Jackson men eyed each other warily. Charles Fisher warned the Jacksonians that Crawford partisans were encouraging the friends of Jackson to form a separate electoral ticket, with the view to divide the opposition. Fisher urged William Polk, a leading Jacksonian, to discourage

⁴⁹Romulus M. Saunders to Bartlett Yancey, January 20, 1824, in Newsome, ed., "Letters of Saunders to Yancey," *North Carolina Historical Review* 8 (1931): 442-43.

⁵⁰B. B. Smith to Charles Fisher, January 24, 1824, Fisher Family Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. See also Albert R. Newsome, ed., "Correspondence of John C. Calhoun, George McDuffie, and Charles Fisher relating to the Presidential Campaign of 1824," *North Carolina Historical Review* 7 (1930): 499-501.

any movement for an independent Jackson ticket and pointed out that the union of the Calhoun and Jackson forces kept the state from being yoked with Crawford.⁵¹ While Calhounites urged unity with the Jackson men, some Jacksonians still desired a separate ticket and looked with suspicion on the claims of the friends of Calhoun to be able to control the votes of the fusion ticket.⁵² Jackson's partisans knew that Old Hickory's fame made him the favorite of the people and that although Calhoun could claim South Carolina, he was too weak to draw much support in other states. One Jacksonian confidently predicted that Jackson could get more votes in North Carolina than Crawford and Calhoun combined.⁵³ Jackson backers thought their favorite had the support of a majority of the people in North Carolina, including the "talking class of people" and the "more common and illiterate class of the community" who, though they were not well acquainted with the character and qualifications of the various candidates, remembered Jackson's military exploits.⁵⁴

"A Friend to Jackson" warned in the *Western Carolinian* that renewed efforts by Crawfordites to encourage a separate Jackson ticket threatened the anti-caucus cause. "Friend" urged unity against the caucus and pointed out that Jackson and Calhoun's

⁵¹Charles Fisher to William Polk, February 3, 1824, William Polk Papers, North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh.

⁵²Archibald D. Murphey to William Polk, February 27, 1824, in W. H. Hoyt, ed., *The Papers of Archibald D. Murphey* (2 vols., Raleigh, 1914), 1:291-93.

⁵³Archibald D. Murphey to William Polk, February 7, 1824, in *ibid.*, 1:289-90.

⁵⁴Thomas Jefferson Green to William Polk, February 2, 1824, William Polk Papers, North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh.

friends in Pennsylvania were acting together on the anti-caucus principle and were “opposed to Caucusing, Radicalism, and to William H. Crawford.”⁵⁵ Yet Jackson’s surprising strength in Pennsylvania forced Calhoun’s withdrawal from the presidential race and he had to content himself with the prospects of the vice presidency. Calhoun admitted that the shifting situation in Pennsylvania was unexpected and attributed it to Jackson’s popularity with “the mass of the community.” He denied rumors of a coalition between himself and Jackson and encouraged his friends to act with caution, for he still viewed the presidential race as crucial for the nation and wanted to keep his options open.⁵⁶

Alleging that Calhoun had considerable support in Pennsylvania, the *Star* lamented that he had been abandoned at the February 18 meeting in Philadelphia. The newspaper insisted that Calhoun’s friends should have at least waited until the March 4 convention in Harrisburg, before declaring for Jackson. The editors, while still maintaining that Calhoun was qualified for the presidency, voiced their admiration for Jackson and repeated that they would support principles over men. Moreover, they warned Crawfordites not to exult too much.⁵⁷ The *Register* declared that Calhoun’s withdrawal was an expected result of the congressional nomination and speculated that other candidates would soon withdraw as well.⁵⁸

⁵⁵*Star and North Carolina State Gazette* (Raleigh), February 27, 1824.

⁵⁶John C. Calhoun to John P. Kennedy, March 20, 1824, in Meriwether et al., eds., *Calhoun Papers*, 8:596–97; John C. Calhoun to Jedidiah Morse, April 15, 1824, in *ibid.*, 9:34.

⁵⁷*Star and North Carolina State Gazette* (Raleigh), March 5, 1824.

⁵⁸*Raleigh Register*, March 5, 1824.

Not all of Calhoun's supporters in North Carolina moved into the Jackson camp. Several Calhoun backers in Lincoln County, for example, favored Crawford; but elsewhere in the state Jackson's strength continued to broaden. At times personal factors came into play. Monfort Stokes, a candidate for elector on the People's ticket, actually preferred Crawford, next to Calhoun, but declared that he would rather be damned than go to heaven with some of Crawford's friends. Thus he would endorse Jackson as the people's choice.⁵⁹ William A. Blount, the first elector nominated for the People's ticket and a Calhoun partisan, also reluctantly supported Jackson.⁶⁰ The People's ticket started by the Calhoun men still retained its anti-caucus focus and merely shifted its support to Jackson. The first nine electoral candidates were pro-Calhoun, but Jackson men filled the remaining six slots. The People's ticket was completed in late April and formally published in the *Western Carolinian* on May 11.⁶¹

The *Star* trumpeted the People's ticket as representative of the people's will. The *Register*, however, attacked the legitimacy of the People's ticket and asserted that it had been "formed by a gratuitous assumption of power by a few unauthorized individuals," while its rival the Crawford ticket had been publicly formed by the representatives of the people. Furthermore, the *Register* contended that a nomination by the legislature was akin to a recommendation by the people themselves, while the so-called People's ticket was not

⁵⁹Priestly H. Mangum to Willie P. Mangum, April 15, 1824, in Shanks, ed., *Mangum Papers*, 1:134-35.

⁶⁰William A. Blount to William Polk, June 13, 1824, William Polk Papers, North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh.

⁶¹Newsome, *Presidential Election of 1824*, 99.

yet pledged to any particular candidate.⁶² Though Adams partisans held meetings in support of their favorite, the anti-Crawford press emphasized unity in its attacks on Crawford and the caucus. The *Western Carolinian*, for example, reminded its readers that “those who agree in Principle should never differ about Men,” and that the primary focus was to defeat the caucus and protect the people’s rights. The *Elizabeth City Star* announced that it favored the election of Adams, because he was more qualified than Jackson, but acknowledged that it would back Jackson as the candidate most likely to defeat Crawford.⁶³

The emergence of Jackson as a popular and viable candidate concerned many of Crawford’s supporters in North Carolina. Some of them, however, viewed it as a temporary phenomenon that would soon be replaced by “sober reason and reflection,” since Crawford was the only man who could save the nation from bankruptcy and bring the nation back to the “good old Republican doctrines of 98.”⁶⁴ Other Crawford men thought that Jackson’s appeal would fade as more people became aware of his moral character.⁶⁵ Lewis Williams feared that Old Hickory was a genuine threat to the nation and if he were elected, the nation would face certain ruin and the prospect of despotism. Williams warned that the country would be drawn into war, forced into debt and taxes “all

⁶²*Raleigh Register*, April 23, 1824.

⁶³Reported in the *Star and North Carolina State Gazette*, April 30, 1824.

⁶⁴William Robards to Unknown, March 17, 1824, Hutchins G. Burton Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

⁶⁵Michael Holt to Willie P. Mangum, [March 23, 1824], in Shanks, ed., *Mangum Papers*, 1:129–30.

because Jackson won the battle at New Orleans.”⁶⁶

Meanwhile public meetings generated support for the People’s ticket. Militia musters, grand jury meetings, and other gatherings, such as public sales, publicized the ticket and built commitment to the anti-caucus cause. Of the seventy meetings reported in the *Star* between January and October, four of them were generally anti-caucus gatherings in favor of the People’s ticket, one nominated Calhoun, fifty-nine expressed support for Jackson, and six recommended Adams. The *Register* noted seven meetings in the same period, all of which supported Crawford for the presidency.⁶⁷

The public meetings generally adopted resolutions against the congressional and legislative caucuses as undemocratic, unconstitutional, and a violation of the rights of the people.⁶⁸ For example, a meeting in Wake County, April 2, declared that caucuses held by “individuals clothed with the body of official power, to restrain the free and unbiased exercise of public opinion should be viewed with distrust, and discountenanced as incompatible with the genius and spirit of our republican institutions.”⁶⁹ Other gatherings urged support for the People’s ticket and warned that the victory of the caucus ticket

⁶⁶Lewis Williams to Newton Cannon, March 13, 1824, quoted in Noble E. Cunningham, Jr., *The Presidency of James Monroe* (Lawrence, Kans., 1996), 169–70.

⁶⁷The first reported public meeting occurred in January and others took place throughout the year up to early October. Only meetings with a reported date and location were considered in this tabulation. The *Star* and *Register* reported other gatherings but did not include much detail beyond the fact that a particular meeting supported one of the candidates. For a list of the meetings surveyed see Appendix I.

⁶⁸*Star and North Carolina State Gazette* (Raleigh), March 5, 12, 26, 1824.

⁶⁹*Ibid.*, April 9, 1824.

“would indicate a prevalence of political intrigue derogatory to the character of a free people,” usurp the rights of the people, and subvert the Constitution.⁷⁰ The bulk of the meetings reported by the *Star* throughout 1824 were militia musters in which Jackson frequently received a majority, though Crawford and Adams garnered support as well. Responding to the constant reports of Jackson’s popularity, the *Register* maintained that there was need for unity among Republicans or else the election would go to the House, “where an ample field will be opened for bargain and corruption.”⁷¹ Later, the paper dismissed Jackson as unqualified for the presidency and disparaged the “few petty musters” that supported him.⁷²

As the election drew closer the *Register* and the *Star* engaged in charges and counter charges about the validity of the vote totals rendered at these meetings and musters. While the *Star* admitted that many of the votes “cannot be legally received” at the upcoming presidential election, it insisted that they demonstrated Jackson’s popularity and support among the people.⁷³ One Crawfordite complained that it seemed hopeless at times to counter enthusiasm for Jackson, because at almost every muster “the drums were beating and the fifes whistling for the hero of New Orleans. The officers would treat their

⁷⁰*Ibid.*, July 2, October 8, 1824.

⁷¹*Raleigh Register*, July 23, 1824.

⁷²*Ibid.*, August 6, 1824.

⁷³*Star and North Carolina State Gazette* (Raleigh), October 1, September 24, 1824.

men, make them drunk and then raise the war whoop for General Jackson.”⁷⁴

Advocates of constitutional reform in North Carolina had been active in the early 1820s and had also used public meetings to express their sentiments in 1822 and 1823. Agitation for a constitutional convention died down, however, after December 1823 as the presidential contest took center stage. During 1824 a few public meetings discussed the proposed tariff bill and adopted resolutions expressing opposition to the tariff as inexpedient, unjust, and unfair.⁷⁵ For example, a meeting in Wake County contended that the tariff would damage agricultural interests in the South and restrict commerce, hurt revenue, and force a direct tax on lands.⁷⁶ These tariff meetings did not address the presidential election and did not directly link the two issues, but the press mentioned the candidates’ perceived positions on the tariff. Whereas Crawford’s friends usually portrayed Jackson as favorable to the tariff, Jackson’s friends pointed out that he favored a “judicious examination and revision of the tariff.”⁷⁷

The presidential contest emerged as a minor issue in the August state elections in North Carolina. A correspondent to the *Western Carolinian* warned that a scheme was in operation to bring a majority of Crawford supporters into the legislature. Since the presidential election would probably go to the United States House, the state’s

⁷⁴Robert Williamson to Bartlett Yancey, July 26, 1824, in Hamilton, ed., “Letters to Bartlett Yancey,” *James Sprunt Historical Publications* 10 (1911): 45–46.

⁷⁵*Star and North Carolina State Gazette* (Raleigh), March 5, 1824.

⁷⁶*Ibid.*, April 9, 1824.

⁷⁷*Raleigh Register*, July 30, 1824; *Star and North Carolina State Gazette* (Raleigh), May 14, 1824.

congressional delegation might use a pro-Crawford state legislature as an excuse to back him over the wishes of the people. Thus the people ought to vote carefully in the state election and "know explicitly the sentiments of every candidate, on this subject, before they vote."⁷⁸

As mock votes for the various candidates had been held since early spring, one writer to the *Star* inquired if polls might also be held during the state elections to test the strength of the different candidates. The *Star* later reported the results of this informal experiment and noted that Jackson or Adams defeated Crawford in the five counties for which they had information.⁷⁹ The *Register* countered that it disliked the practice of collecting opinion all over the state, introduced by the friends of Jackson, and further noted that it misrepresented public opinion. The *Register* also contended that during the election for the state assembly unauthorized persons held the boxes for the presidential straw poll and only accepted Jackson votes, therefore Crawford's friends paid little attention to these polls.⁸⁰

Throughout 1824 opponents of Crawford and the congressional caucus consistently addressed the themes of intrigue, corruption, and usurpation of the people's rights. "A Warning Voice" cautioned the readers of the *Star* about the danger posed by the caucus to the liberty of the people and the potential for the corruption of members of

⁷⁸*Star and North Carolina State Gazette* (Raleigh), August 6, 1824.

⁷⁹*Ibid.*, August 20, 27, 1824. Jackson won this informal poll in Wake, Hertford, and Rowan Counties; Adams placed first in Robeson and Richmond Counties. Crawford place third in these polls with a few votes going to Calhoun, Clay, and DeWitt Clinton.

⁸⁰*Raleigh Register*, August 27, 1824.

Congress. "Warning Voice" also urged unity against the caucus candidate and warned North Carolinians that efforts were underway to split the People's ticket by encouraging the Adams men to put forth their own electoral ticket. As the time for the presidential election approached, these cautions intensified. The editors of the *Star* and the *Western Carolinian* urged that adherents to the People's ticket place measures above men and focus on the defeat of the caucus and Crawford.⁸¹

The *Register* gleefully reported any dissension in the opposition camp and argued that the People's ticket was a sham designed to delude the people into thinking that Adams and Jackson were equally represented. The *Register* pointed out that the electors had not publicly expressed their preferences and intentions regarding the presidential election. Thus the People's ticket was based on misrepresentation and presented a situation ripe for intrigue, since Adams supporters were encouraged to join a Jackson ticket under an anti-caucus guise.⁸²

In an effort to prevent a rift between the Adams and Jackson camps, "Union" proposed to the editors of the *Star* that voters supporting the People's ticket mark their ballots in the November election either for Jackson or Adams. The sheriffs or other officials could then "proclaim the distinctive character of each ballot" so that the electors on the ticket could support the strongest candidate against Crawford. "Union" explained that this procedure would have the benefit of separate tickets but would also unite them

⁸¹*Star and North Carolina State Gazette* (Raleigh), July 23, September 3, 1823.

⁸²*Raleigh Register*, September 3, 10, 24, 1824.

against the caucus.⁸³ In October advocates of Jackson and Calhoun urged Adams men to endorse the People's ticket and told them that their favorite could not carry the state. Furthermore, a separate Adams ticket would only give the state to Crawford. Again, the cries of intrigue and management rang out against the Crawfordites. "A Free Man" charged in the *Star* that Crawford and his supporters had intrigued for eight years to get him into the presidency and that the congressional caucus was but one part of that conspiracy.⁸⁴ Throughout October many candidates on the People's ticket publicly announced their intentions to support Jackson as the strongest anti-caucus candidate and thereby answered the Crawfordites' protests that the ticket was unpledged.⁸⁵

The *Register* continued to attack the legitimacy of the People's ticket, dubbed the "mongrel ticket" by some, and noted that the withdrawal of Albert Gallatin from the contest would strengthen the Crawford ticket, since many of Crawford's friends objected to Gallatin. Though the Crawford committee did not announce a replacement for the vice presidential slot, they assured voters that such a person would undoubtedly be someone worthy of the Republicans' confidence. The name of Nathaniel Macon was bandied about in the hopes of bolstering Crawford's hopes, but the *Star* declared that "we hold Mr. M[acon]'s character in too high estimation to suppose that he would permit himself to be made a tool, for the purpose of electioneering."⁸⁶

⁸³*Star and North Carolina State Gazette* (Raleigh), September 10, 1824.

⁸⁴*Ibid.*, October 1, 8, 1824.

⁸⁵*Ibid.*, October 8, 15, 22, 29, 1824.

⁸⁶*Ibid.*, October 29, 1824.

Before the election, the partisans of both tickets in North Carolina urged their supporters to the polls and portrayed the contest as one of principle. Advocates of the People's ticket proclaimed that the sovereignty and liberty of the people were at stake, while Crawford's supporters argued that a vote for Jackson was a vote for the tariff. The Crawford central committee's pre-election address hailed its candidate's background and record of public service and contended that he would administer the government with prudence and economy.⁸⁷ The *Register* made one more attempt to sow disunity among the anti-Crawford forces. The newspapers informed Adams supporters that they ought to back Crawford and implied that if he did not make it into the House, then Adams's friends "would have a claim" on Crawford's partisans.⁸⁸

The congressional caucus as an issue did not generate as much excitement in Virginia. Crawfordites dominated the state and the supporters of the other candidates failed to combine their efforts to question the legitimacy of the caucus and portray their favorites as the choice of the people. The *Enquirer* had discussed the caucus issue throughout 1823 and asserted repeatedly that a congressional caucus was the lesser evil, when compared with a presidential election in the House of Representatives. In March 1823, the paper called for proposals for a more suitable means to narrow the number of presidential candidates. In the House, so the *Enquirer* warned, small states would have

⁸⁷*Raleigh Register*, October 22, 1824.

⁸⁸*Star and North Carolina State Gazette* (Raleigh), October 29, 1824; *Raleigh Register* November 5, 1824.

equal weight with large states, thereby possibly defeating the will of the majority.⁸⁹

To emphasize the dangers inherent in a House election, the *Enquirer* held up the election of 1800, in which thirty-six ballots were needed to establish a victor, as an example of the political intrigue that would result from an election in the House. What, asked the newspaper, would be the result of an election with three candidates, each supported by "anxious partisans to press their pretensions to the last extremity?" Not everyone accepted the *Enquirer's* warning of the hazards of an election in the House. For example, "A Farmer" commented in the *Enquirer* that it was better for Virginia to throw away its vote on a good candidate, like Nathaniel Macon in support of republican principles, rather than "truckling to a triumphant candidate." The *Enquirer* replied that it supported Crawford as the "best man we can get, not the best man in the nation . . . he has sinned less than his competitors, and may serve us better."⁹⁰ Other papers, such as the *Petersburg Republican*, also endorsed the congressional caucus as necessary to maintain unity of the Republican party.⁹¹

In August 1823 the *Virginian* picked up the caucus question and argued that Crawford's friends, including the *Enquirer*, supported the congressional caucus, because it represented the treasury secretary's only chance. The *Virginian* agreed that an election in the House was an evil that ought to be avoided, but pointed out that the situation of 1801 did not apply to this election. There was no Aaron Burr. Although the *Virginian* did not

⁸⁹*Richmond Enquirer*, March 28, August 8, December 18, 1823.

⁹⁰*Ibid.*, July 1, 4, 1823.

⁹¹*Ibid.*, August 26, 1823.

initially condemn the congressional caucus in mid-1823, later in the year it shifted its sentiments against the caucus.⁹² A congressional caucus was useful when it united the party, declared the *Virginian*, but in this presidential contest, it would only make divisions worse, because the disappointed factions would deliberately seek to push the election into the House. By December 1823, the *Virginian* condemned the caucus as “that political monster—that antipode of republicanism.”⁹³ The anti-caucus rhetoric of the Crawford opposition focused on protecting the people’s rights from conniving politicians. Some Crawford partisans, however, countered that those who opposed the caucus did so in a deliberate attempt to force the election into the House in order to bolster the prospects of the other candidates. This course of action, Crawfordites protested, would take away the rights of the people and defeat the will of the majority.⁹⁴

By February 1824, the *Virginian* had taken up Adams as its favorite and asserted that the congressional caucus was unconstitutional and a usurpation of power.⁹⁵ The *Enquirer* put the situation in equally blunt terms but contended that the people must choose between unity via the congressional caucus or else disunion. An election in the House, argued the *Enquirer*, would be decided by a minority of the nation and possibly be the scene of cabal and intrigue. The paper warned that sectional parties would divide the

⁹²*Virginian* (Lynchburg), August 12, 27, October 31, 1823.

⁹³*Ibid.*, November 7, December 19, 1823.

⁹⁴David Campbell to James Campbell, January 27, 1824, Campbell Family Papers, Duke University.

⁹⁵*Virginian* (Lynchburg), February 6, 1824.

country and the next administration would be "surrounded in all probability by hosts of enemies."⁹⁶

After the congressional caucus, the *Enquirer* asserted that, despite the poor turnout, at least ninety-three members of Congress backed Crawford, a figure higher than any other candidate likely had. The *Enquirer* also began to take more notice of Jackson's candidacy and declared that though it respected the Hero, it preferred Crawford, because he possessed more experience as a statesman.⁹⁷ Virginia's congressional delegation, unlike the North Carolina representatives, did not feel pressed to defend their attendance at the caucus. Yet Representative George Tucker did issue a circular letter to his constituents stating his reason for attending. According to him, the number of candidates made it likely that the election would go to the House, where small states would have equal weight with large states. That situation, Tucker complained, was "repugnant to the great republican principle that a majority should govern [and] so favorable to corruption and intrigue." Thus a congressional caucus had been necessary to recommend a candidate to the people.⁹⁸

Following the congressional caucus, Crawford supporters in the Virginia General Assembly moved to second the nomination and invited members to a meeting on February 21 to consider the presidential question. The *Virginian* reported that the original

⁹⁶*Richmond Enquirer*, February 12, 1824.

⁹⁷*Ibid.*, February 21, 1824.

⁹⁸George Tucker, "To the Freeholders of the Counties of Campbell, Pittsylvania and Halifax," June 9, 1824, in Cunningham, ed., *Circular Letters*, 3:1246-47.

invitation had been confined to the friends of Crawford but was later changed to include "all interested members."⁹⁹ One hundred fifty-four members attended the legislative caucus and nine were represented by proxy, for a total of 163. Speaker of the House of Delegates Linn Banks chaired the meeting and declared that those assembled were obligated to the country and to their "republican brethren throughout the Union" to articulate the necessity of conciliation and harmony via a caucus nomination. Some of the delegates present, such as Arthur Lee and Robert Mallory, insisted that while they favored Crawford, they were willing to sacrifice their preferences to support the will of the majority.¹⁰⁰

In the resulting vote Crawford garnered an overwhelming majority with 139 votes, followed at a great distance by Adams with seven, Jackson and Macon with six each, and Clay with five votes. Those legislators who attended, however, disagreed about voting for a vice-presidential nominee. The nomination by the congressional caucus of Albert Gallatin to the vice presidency did not go over well in Virginia and, according to some, detracted from the ticket.¹⁰¹ Even though John Tyler pleaded in behalf of the ticket named at Washington, others, such as Chapman Johnson, thought it best to leave the choice of a vice president to the discretion of the electors. After some discussion, however, the attendees at the February gathering resolved to take a vote and gave Gallatin the majority

⁹⁹*Virginian* (Lynchburg), March 2, 1824.

¹⁰⁰*Richmond Enquirer*, February 24, 1824.

¹⁰¹J. B. Mower to James Barron, March 20, 1824, Barron Family Papers, Library of Virginia, Richmond.

with 130 votes; Nathaniel Macon received thirty-one votes, whereas Langdon Cheves secured ten. The meeting then adjourned to reconvene four days later on February 25. In the second session, those who had been absent from the first cast their ballots, with the result that Crawford garnered twelve additional votes, Adams received three, and Clay picked up one. Those assembled then nominated a slate of electors and appointed a central corresponding committee.¹⁰²

The Richmond *Constitutional Whig* commented on the spirit of harmony at the legislative caucus and the editors declared that, while they preferred Adams to Crawford, they did not want to see the discord and division that distracted other states. The paper did remark, however, that though Crawford had the support of Virginia, he was not the second choice of any other state. Thus Virginia would throw away its vote by supporting him and indirectly elect Jackson or Calhoun “with his high-handed federalism,” or even Clay whose policies opposed Virginia’s interests and feelings. Therefore, the *Constitutional Whig* concluded, Adams was the best choice.¹⁰³

Calhoun’s withdrawal from the contest did not shake up the race in Virginia as it did in North Carolina, for he was never a viable contender in the Old Dominion. His removal from the race, however, did influence the dynamics of the contest. Having never taken Old Hickory very seriously as a presidential contender, the *Enquirer* now directed its attention toward him and announced that “a crisis has arrived in this contest.” After the Harrisburg convention’s recommendation of Jackson on March 4, Thomas Ritchie

¹⁰²*Richmond Enquirer*, February 26, 1824.

¹⁰³*Constitutional Whig* (Richmond), February 24, 1824.

admitted he now had a strong sense of duty to examine Jackson's pretensions to the presidency. The *Enquirer* began a series of essays in March on Jackson's qualifications for office and focused on his temper and his inexperience in civil office. The newspaper continued to emphasize Jackson's rash temper and his disregard for the constraints of law, such as his violation of his Florida instructions in 1818.¹⁰⁴

The *Virginian* took a more conciliatory approach toward Jackson at first but conceded that he was not its first choice. In an effort to appeal to Jackson partisans, the paper took pains to point out to its readers that Adams, as secretary of state, had defended Jackson's excursion into Florida, while Crawford and Clay had assailed him.¹⁰⁵ After Calhoun's prospects evaporated following the Harrisburg convention, the *Virginian* noted that the contest had settled down to Adams, Crawford, and Jackson. It predicted that the election seemed destined to go into the House, a prospect that Crawford's partisans had openly dreaded as the worst of evils. Since Crawford could not win in the House, the *Virginian* reasoned, the state ought to vote for either Adams or Jackson. Regarding the contest between these two men, the newspaper declared that the "civilian" should be placed before the "warrior."¹⁰⁶ The *Virginian*, however, criticized Jackson more harshly as his strength became more apparent. The paper expressed astonishment at Pennsylvania's support for the general and observed that he was not a statesman and that

¹⁰⁴*Richmond Enquirer*, March 2, 6, 19, 1824.

¹⁰⁵*Virginian* (Lynchburg), March 5, 1824.

¹⁰⁶*Ibid.*, March 12, 1824.

his only claim to fame was his military accomplishments.¹⁰⁷

Opponents of Crawford's election in Virginia did not mobilize as successfully as they did in North Carolina, largely because the partisans of Adams, Clay, and Jackson refused to cooperate and instead formed three separate electoral tickets. This lack of unity among Crawford's detractors in Virginia practically guaranteed the state to Crawford. On March 8, Clay's devotees moved first at a small meeting of legislators and named an electoral ticket, headed by Francis T. Brooke. Those present urged support for Clay because of his record of public service; moreover, they pointed out that he was a native Virginian and had "imbibed our principles." Clay's endorsement of internal improvements and the tariff was objectionable, they acknowledged, but at least he had honestly and openly declared his opinions on the issues of the day, while the other candidates had not. Furthermore, Clay adherents asserted, his views mirrored those of his constituents and demonstrated his integrity and fidelity to the people he represented.¹⁰⁸ The *Enquirer* remarked that, while it had anticipated Jackson's nomination in Pennsylvania, it did not expect Clay's in Virginia. He had no chance in the state. The newspapers later commented that the Clay meeting was not held by public notice or even held in public and that only about seven members of the legislature had actually attended.¹⁰⁹

Adams supporters held a meeting in Fredericksburg on March 13 and resolved to

¹⁰⁷Ibid., March 19, 30, 1824.

¹⁰⁸Ibid., March 16, 1824.

¹⁰⁹*Richmond Enquirer*, March 12, 19, 1824.

back Adams for the presidency and Jackson for the vice presidential slot. This gathering recommended Adams, based on his thirty-year record of public service, his patriotism, talents, and integrity. It warned that legislative caucuses were fraught with evils and were beyond the duties of the legislators. The Adams men declared that legislators' prerogatives did not include the power to designate presidential candidates; moreover their station as state legislators belied their claims of acting as private citizens. Besides, the Adams meeting argued, legislative caucuses "beget an indifference and contempt for the most valuable political rights and privileges" of the people.¹¹⁰ Other pro-Adams conclaves took up the same line of attack. For example, a gathering in Norfolk, on March 29, endorsed Adams for president and Jackson for vice president and asserted that the congressional caucus had originated to concentrate the strength of the Republicans, *vis-à-vis* the Federalists, but was no longer necessary. Thus it was an usurpation of power and an attempt to dictate to the people. The ticket recommended by the state legislature, declared the Norfolk participants, was not the choice of the people.¹¹¹

Adams partisans did not efficiently organize their electoral ticket, not completing it until September. The *Virginian* reported in mid-August that the ticket was still being devised. The newspaper explained that it could have been arranged much earlier, had the fifteen-member committee at Fredericksburg simply appointed electors. But the Adams men preferred to receive nominations "where practical" from public meetings. In late September the Adams committee announced the completion of the "People's ticket," but

¹¹⁰Ibid., April 13, 1824.

¹¹¹Ibid., April 2, 1824.

sidestepped the nomination of a vice-presidential candidate by declaring that the electors favored "some tried and true patriot" for vice president.¹¹² A small majority of the central committee favored Jackson for the vice presidency, but the committee decided to leave the designation of a suitable candidate to the discretion of the electors. The committee's address claimed that spontaneous meetings throughout most of the state had formed the ticket; thus it was, in fact, a true people's ticket.¹¹³

Jackson enthusiasts in Fredericksburg convened on March 17 and proclaimed their opposition to the caucuses at Washington and Richmond, approved the nomination of the Harrisburg convention, and proposed the formation of a Jackson electoral ticket.¹¹⁴ Likewise Jackson partisans in Winchester, Frederick County, followed suit and issued an address declaring that the people were the foundation of legitimate authority and denounced "any means to defeat the people's will." Furthermore, the Jackson men asserted that the practice of caucusing was an usurpation of power and set a dangerous precedent. They resolved to support Jackson for president and Calhoun for vice president.¹¹⁵

In June, the Fredericksburg Jackson corresponding committee determined to hold a meeting on July 28 to frame their own "people's ticket."¹¹⁶ At that gathering stalwart

¹¹²*Virginian* (Lynchburg), August 13, September 28, 1824.

¹¹³*Richmond Enquirer*, September 28, 1824.

¹¹⁴*Ibid.*, March 23, 1824.

¹¹⁵*Ibid.*, 23, 1824.

¹¹⁶*Ibid.*, June 18, 1824.

Jackson men defeated a resolution to appoint a five-man committee to confer with the Fredericksburg Adams committee and also with those favorable to the election of Clay. The meeting, however, did designate a Jackson electoral ticket and declared its opposition to the congressional caucus and its support for Jackson and Calhoun as opponents "of an enlarged system of national policy." Ironically, though the Jackson convention had refused to confer with the partisans of the other candidates, it urged the friends of Adams and Clay to realize that their favorites could not carry Virginia and that they ought to support Jackson and the principle of a free election.¹¹⁷ Thus the opportunity for the construction of a unified anti-caucus coalition passed and the politics of faction prevailed in Virginia.

The anti-Crawford press in Virginia did not report the sentiments on the presidential contest of every militia muster or gathering of citizens. Instead, the press was more restrained, but there was a degree of sniping between advocates of Crawford and those favorable to Adams or Jackson. Regarding the two different gatherings in Fredericksburg, "A Looker-On" reported to the *Enquirer* that the Adams meeting drew about one hundred participants, composed of men and boys, and that there was no free discussion; the Jackson assembly attracted about the same number of attendees. The *Enquirer's* correspondent dismissed these conclaves as "mere bubbles, which can have no serious effect."¹¹⁸ As other Adams or Jackson meetings were reported around the state,

¹¹⁷Ibid., August 3, 1824.

¹¹⁸Ibid., March 23, 1824.

the *Enquirer* commented that it was not "every swallow [that] makes a summer."¹¹⁹

While the opposition gatherings questioned the legitimacy of the caucus, the *Enquirer* defended the practice as established by long usage and contended that the political situation required the repudiation of personal considerations to insure the public welfare.¹²⁰

The Crawford papers usually dismissed the Adams and Jackson meetings as "all stuff and humbug," but reported any Crawford gatherings with delight. On the other hand, the *Virginian* defended anti-Crawford public meetings as the expression of public sentiments and contended that participation in these gatherings was a matter of duty for concerned citizens. Furthermore, the paper declared, such conclaves could do no harm and the alternative was a passiveness that would lead to the degradation and destruction of the nation.¹²¹

The various public assemblies held by Crawford opponents attacked the caucus and questioned its legitimacy and pointed to the qualifications of their particular favorite.¹²² Assertions by the opposition press of meetings attended by "numerous and respectable" participants caused the *Enquirer* to remark that it did not quarrel with the characterization "respectable" but noted that it lacked evidence "to judge of their

¹¹⁹*Ibid.*, May 11, 1824.

¹²⁰*Ibid.*, June 18, 1824.

¹²¹*Virginian* (Lynchburg), June 15, 1824.

¹²²*Richmond Enquirer*, July 2, August 10, 1824; *Virginian* (Lynchburg), July 6, 1824.

numbers.”¹²³ Reports as to the number of participants varied widely. The *Virginian* mentioned that “hundreds” had attended an August 23 Adams meeting in Bedford County, while a correspondent to the *Enquirer* claimed that he did not count more than forty-nine.¹²⁴

Overall there were not as many reported presidential public meetings in Virginia as in North Carolina. The newspapers examined accounted for forty-one such gatherings throughout 1824. As Virginia’s foremost newspaper, the *Enquirer* provided balanced coverage and reported on meetings for all candidates, while the *Virginian* clearly favored Adams in its coverage. Of the public meetings surveyed, twenty-four supported Adams for the presidency, while thirteen advocated Jackson. One gathering backed Crawford and three endorsed Clay. Crawford supporters apparently felt confident enough regarding the contest and did not need to rely on public meetings to generate momentum for their man. Whereas the anti-Crawford papers in North Carolina trumpeted every militia muster or public gathering to illustrate the opposition to the caucus and support for Calhoun, and later Jackson, the *Virginian* did not provide accounts of militia musters. This situation existed, because this newspaper backed Adams, who was not the sort of candidate to generate widespread support among the militia or the common people.¹²⁵

¹²³*Richmond Enquirer*, September 7, 1824.

¹²⁴*Ibid.*, September 10, 1824.

¹²⁵As with the meetings in North Carolina, only those reported with dates and locations were considered in this tabulation. The newspapers surveyed were the *Richmond Enquirer*, the *Virginian* (Lynchburg), and the *Virginia Herald* of Fredericksburg. Reports of meetings began in March and disappeared by August. For a list of the meetings see Appendix II.

As in North Carolina, state issues, such as agitation for constitutional reform, did not mix in the presidential contest. Reports of pro- or anti-convention meetings did not include references to the presidential question or to the congressional caucus. Throughout 1824 various meetings on the question of reforming Virginia's constitution refrained from commenting on the presidential contest.¹²⁶ "Milo" did warn against calling a state constitutional convention during the "crisis" of the presidential election, because the number of candidates and the likely strife and struggle for power among their friends threatened the stability of the union.¹²⁷

Throughout the campaign, Crawford's supporters dealt with the issue of his health. In June 1824 renewed rumors circulated; the Fredericksburg *Virginia Herald* reported that Crawford had suffered "a severe apoplectic fit" and the *Enquirer* found itself again downplaying reports of a relapse. When allegations spread that the central committee in Richmond no longer considered Crawford a viable candidate, the *Enquirer* published an extract of a letter, dated June 9, from his attending physician in Washington. It insisted that Crawford's condition was good and that in fact he was approaching a state of perfect health.¹²⁸ The *Virginian*, on the other hand, criticized the "gross attempt" to deceive the public as to the true state of his health and reported that Martin Van Buren had traveled to Richmond to consult with the central committee and discuss the selection of a

¹²⁶*Richmond Enquirer*, March 30, April 13, May 28, and August 17, 1824.

¹²⁷*Ibid.*, August 3, 1824.

¹²⁸*Ibid.*, June 1, 15, 1824.

successor.¹²⁹

The Crawford men in Virginia, though concerned about his health, did not make any overt moves to replace him. Rumors indicated that the "Richmond party" had considered Adams, if Crawford had to withdraw, but that they were put off by his opinions concerning internal improvements. Some Crawford men considered Clay, but most remained loyal to the secretary of the treasury.¹³⁰ Many of Crawford's friends did voice their concern over finding a more suitable vice-presidential candidate than Albert Gallatin. A few looked to Clay, although his endorsement of the tariff and the "American System" weakened any support in Virginia.¹³¹ Initially, Gallatin's stature and popularity had made him seem a good choice for vice president. But the opposition worked successfully to taint Gallatin as a devious, self-serving politician.¹³²

Claiborne W. Gooch, co-editor of the *Enquirer*, thought that the Crawfordites should nominate Clay as Crawford's vice-presidential candidate. For if the Kentuckian withdrew from the race entirely, it would probably serve to strengthen Jackson in the West and possibly insure Old Hickory's election. With Clay as vice president, Crawford might

¹²⁹*Virginian* (Lynchburg), June 15, 18, 1824.

¹³⁰Daniel Call to Henry Clay, June 30, 1824, in James Hopkins et al., eds., *The Papers of Henry Clay* (11 vols., Lexington, 1959-92), 3:789-90.

¹³¹Francis T. Brooke to Henry Clay, July 12, 1824, in *ibid.*, 3:793-94.

¹³²Robert P. Hay, "The Pillorying of Albert Gallatin: The Public Response to his 1824 Vice-Presidential Nomination." *Western Pennsylvania Historical Magazine* 65 (1982): 181-202.

also garner some support in the West.¹³³ In mid-October speculation that a movement was underway to place Clay on Crawford's ticket in Virginia continued to circulate.¹³⁴

Gallatin's withdrawal from the Crawford ticket in October caused some anxiety among Crawfordites, because no one had put forth a replacement. Gales and Seaton of the *National Intelligencer* entreated Thomas Ritchie to urge the Crawford central committee at Richmond to decide on a candidate and announce it in the *Enquirer*. They recommended Clay for the slot and observed that his nomination would rally support in several states.¹³⁵ The *Enquirer* published the notice of Gallatin's withdrawal on October 19, claiming that it was a voluntary decision on his part and a noble effort to promote the unity of the Republican cause.¹³⁶ Though Crawford's friends considered various means to garner Clay's support in the probable House election including hinting that he could be vice president, Clay dismissed such overtures. The Kentuckian confided to his friend Charles Hammond that it was his policy to reject such "arrangements or compromises." Furthermore, he emphasized that he would not make a pledge or promise to any man.¹³⁷

As the election drew closer, the *Virginian* cautioned voters against a complacent

¹³³[C. W. Gooch] to Thomas Ritchie, April 24, 1824, Gooch Family Papers, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond.

¹³⁴Francis T. Brooke to Henry Clay, October 15, [1824], in Hopkins et al., eds., *Clay Papers*, 3:867.

¹³⁵Gales and Seaton to Thomas Ritchie, October 17, 1824, Gooch Family Papers, University of Virginia, Charlottesville.

¹³⁶*Richmond Enquirer*, October 19, 1824.

¹³⁷Henry Clay to Charles Hammond, October 25, 1824, in Hopkins et al., eds., *Clay Papers*, 3:870–71.

attitude toward the election and urged them to vote for Adams. If the election went into the House of Representatives, the paper warned, the Virginia delegation might vote for Clay as a second choice and his administration would be one of "rash experiment." The *Virginian* also insisted that no agricultural state could support Clay and that Jackson was not qualified for the presidency; thus the best choice was Adams.¹³⁸ The Crawford central committee moved to counter anti-Crawford sentiment by declaring that the preservation of the federal government was at stake and by lauding Crawford's advocacy of limited government and his adherence to economy in public expenditures. The committee also reported that his health had greatly improved and urged support for the congressional nomination in order to avoid division among the Republicans.¹³⁹

During the presidential campaign of 1824, cries of corruption, intrigue, and bargaining from all sides filled the political atmosphere. Supporters of the congressional caucus and Crawford warned that the presidential election would undoubtedly go into the United States House, unless the voters unified on the caucus nominee. A House election, they protested, would rob the majority of its right to choose a president and the resulting sectional bickering might spark a political crisis in the nation. The Crawford men held up the tumultuous scene of the 1801 House election as an example of what awaited the nation, if the caucus nomination went unheeded. Their depiction focused on the intrigue and bargain that would inevitably corrupt the process and they declared that the caucus provided the only means to avoid the crisis.

¹³⁸*Virginian* (Lynchburg), September 10, October 8, 1824.

¹³⁹*Richmond Enquirer*, October 16, 1824.

Those opposed to the congressional caucus in general, or to Crawford in particular, argued that corruption and intrigue had already appeared in Congress in the form of the caucus designed to bolster the prospects of the treasury secretary. The proponents of the other candidates declared that the congressional caucus violated the spirit of the Constitution, endangered the liberty of the people, and set a precedent that would eventually place the executive branch under the influence of Congress. This arrangement, they warned, would lead to a cycle of Representatives selecting presidents who would then reward their support through executive patronage. After the acrimonious campaign the nation readied for the upcoming presidential election amid the rhetoric of corruption, intrigue, and the usurpation of the people's rights.

Chapter 4

The Election of John Quincy Adams: The Politics of Coalition and Corrupt Bargain

The presidential election of 1824 marked something of a transition in the political development of the United States. With the Republican party split into factions, the congressional caucus no longer possessed the legitimacy that it once had to anoint the next president. The "Virginia dynasty" was over. The strains of competing factions weakened the Republican party of Jefferson and Madison, and new parties would eventually emerge from the disarray of the 1820s. The tumultuous presidential campaign had focused on the candidates' characters and their political principles. Throughout the contest, Crawfordites in Virginia and North Carolina adhered to the Georgian, because he was committed to Jeffersonian principles of limited government and strict construction. Partisans of the other candidates, however, contended that their respective favorites would best fill the presidential chair. Yet the November election would not yield a victor; and for the second time in a quarter century, the election would be decided by the House of Representatives.

As the young nation sought to come to terms with the stress of competing sectional interests over issues like tariff policy, internal improvements, and even slavery, the new politics would depend on coalitions. In the transitional period between the first and second party systems, the factions within the Republican party would have to form alliances on the basis of common interests and goals. For example, in North Carolina, John C. Calhoun and his supporters had looked to Andrew Jackson as an ally and formed

a coalition with his adherents under the umbrella of the "People's ticket" to unify the anti-Crawford and anti-caucus vote. Efforts to organize a coalition of the anti-Crawford factions in Virginia, however, failed.

An alliance between factions could produce a degree of controversy. Throughout the campaign anti-caucus rhetoric had emphasized the dangers of corruption, intrigue, and political management. Conversely, caucus proponents warned that the caucus was necessary to prevent the election from going to the House, where the right of the people to choose a president would be bargained away. Thus it is no surprise that Adams and Clay's coalition in 1825 sparked charges of a "corrupt bargain."

The campaign in Virginia did not generate the interest or intensity that it did in North Carolina. Crawford supporters dominated the state and the advocates of Adams, Jackson, and Clay failed to cooperate and instead fielded separate electoral tickets. Even if they had cooperated, as in North Carolina, it seems unlikely that a unified anti-Crawford ticket could have defeated the treasury secretary in Virginia. The *Richmond Enquirer* observed that in towns and counties where there was opposition to William H. Crawford there might be a contest, but overall the electoral vote would be "a thin one." In the state as a whole, the newspaper declared, thousands of Crawford supporters would not bother to cast their ballots due to the lack of credible opposition to their favorite.¹

Virginians went to the polls on November 1 and the turnout was indeed light with

¹*Richmond Enquirer*, November 2, 1824.

only slightly more than 15,000 voting, less than 12 percent of Virginia freeholders.²

Crawford handily won the state, carrying seventy-one counties and the cities of Petersburg, Richmond, and Williamsburg. He garnered almost 56 percent of the statewide vote, distantly followed by John Quincy Adams, who won in only fifteen counties and in the city of Norfolk. Adams's share of the statewide vote amounted to just over 22 percent. Jackson placed third, taking fourteen counties and 19 percent of the state's vote. Henry Clay trailed the rest of the candidates winning in only two counties and capturing almost 3 percent of the statewide vote (see Figure 1).³

Historians such as Richard P. McCormick have argued that low voter participation indicates a low popular interest in elections. For example, McCormick holds that the 1824 presidential election failed to generate much excitement, because in most states political leaders and voters heavily favored one candidate; thus there was no competition to stir the voters. Furthermore, he notes that most voters in 1824 were not accustomed to participation in presidential elections, because there had rarely been a contest.⁴ This view

²United States Bureau of the Census, *Historical Statistics of the United States Colonial Times to 1970* (2 vols., Washington, 1970), 2:1072. One had to own 25 acres with a house or at least 50 acres of uncultivated land to vote. Urban dwellers had to own a lot with a house in order to vote. See Julian A. C. Chandler, *The History of Suffrage in Virginia* (Baltimore, 1901), 17–21.

³*Congressional Quarterly's Guide to U.S. Elections* (3rd ed., Washington, 1994), 429. *Richmond Enquirer*, November 5, 9, 12, 16, 26, 1824. The official returns in the Library of Virginia and returns in contemporary newspapers do not contain any data on Grayson County. Crawford and Adams tied in Wood County and Adams tied with Jackson in Accomac County. While the official returns differ slightly from those in the *Guide to U.S. Elections*, they do not alter the percentages garnered by the candidates.

⁴Richard P. McCormick, *The Second American Party System: Party Formation in the Jacksonian Era* (Chapel Hill, 1966), 332.

is verified by the situation in Virginia. For example, in the 1820 presidential election the *Enquirer* did not bother to publish any election returns except to comment that only seventeen votes had been cast in Richmond.⁵ Monroe's uncontested election brought little notice in comparison to the more suspenseful 1824 contest.⁶

Despite the low turnout, the *Enquirer* proclaimed that the election returns confirmed Crawford's standing in the state. Even though many Crawford supporters had not even bothered to vote, the Georgian had overwhelmingly carried the state. The newspaper declared that the low turnout was due to "the entire confidence of the friends of Mr. Crawford in his success in the state." For example, in Fairfax County out of 106 voters who went to the polls, less than one third of those qualified, seventy-nine voted for Crawford. By November 16, Governor James Pleasants proclaimed Crawford the winner and directed the Crawford electors to come to Richmond and give their votes.⁷

In late November, election returns from other states indicated that Crawford's prospects for an outright victory were fading and that he might not even make it into an election in the House of Representatives. The *Enquirer* therefore urged the Crawfordites to remain calm and adhere to their political principles and support the secretary of the

⁵*Richmond Enquirer*, November 7, 1820.

⁶One of the problems in studying the 1824 presidential election is the lack of comparative data. For example, W. Dean Burnham's *Presidential Ballots, 1836-1892* (Baltimore, 1955) begins with 1836. Burnham notes that reliable data for some states prior to 1836 are "almost completely unobtainable" thereby making an earlier uniform compilation of returns impossible (xvi). The Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research at the University of Michigan has managed to collect presidential voting data starting in 1824.

⁷*Richmond Enquirer*, November 5, 9, 16, 1824.

treasury. This course of action would allow the Crawford men to preserve their influence and position themselves to give "that direction which is best calculated to subserve the cause of the nation." The *Enquirer* declared that the Crawford electors would remain steadfast and that nothing short of his withdrawal from the contest would alter their resolve to support him.⁸

The Crawfordites in Virginia found the prospect humiliating that their favorite might not even achieve a position in the House vote and some held Pennsylvania responsible for strengthening Jackson's candidacy.⁹ Still, they were prepared to support Crawford, if he made it into the House balloting. In a contest between Adams and Jackson, Virginia, the Crawfordites asserted, would vote against Jackson "to the bitter end."¹⁰ By the time the electors assembled in Richmond, Crawford's poor showing nationally had become more apparent. A few Crawford supporters suggested that he should be given up, but others declared that the Virginia electors had solemnly pledged to vote for Crawford and that, even if his prospects were slight, Virginia had its duty and honor to consider.

Given that Albert Gallatin had withdrawn from the Crawford ticket in October, some Crawfordites contended that Virginia ought to vote for Calhoun as vice president. This strategy was designed to conciliate his supporters in Congress, probably in an effort

⁸Ibid., November 23, 1824.

⁹George Hay to James Monroe, November 22, 1824, Letter, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond.

¹⁰Benjamin Watkins Leigh to Henry Lee, November 29, 1824, Benjamin Watkins Leigh Papers, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond.

to obtain their endorsement for Crawford in an election in the House. Crawford true believers, however, countered that Calhoun had the least call on them.¹¹ The *Enquirer* echoed this view and dismissed efforts to procure Virginia's vote for Calhoun as vice president as absurd and commented that "until Mr. C[alhoun] shall see fit to bring his views of the Constitution to the good old standard of '98-99, it is impossible that Virginia can lend him her support." Virginia's determination to stand by Crawford demonstrated its commitment to the principles of states rights and a limited construction of the Constitution.¹² The Virginia electors met in Richmond on December 1 and cast their twenty-four votes for Crawford as president and for Nathaniel Macon as vice president.¹³

In North Carolina the presidential contest had been more intense and volatile. Crawfordites had initially believed the state would follow Virginia's lead and support their candidate as the caucus nominee. But Calhoun and his supporters had encouraged opposition to Crawford in the state. When Calhoun's candidacy derailed in Pennsylvania, however, his partisans aligned with the Jackson men in North Carolina to mount an aggressive campaign against Crawford and the congressional caucus. This Jackson-Calhoun alliance recruited Adams supporters under the rubric of an anti-caucus movement and sponsored a unified rival electoral ticket, the People's ticket, in opposition to the slate of Crawford electors nominated by the legislature.

The hard-fought campaign in North Carolina generated a degree of political

¹¹*Richmond Enquirer*, November 30, 1824.

¹²*Ibid.*, December 2, 1824.

¹³*Virginian* (Lynchburg), December 7, 1824.

excitement that encouraged voters to turn out to support their favorite. As the election approached, the *Raleigh Register* expressed confidence of Crawford's success, exhorted his supporters to go to the polls, and warned its readers that a vote for Jackson was a vote for the tariff. In an effort to sow discord among the supporters of the People's ticket, the *Register* contended that since that ticket's electors had pledged themselves to vote for Jackson, the friends of Adams must decide between Jackson and Crawford. The paper hinted that if the election went into the U.S. House and the North Carolina representatives despaired of electing Crawford, "then the friends of Mr. Adams would have a claim on them, in consideration of their having supported Mr. Crawford in preference to Gen. Jackson."¹⁴ In other words, support for Crawford now might translate into support for Adams later. For its part, the *Star* portrayed the election as a test whether or not North Carolina would fall in line with Virginia and asserted that the contest was one of measures and principles, rather than a contest between men. The *Star* urged the friends of Adams to sacrifice their "personal predilection on the altar of patriotism, to give a death blow to the machinations of the agents of King Caucus."¹⁵

Nearly 42 percent of eligible North Carolinians went to the polls on November 11.¹⁶ The election returns from the various counties indicated that the People's ticket was increasing in strength, leading the *Register* to remark that if Jackson took the vote of

¹⁴*Raleigh Register*, November 5, 1824.

¹⁵*Star and North Carolina State Gazette* (Raleigh), November 5, 1824.

¹⁶*Historical Statistics*, 2:1072.

North Carolina, he would owe his success to Adams's supporters.¹⁷ In the election the People's ticket carried forty-two of North Carolina's sixty-three counties and garnered 56 percent of the statewide vote. Crawford took the remaining twenty-one counties and just over 43 percent of the vote (see Figure 2).¹⁸ The *Register* noted that the western counties gave the People's ticket (Jackson) a greater majority than had been expected but reemphasized that if there had been three separate tickets, Crawford would have won. The paper further commented that Crawfordites had urged voters to unite behind their candidates and settle the election, but now it would pass to the House of Representatives.¹⁹ Unlike Virginia, data on voter behavior in North Carolina are more accessible. Though turnout for the presidential vote had been about two-thirds of the turnout for the state elections held in August, available returns clearly show that the 1824 election drew considerably more interest than the previous two elections. In 1816, for example, an estimated 9,549 voters, out of the 60,000 eligible, cast their ballots. Four years later, only about 3,567 went to the polls. In 1824, the turnout significantly increased with slightly more than 36,000 voting in the presidential election.²⁰

¹⁷*Raleigh Register*, November 19, 1824.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, November 26, 1824; *Star and North Carolina State Gazette* (Raleigh), November 26, 1824. *Guide to U.S. Elections*, 429. The vote totals published in the *Register* and the *Star* vary slightly from those rendered in the *Guide to U.S. Elections*, but not enough to affect the overall percentages as reported.

¹⁹*Raleigh Register*, November 26, 1824.

²⁰Alfred R. Newsome, *The Presidential Election of 1824 in North Carolina* (Chapel Hill, 1939), 41, 155–56. Unlike Virginia, North Carolina did not impose a property requirement to vote for presidential electors. To vote, one had to be a resident of the state for one year and have paid all applicable taxes. See Francis N. Thorpe, comp.,

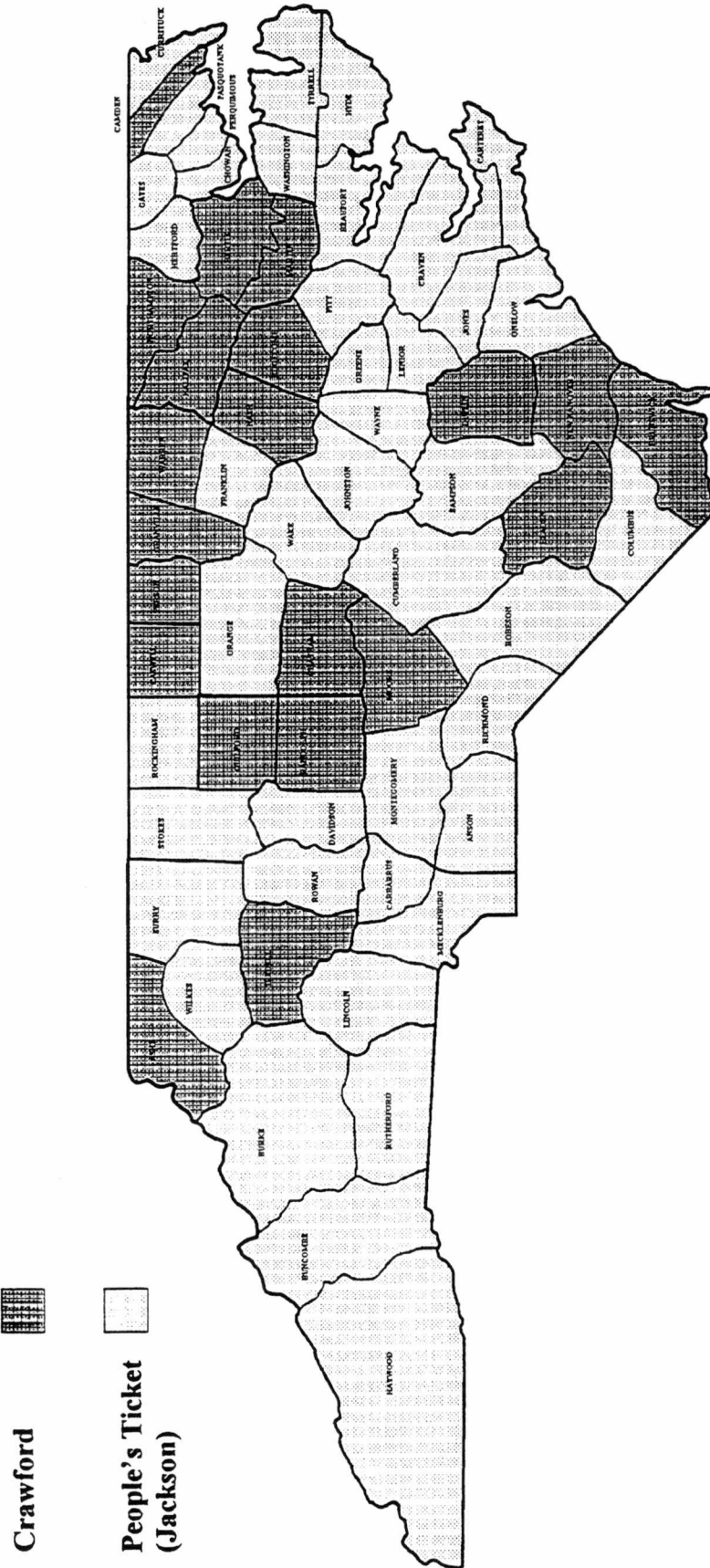


Figure 2. The 1824 presidential election in North Carolina.

The loss of North Carolina surprised Crawfordites in the state, for their candidate had been decisively beaten by the upstart coalition of Calhounites, Jacksonians, and Adams men. To the supporters of the People's ticket, the election was a great victory in that it demonstrated that the influence of the congressional caucus was over. Furthermore, North Carolina would not automatically follow Virginia's lead in national politics, because "the people" had spoken out against Virginia's favorite candidate.

In the immediate aftermath of the election, the *Star*, as if glad for the respite, declared that the editors deemed it "unnecessary to publish anything further on the subject."²¹ The paper broke this self-imposed silence seven days later, however, when it decried the efforts of the *Register* to delude the public as to Crawford's popularity. The *Star* theorized that this was an attempt to provide a pretext for North Carolina's representatives in Congress to vote for Crawford, should the election go into the House. The paper warned North Carolina's congressional delegation that voting for Crawford would be a clear disregard for the sentiments of their constituents and that their defiance of the people's will would be remembered when they ran for reelection.²² The electors on the People's ticket met at the capitol in Raleigh on December 1 to cast North Carolina's fifteen electoral votes for Jackson.²³

The Federal and State Constitutions, Colonial Charters, and other Organic Laws of the States, Territories, and Colonies Forming the United States of America (7 vols., Washington, 1909), 5:2790.

²¹*Star and North Carolina State Gazette* (Raleigh), November 26, 1824.

²²*Ibid.*, December 3, 1824.

²³*Raleigh Register*, December 3, 1824.

The results of the national electoral vote showed Jackson with ninety-nine votes, a plurality but not the majority required to win outright. Adams came in a strong second with eighty-four electoral votes, and Crawford edged out Clay with forty-one votes to Clay's thirty-seven. Many political observers had long predicted that the multitude of candidates would force the election into the House and that forecast had come true. The campaign that had agitated and energized the political discourse of the nation would continue. As laid out in the Twelfth Amendment, the House would elect a president from among the top three candidates with each state having one vote. The vote of an individual state would be determined by a ballot among its representatives. Clay's last-place finish put him out of the race, but as Speaker of the House he found himself in the center of this seemingly unending contest.

As it became clear that Crawford would place third in the electoral vote, Virginia Crawfordites considered their course of action. Adams recorded in his diary that on December 22, Virginia senator James Barbour paid him a visit and that they conversed for two hours about the presidential election. Barbour informed Adams that the Virginia delegation was indeed committed to support Crawford as long as there was any possibility of his success, but if that proved impracticable, then the delegation would prefer Adams. Barbour asked Adams a few questions regarding the tariff and internal improvements. Adams replied that his views on internal improvements were well known and expressed satisfaction with the tariff as it now stood but that he would be inclined to alter it, if it proved to hurt agricultural and commercial interests. While seemingly satisfied with Adams's answers, Barbour reiterated Virginia's commitment to Crawford but let Adams

know that the Old Dominion maintained her determination to vote for anyone other than Jackson whom he characterized as “a mere military leader.”²⁴

The conservative Crawfordites in Virginia had long disliked and distrusted Jackson. In a state increasingly committed to preserving states rights and advocating a strict adherence to the Constitution, Jackson’s martial spirit and willingness to use any means to achieve his goals, as demonstrated in his military career, made him an untrustworthy candidate for the presidency. For example, in the columns of the *Enquirer*, “Cato” urged Congress to elect a president for his principles rather than for his popularity. According to “Cato,” the question was whether or not a man should obtain the presidency based solely on military achievement. “Cato” warned against “the blindness of the people produced by the dazzling splendor reflected from the warrior’s shield” and implored them to remember the lessons of history and reminded readers that not every military man was a Washington.²⁵

Members of Congress could not ascertain in advance how the presidential election in the House would turn out. Even seasoned political observers, such as Virginia congressman John Floyd, hesitated to make a prediction. But rumors circulated that Clay and his friends would support Adams as a more attractive option for Clay’s political future. Floyd reported to one correspondent that early in the session Clay’s supporters in Congress had urged some sort of unity of action with the Crawfordites, which, according

²⁴Charles F. Adams, ed. *Memoirs of John Quincy Adams, Comprising Portions of His Diary from 1795–1848* (12 vols., Philadelphia, 1874–77), 6:450–51; 466–67.

²⁵*Richmond Enquirer*, December 29, 1824.

to Floyd's interpretation, meant the abandonment of Crawford and of Virginia's political principles.²⁶ After Clay came out for Adams in late January 1825, Virginia's congressional delegation stood firm and supported Crawford as a man of talent and honor who would protect states rights and adhere to the tenets of Jeffersonian principles. Despite the turn of events in the House, Floyd maintained that Virginia's commitment to its principles would make the state a beacon for other states, "the point to which all true republicans will steer . . . when the political speculators, smugglers, and pirates are whelmed in the deep."²⁷

North Carolina's congressional delegation found themselves in a particularly delicate situation, for in general they supported Crawford, while their state had voted for Jackson. They backed Crawford on principle but some were concerned about Crawford's health. Reports indicated that, though Crawford's mind seemed relatively unimpaired, he still had difficulty in articulation and was reportedly unable to read more than a half a page at a time.²⁸ Some North Carolina representatives, such as Lewis Williams, however, remained optimistic and estimated that Crawford might get eight votes on the first ballot but admitted that it was still too uncertain how the membership would vote. Williams expressed confidence that Crawford would be elected in the end and that Jackson would

²⁶John Floyd to [Claiborne W. Gooch?], January 17, 1825, Gooch Family Papers, University of Virginia, Charlottesville.

²⁷John Floyd to Claiborne W. Gooch, January 25, 1825, *ibid.*

²⁸Thomas W. Cobb to Bartlett Yancey, December 8, 1824, Bartlett Yancey Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill; Romulus M. Saunders to Yancey, December 10, 1824, in Albert R. Newsome, ed., "Letters of Romulus M. Saunders to Bartlett Yancey, 1821-1828," *North Carolina Historical Review* 8 (1931): 445-47.

not have much support in the House.²⁹

Others feared Crawford could get no more than four votes on the first ballot and that the North Carolina delegation could not maintain its unity after the first ballot. Three of the thirteen members reportedly favored Jackson and at least one leaned toward Adams, while the rest of the delegation, such as Romulus M. Saunders and Willie P. Mangum, had vowed to stay with Crawford even though he had little chance. At any rate, a majority of the delegation resolved to support Crawford and act together "with perfect harmony and en masse."³⁰

The North Carolinians supported Crawford out of principle and chose to vote against the sentiment of their state for the best interest of the nation. For many in Congress, however, Crawford's ill health generally placed him out of the equation, and the contest centered on Adams and Jackson. By mid-January rumors circulated that Clay's supporters would not vote for Jackson, thus he could not be elected.³¹ So the Virginia and North Carolina delegates could afford to stand on principle and pledge themselves to Crawford, at least on the first ballot, because Adams seemed to be the odds-on favorite, and he was at least an acceptable alternative.

²⁹Lewis Williams to Bartlett Yancey, December 2, 12, 1824, Bartlett Yancey Papers, Southern Historical Collection.

³⁰Romulus M. Saunders to Bartlett Yancey, December 19, 1824, in Newsome, ed., "Letters of Saunders to Yancey," 447-49; Willie P. Mangum to Bartlett Yancey, December 25, 1824, in Henry T. Shanks, ed., *The Papers of Willie Person Mangum* (5 vols., Raleigh, 1950-56), 1:160-61.

³¹Willie P. Mangum to John Robertson, January 3, 1825; Mangum to Duncan Cameron, January 10, 1825, in Shanks, ed., *Mangum Papers*, 1:169-71; 173-74.

The strength of Jackson's popularity surprised many in Congress, and one observer reported that early in the Congressional session many members did not, in fact, favor Jackson but had decided to support him in the House election because their constituents had done so.³² As rumors of intrigue and bargain circulated in Congress, Jackson remained aloof and insisted that he was uninterested in the contest. In his correspondence throughout December and January, Jackson emphasized that he would spurn any intrigue, management, or promise to win the election. He also predicted that "a turbulent time will be the lot of that man who may come in, thro any other channel save that of a preference by the people; and god grant it may be always so."³³

Jackson's plurality of electoral votes and the strength of his popular vote placed him on the high ground, in his mind, as the choice of the people and above intrigue. He rejoiced that the caucus and Crawford's influence had been prostrated. Jackson believed that the defeat of the caucus insured that "the liberty of our country is safe, and will be perpetuated." He had heard that, if he won the election, it would be against the influence of Monroe's entire cabinet, with the exception of Calhoun. Jackson held to the position that the voice of the people preferred him, but if Congress chose another he looked

³²William Plumer, Jr., to William Plumer, December 15, 1824, in Everett S. Brown, ed., *The Missouri Compromises and Presidential Politics, 1820-1825, from the Letters of William Plumer, Junior, Representative from New Hampshire* (St. Louis, 1926), 122.

³³Andrew Jackson to Samuel Swartwout, December 14, 1824, in John S. Bassett, ed., *Correspondence of Andrew Jackson* (7 vols., Washington, 1926-35), 3:269.

forward to retirement.³⁴ Jackson later voiced his disgust at the political machinations in Washington as rumors of intrigue and cabinet influence permeated the political atmosphere. He confided to one correspondent that he had rejected suggestions by “friends” that implied a favorable outcome of the election and declared that “no influence has, or will be used by me; if I am selected, it will be without promise, without being committed to any one.”³⁵

Once it was apparent that Clay would not be among the contestants in the House election, he found himself the focus of attention for the partisans of the remaining candidates. Clay admitted, however, that he often found his new role in the presidential election amusing. Partisans of Crawford, Adams, and Jackson approached him and offered assurances that he had been their second choice. He reported to one correspondent that since his loss he had heard “every kind of eulogium and panegyric pronounced upon me.” Clay believed that Crawford’s delicate health precluded him for the competition, even “if there were no other objection to his election.” With the choice, in his mind, between Adams and Jackson, he wrote that “I would not cross Pennsylvania Avenue to be in any office under any Administration which lies before us.”³⁶

Clay, who had strong personal objections to Adams and Jackson, regarded the

³⁴Andrew Jackson to John Overton, December 19, 1824, in Sam B. Smith et al., *The Papers of Andrew Jackson* (5 vols. to date, Knoxville, 1980–), 5:455; Andrew Jackson to John Overton, January 10, 1825, Papers of Andrew Jackson (1986 microfilm).

³⁵Andrew Jackson to John Coffee, January 23, 1825, in Bassett, ed., *Correspondence of Jackson*, 3:274–75.

³⁶Henry Clay to Benjamin Watkins Leigh, December 22, 1824, in James F. Hopkins et al., eds., *The Papers of Henry Clay* (11 vols., Lexington, 1959–92), 3:901.

option between them as something of a choice between evils.³⁷ He had, however, already decided that if the contest were between Adams and Jackson, he would have to support Adams.³⁸ Furthermore, Clay had learned that the vote in the House would probably go for Adams, and that three of the four states that supported Crawford were rumored to favor Adams over Jackson.³⁹

Clay called on Adams on January 9 regarding “an affair of business.”⁴⁰ Adams noted in his diary that Clay and he had a “long conversation explanatory of the past and prospective of the future.” Clay had come to ask Adams “to satisfy him with regard to some principles of great public importance, but with out any personal considerations for himself.” During this meeting Clay told Adams that he would support him in the House election over Crawford and Jackson.⁴¹ Clay was confident that Adams would win the election and informed one correspondent that he could probably obtain any situation in the new administration that he pleased. He was not sure, however, if he would accept “the first place in the Cabinet, if offered.”⁴²

Later, Clay backed away from such self-assured statements and contended that he

³⁷Henry Clay to Francis Preston Blair, January 8, 1824 [1825], in *ibid.*, 4:9–10.

³⁸Henry Clay to George McClure, [December 28, 1824], in *ibid.*, 3:906.

³⁹Henry Clay to Francis Preston Blair, January 8, 1824 [1825], in *ibid.*, 4:9–10.

⁴⁰Henry Clay to John Quincy Adams, January 9, 1825, in *ibid.*, 4:11.

⁴¹Adams, ed., *Memoirs of John Quincy Adams*, 6:464–65.

⁴²Henry Clay to James Brown, January 23, 1825, in Hopkins et al., eds., *Clay Papers*, 4:38–39.

did not know if Adams would offer him a position, but if he did Clay would act “according to my sense of duty.”⁴³ Clay realized the difficulty of his situation and understood that he could not move in any direction without censure. He maintained, however, that his conscience required him to vote for Adams, because Crawford’s ill health disqualified him for the presidency; and he could not support a “military chieftain” in light of the experiences of other republics such as ancient Greece and Rome.⁴⁴

Throughout the campaign for the presidency, all sides had used language decrying the intrigues against their particular candidate and the corruption of the other contenders. It is no wonder then that this rhetoric spilled over into the election in the House. Charges of corruption and intrigue had so polluted the atmosphere of national politics that it seemed almost inevitable that, regardless how the election might have ended, cries of “corrupt bargain” would have filled the air.

In late January, the *Enquirer* reported that rumors of bargains and compromises were circulating in Washington regarding the upcoming presidential election. But it declared that despite allegations of a coalition between Adams and Clay, the editors would not believe such until there was definite proof. The *Enquirer* also warned that if a member of Congress promoted the election of the next president and then accepted an office under him, he “may expect a full share of public odium and indignation.”⁴⁵

The *Virginian*, however, applauded Clay’s support of Adams and asserted that

⁴³Henry Clay to Francis T. Brooke, February 4, 1825, in *ibid.*, 4:55–56.

⁴⁴Henry Clay to Francis T. Brooke, January 28, 1825, in *ibid.*, 4:45–46.

⁴⁵*Richmond Enquirer*, January 25, 27, 1825.

Crawford might have been Clay's first choice but that he did not have a viable chance to win. The newspaper explained that Clay may have faulted Adams on some policy and political errors, but his attacks on Jackson were over constitutional principles and the doctrines of national law.⁴⁶ For the most part, the papers in North Carolina generally remained quiet on the issue of intrigue and management in Washington. In late January the *Register* noted that although the outcome could not be predicted with any degree of certainty, the friends of Clay held the balance of power.⁴⁷ The *Star* reported that rumors claiming Clay and others would form a combination to defeat Jackson had appeared in several northern papers, but the paper discounted such maneuvers as not in line with Clay's character.⁴⁸

On January 28 the Philadelphia *Columbian Observer* published a letter reputedly from one of Pennsylvania's congressmen charging that Clay and Adams had entered into a "corrupt bargain."⁴⁹ Three days later, Clay published a notice in the *National Intelligencer* that repudiated the charge and labeled its author "a base and infamous calumniator, a dastard and a liar" and declared that if he "unveiled himself," Clay would hold him responsible "to all the laws which govern and regulate the conduct of men of

⁴⁶*Virginian* (Lynchburg), February 8, 1825.

⁴⁷*Raleigh Register*, January 28, 1825.

⁴⁸*Star and North Carolina State Gazette* (Raleigh), February 4, 1825.

⁴⁹Robert V. Remini, *Henry Clay: Statesman for the Union* (New York, 1991), 261.

honor.”⁵⁰ On February 3, George Kremer of Pennsylvania responded in the same newspaper with his own card proclaiming that he was ready to prove “the accuracy of the statements” in the letter to the *Columbian Observer*.⁵¹ Clay immediately requested the House of Representatives to investigate the charge. Kremer, however, refused to cooperate with the investigation and the committee declined to pursue the inquiry further.⁵²

Some of Clay’s friends thought that Kremer’s address was likely written by others. John Binns reported to Clay that Calhoun’s lieutenants George McDuffie and Samuel D. Ingham had actually authored the letter.⁵³ It is possible that given the Calhounites’ aggressive overtures to Adams regarding the composition of his cabinet, Calhoun and his partisans sought to intimidate Adams into leaving Clay out of the administration. This would remove a potential threat to Calhoun’s future political interests. Jackson’s trusted lieutenant John H. Eaton later became briefly entangled in the affair when Clay issued an address to his constituents defending himself against the charge of corrupt bargain. In his address, Clay suggested that Kremer had been manipulated by others and implied that

⁵⁰“A Card,” by Henry Clay, January 31, 1825, in Hopkins et al., eds., *Clay Papers*, 4:48.

⁵¹“A Card,” by George Kremer, February 3, 1825, in *ibid.*, 4:52.

⁵²*Register of Debates in Congress*, 18 Cong., 2 Sess., 440–44, 463–86, 522–25.

⁵³John Binns to Henry Clay, February 27, 1825, in Hopkins et al., eds., *Clay Papers*, 4:84–85.

Eaton had assisted Kremer with his February 3 reply to Clay's "card."⁵⁴

In the presidential election in the House on February 9, Adams won thirteen states on the first ballot and thus the election. Jackson secured seven states and Crawford retained the three states originally loyal to him and also garnered the support of North Carolina. The Virginia delegation voted overwhelmingly for Crawford with the exception of two of its members, one of whom voted for Adams and the other for Jackson. The North Carolina delegation likewise swung to Crawford with only three of its members deviating from the majority, two supported Jackson and one voted for Adams.⁵⁵

The reaction in Virginia and North Carolina to Adams's election was one of disappointment but not condemnation. Of the three candidates in the House election, Adams appeared to be almost everyone's second choice. In Virginia, the *Enquirer* commented that Adams was neither the best qualified candidate nor the choice of a plurality of the people. The editors admitted that they had not expected the election to conclude on the first ballot but acknowledged that there had been little hope of defeating Adams in the end. According to the *Enquirer*, however, Adams did not have any large popular support or the command of a party. Therefore, he had two choices: to secure a loyal following through the use of patronage and management "or throw himself upon the support of his country by the weight and wisdom of his measures." The *Enquirer*

⁵⁴Henry Clay, "Address to the People of the Congressional District Composed of the Counties of Layette, Woodford, and Clarke, March 26, 1825," in *ibid.*, 4:143-66.

⁵⁵*Star and North Carolina State Gazette* (Raleigh), February 25, 1825. In the Virginia delegation, Thomas Newton voted for Adams, and Joseph Johnson for Jackson. In the North Carolina delegation, Henry Conner and Robert B. Vance voted for Jackson, and John Culpepper went for Adams.

declared that if Adams adhered to a proper course, Virginia would support him. In short, the administration would be judged on its merits and the friends of Crawford would remain neutral and "await the progress of time, and abide by its decision."⁵⁶

While the editors of the *Enquirer* and other Crawfordites expressed a cautious resignation to Adams's election, others in Virginia were quite pleased. Citizens in Lynchburg, for example, celebrated by firing cannon and small arms, playing martial music, and, according to one observer, "drinking wine, which they kept up till very late."⁵⁷ Adams newspapers in the state, such as the *Constitutional Whig* and the *Virginian*, predicted that Virginia would be satisfied with Adams's election, and explained that Jackson's political strength had compelled Virginia to transfer its interests to Adams. The delegation voted for Crawford on the first ballot but would have ultimately voted for Adams if necessary.⁵⁸

The reaction was similar in North Carolina. Those who supported Crawford were disappointed but generally evidenced a tone of resignation and neutrality. Staunch Crawfordite Lewis Williams informed Bartlett Yancey that with the conclusion of the election, "everything is lost but our honor." He blamed Clay's influence for making the election into a contest between Adams and Jackson and mused that Clay's cooperation would have placed Crawford in the presidency. Williams noted, however, that the

⁵⁶*Richmond Enquirer*, February 12, 15, 1825.

⁵⁷Andrew Russell to David Campbell, February 18, 1825, Campbell Family Papers, Duke University.

⁵⁸*Virginian* (Lynchburg), February 15, 1825.

circumstances of Adams's election placed the friends of Crawford in a strengthened position and that they would "command the fear if not the respect of any administration."⁵⁹ Thus, even though Crawford had not won, his followers, the Old Republicans of the Jeffersonian school, viewed themselves as sufficiently powerful to influence the policies of the national government.

The pro-Jackson *Star* took comfort that while its candidate had not won, Jackson was the favorite of the nation; and the caucus, "that baneful enemy of the people's rights," had been overthrown. Furthermore, the *Star* asserted that Adams had been their second choice. The paper also warned the members of Congress who had acted "in direct opposition to the known sentiments of their constituents," that the polls at the next election would demonstrate if these congressmen could retain the trust of the people.⁶⁰ Meanwhile the *Register* declared that "the Long Agony" of the campaign was finally over and expressed the hope that the ill will generated by the contest would abate. Its editors admitted that they too had preferred Adams as their second choice after Crawford, and commended the congressional delegation for voting their choice—except for the two who "fainted by the way" and voted for Jackson.⁶¹

In forming his cabinet Adams sought to conciliate the different factions of the Republican party. He had decided to keep Monroe's cabinet mainly and offered the

⁵⁹Lewis Williams to Bartlett Yancey, February 11, 1825, Bartlett Yancey Papers, Southern Historical Collection.

⁶⁰*Star and North Carolina State Gazette* (Raleigh), February 18, 1825.

⁶¹*Raleigh Register*, February 18, 1825.

treasury department to Crawford, who refused it. Adams also intended to offer the war department to Jackson but reconsidered when he learned that Jackson would refuse. Instead, he offered the department to James Barbour. He retained John McLean as postmaster general, Samuel L. Southard as secretary of the navy, and William Wirt as attorney general.⁶²

Calhoun's partisans in Congress informed Adams that they opposed Clay for the state department and warned that if Clay were given the post, an opposition would arise with Jackson as its head. As an alternative, the Calhounites outlined an acceptable cabinet composed of Calhoun's friend Joel R. Poinsett as secretary of state, Langdon Cheves over the treasury department and John McLean at the war department, with Southard remaining as secretary of the navy. Adams viewed this "suggestion" as an attempt by Calhoun to intimidate him into accepting a cabinet composed of Calhoun supporters by threatening to foment opposition to the new administration.⁶³

Three days after his election, Adams met with Clay and offered him the state department. Clay considered the offer and shortly thereafter accepted it. Clay realized that the offer of the first place in the cabinet placed him in a predicament. If he accepted, his opponents would label him as corrupt. But if he refused, they would proclaim that George Kremer's charges of a "corrupt bargain" had exposed the arrangement and thus prevented it; or that Clay thought so little of Adams that he could not serve under him,

⁶²Mary W. M. Hargreaves, *The Presidency of John Quincy Adams* (Lawrence, Kans., 1985), 48.

⁶³Adams, ed., *Memoirs of John Quincy Adams*, 6:506-508.

thus condemning the administration before it even started. Clay decided to accept the position and dismissed the rumors of opposition as “the natural offspring of chagrin and disappointment” and admitted that while there might be elements for faction, there were none for outright opposition.⁶⁴

Clay’s acceptance of the state department fueled the charges of corruption, and brought about a storm of condemnation. The question of whether or not a bargain was struck has intrigued historians for generations. In his historiographical examination of the issue, William G. Morgan asserts that the consensus of the biographers of Adams and Clay justifies the two men’s actions and contends that there was no corrupt arrangement.⁶⁵ The Republican party was undeniably hamstrung by the various factions. Had Jackson shown some openness to overtures by Clay’s partisans, the Kentuckian might have reasoned that he could influence a Jackson administration and might have supported him. Given the history between the two, however, this scenario seems unlikely at best. Thus, Clay probably would have voted for Adams anyway.

For his part, Adams might have accepted Clay’s support but withheld an offer to serve in the new administration. In this scenario, Clay would have remained in the House and might have been a potential source of future opposition to the administration. After

⁶⁴Henry Clay to Francis T. Brooke, and Henry Clay to Robert Walsh, Jr., both February 18, 1825, in Hopkins et al., eds., *Clay Papers*, 4:73–76.

⁶⁵William G. Morgan, “John Quincy Adams versus Andrew Jackson: Their Biographers and the ‘Corrupt Bargain’ Charge,” *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 26 (1967): 43–58; and William G. Morgan, “The ‘Corrupt Bargain’ Charge Against Clay and Adams: An Historiographical Analysis,” *Filson Club Historical Quarterly* 42 (1968): 132–49.

all, he had been a persistent critic of Monroe. Therefore, Adams would need him in the cabinet. The two formed a coalition based on their view of politics and brought the presidential contest to a close. Given the nature of political rhetoric which emphasized the dangers of corruption and intrigue, however, it seems incredible that neither Adams or Clay considered the long-term results of their coalition.

Jackson viewed Clay's support for Adams in the House election as a clear disregard for the voice of the people and a bartering of the votes of the western states by Clay to further his political career over the will of the people.⁶⁶ In Jackson's opinion, Clay's acceptance of the state department proved that a deal had been struck. Jackson declared this turn of events "the most open daring corruption that has ever shown itself under our government." He insisted that if this corruption was not checked, open bribery within the government would become a matter of common practice within twenty years.⁶⁷

Jackson had believed Adams to be an honest and virtuous man until the rumors of bargain and sale had been, in his mind, verified. After this he became convinced that some sort of secret understanding must have existed between Adams and Clay. Jackson fumed that he would have been happy with the result of the election, if not for the means by which it was accomplished; but now he viewed the situation as one that threatened the liberty of the nation. The only corrective to this intrigue and management, he declared,

⁶⁶Andrew Jackson to John Overton, February 10, 1825, in Papers of Andrew Jackson (1986 microfilm).

⁶⁷Andrew Jackson to William B. Lewis, February 14, 1825, in Bassett, ed., *Correspondence of Jackson*, 3:276. Jackson to George Wilson, February 20, 1825, in Papers of Andrew Jackson (1986 microfilm).

was the suffrages of the people which could counteract the malign influence of corrupt politicians in the cabinet, Calhoun excepted.⁶⁸

For his part, Calhoun expressed mixed feelings about the election. On one hand, he perceived it as a triumph, in that it would preserve the policies of Monroe's administration. On the other hand, however, the circumstances of Adams's election negated the political and moral power that had supported Monroe. He characterized the "arrangement" between Adams and Clay as "the most dangerous stab, which the liberty of this country has ever received." Furthermore, he asserted that "I will not be on that side, I am with the people, and shall remain so."⁶⁹ Though retired from national politics, Crawford signified his thoughts on the Adams administration in a toast he gave at dinner held in his honor in Lexington, Georgia, on April 16: "The present Administration—let it be judged by its measures."⁷⁰

When Clay's nomination as secretary of state came up for a vote in the Senate, the senators from Virginia and North Carolina, along with eleven others, voted "no." James Barbour did not vote, since he had already accepted the appointment as secretary of war. John Branch of North Carolina voted no, because he was troubled by the specter of a

⁶⁸Andrew Jackson to William B. Lewis, February 20, 1825, in James Parton, *Life of Andrew Jackson* (3 vols., New York, 1860; repr., New York, 1967), 3:73–75.

⁶⁹John C. Calhoun to Joseph G. Swift, March 10, 1825, in Robert L. Meriwether et al., eds. *The Papers of John C. Calhoun Papers* (24 vols. to date, Columbia, 1959–), 10:10.

⁷⁰*Raleigh Register*, May 20, 1825.

"corrupt bargain."⁷¹ Nathaniel Macon, however, later informed Clay that the presidential election had not influenced his vote and that he generally approved Clay's course of action. He opposed Clay's nomination, because he did not agree with Clay's opinions on the Constitution.⁷²

Though cautiously resigned to the incoming Adams administration, the *Enquirer* opposed Clay's acceptance of the state department. The editors did not necessarily disagree with Clay's vote for Adams in the House but maintained that he should not have gone into the cabinet. Rather, they declared, he should have explained his reasons for supporting Adams and publicly declined a seat in the cabinet to avoid even the appearance of a bargain. Furthermore, the *Enquirer* wished that James Barbour had remained aloof from the administration for the present and waited to see what course it would take. The *Enquirer* outlined its policy of withholding judgement of Adams and commented that the people would try him impartially.⁷³

After Adams's inaugural address, the *Enquirer* remarked that though his style was more ornate and artificial than Monroe's, it was at least more brief. Regarding more substantive matters, the paper observed that the address indicated that Adams would adhere to the policies of the previous administration. The *Enquirer* further declared that it considered Adams's construction of the constitution loose and equivocal and noted that he

⁷¹*Star and North Carolina State Gazette* (Raleigh), August 8, 1827.

⁷²Henry Clay to Elisha Whittlesey, March 26, 1825, in Hopkins et al., eds., *Clay Papers*, 4:179.

⁷³*Richmond Enquirer*, February 22, 25, March 1, 1825.

“goes for the whole ground of internal improvement.” The *Enquirer* lamented that the doctrines of '98 were forgotten, if not denounced, and that Virginia was the only state to resist the encroachments of federal power. Thus the people should look to Congress and send “their ablest and most virtuous men to Congress,” because Adams was not the man to preserve a strict construction of the Constitution.⁷⁴

The outcome of the presidential election in the House had no discernible influence on the April congressional elections in Virginia. The state had largely supported Crawford; hence the loyalty of Virginia's representatives to him did not pose a problem among their constituents. Six of the twenty-two representatives declined to offer themselves as candidates for various reasons. For example, Philip P. Barbour did not run but agreed to an appointment to the state's general court instead, and George Tucker accepted a post as professor of moral philosophy at the University of Virginia. Alexander Smyth and the three others apparently retired for personal reasons. In the congressional elections, fifteen incumbents won reelection (seven faced no opposition) and one, Jabez Leftwich, lost. Thomas Newton, who voted for Adams, faced no opposition, while Joseph Johnson, who supported Jackson, defeated his one opponent.⁷⁵ The *Virginian* remarked that the people of Virginia “seldom change their public servants unless there is some cause for it.”⁷⁶

⁷⁴Ibid., March 8, 11, 1825.

⁷⁵Ibid., March 25, 1825; Michael J. Dubin, *United States Congressional Elections, 1788–1997* (Jefferson, N.C., 1998), 83–84.

⁷⁶*Virginian* (Lynchburg), May 12, 1825.

Though the Adams administration was only a few months old, some Virginia Crawfordites urged an active resistance to it and called for an early preparation for the next election. For example, "One from the East" argued in an essay in the *Enquirer* that Adams's victory was the result of management and intrigue and he urged the friends of Crawford and Jackson to unite against Adams and support the stronger of the two in the next presidential election.⁷⁷ The *Virginian* dismissed this call to arms by noting that if Jackson had won, the friends of Crawford would be seeking out Adams men; and if Crawford had triumphed, then Adams and Jackson partisans would undoubtedly come to terms. The *Virginian* further ridiculed the Crawfordites' new-found respect for Jackson and marveled at the Hero's transition from military chieftain to statesman.⁷⁸ The *Enquirer* countered that there was no concerted plan of opposition to Adams and that the next election would depend on events "which are yet in the womb of time" and that the public should wait for them and avoid a rash decision in 1825 concerning "what shall be best in 1828."⁷⁹

With James Barbour serving in Adams's cabinet, the Virginia legislature in its 1825–26 session had to elect a U.S. senator to replace him; and that issue became a focal point for those alarmed by the condition of national politics. Names mentioned as potential senators included William B. Giles, Governor James Pleasants, and John Randolph, who was described by "Henry" in the *Enquirer* as above any and all intrigue,

⁷⁷*Richmond Enquirer*, May 10, 1825.

⁷⁸*Virginian* (Lynchburg), May 16, 1825.

⁷⁹*Richmond Enquirer*, May 24, 1825.

fearless, and independent. "Henry" further asserted that Randolph would stand vigilant against evil measures and corrupt machinations. As the *Enquirer* opened its columns to discussion of the senate election, the essays dramatized the situation and warned of the "political crisis" in which the spirit of 1798 was needed to protect the right of states and promote the good of the country. These political jeremiads portrayed the senate as the key point of political resistance to check executive power, defend states rights, and protect "Virginia principles and doctrines."⁸⁰

The question of selecting a new senator agitated Richmond and the entire state, because many considered it an opportunity to indicate the disposition of Virginia toward the administration.⁸¹ Clay's friend Francis T. Brooke echoed those sentiments and noted reports circulating in Virginia of an attempt to foment an anti-administration party under the banner of states rights, but expressed doubt that the effort would be successful.⁸² If Virginia had to elect an anti-administration senator, Clay preferred William B. Giles, who would "be a real friend though a nominal enemy" in that his lack of tact would benefit rather than harm the administration and its supporters in Virginia. In Clay's opinion, the success of the administration depended on its policies and an anti-Adams senator from Virginia could not possibly hinder that success.⁸³

⁸⁰Ibid., October 25; November 1, 8, 1825.

⁸¹John H. Pleasants to Henry Clay, November 14, 1825, in Hopkins et al., eds., *Clay Papers*, 4:827.

⁸²Francis T. Brooke to Henry Clay, November 27, 1825, in *ibid.*, 4:857.

⁸³Henry Clay to Francis T. Brooke, November 30, 1825, in *ibid.*, 4:867.

The Virginia legislature considered the question on December 9 and the discussion centered on the need to elect a senator true to "Virginia principles." Members nominated John Randolph, William B. Giles, John Floyd, and Henry St. George Tucker. After two ballots, only Randolph and Tucker remained. At that point Tucker supporters moved to withdraw his name as he had expressly stated that he did not wish to oppose Randolph. The members had, however, already taken a third ballot. The legislature proceeded to count the vote, despite Tucker's withdrawal, and Randolph won by a respectable margin. After the vote, the legislature hailed Randolph as one who would remain true to Virginia's doctrines on the Constitution.⁸⁴

Despite the excitement over the senatorial contest and the rhetoric of a "crisis" in national affairs, Governor Pleasants's message to the Virginia legislature did not mention the late presidential election or make reference to Adams's administration. Pleasants did, however, urge the state's representatives in Congress to address the tariff issue and condemned restrictions on commerce as erroneous in principle. The *Enquirer* expressed satisfaction with the message and declared that the governor's principles on the tariff were in line with those of '98-99.⁸⁵

In contrast, the *Enquirer* was not pleased with Adams's first annual message to Congress. His address urged Congress to consider an expansive program of improvement and recommended the construction of a national university, voyages of scientific discovery, and a national observatory. Furthermore, Adams asserted that the nation

⁸⁴*Richmond Enquirer*, December 10, 1825.

⁸⁵*Ibid.*, December 6, 1825.

needed to seize available opportunities to advance its learning and culture. He then asked Congress if “we were to slumber in indolence or fold up our arms and proclaim to the world that we are palsied by the will of our constituents, would it not be to cast away the bounties of Providence and doom ourselves to perpetual inferiority?”⁸⁶

Attorney General William Wirt had warned Adams that his conclusions regarding internal improvements were “excessively bold” and that it would “give strong hold to the party in Virginia” who already represented Adams “as grasping for power.”⁸⁷ Clay noted that the message was received with “acquiescence, or with applause” in the North, while Adams’s doctrines on internal improvements had produced an unfavorable reaction in Richmond.⁸⁸ Administration supporters in Virginia declared that Adams’s message had helped elect Randolph to the Senate.⁸⁹

The editors of the *Enquirer* commented that they had possessed conciliatory feelings for Adams and had taken up his message with the desire to do him justice, and had, in fact, found little that gave offense in the first two-thirds of the message. Adams’s ambitious proposals, however, led the *Enquirer* to declare that Adams had deduced an extensive range of powers “from the wildest construction of the express, enumerated powers given by the Constitution.” The paper announced that Virginia would not

⁸⁶James D. Richardson, comp., *Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents, 1789–1897* (10 vols., Washington, 1896–99), 2:299–317.

⁸⁷Adams, *Memoirs of John Quincy Adams*, 7:64–65.

⁸⁸Henry Clay to James Brown, December 12, 1825, in Hopkins et al., eds., *Clay Papers*, 4:895–96.

⁸⁹Francis T. Brooke to Henry Clay, December 13, 1825, in *ibid.*, 4:906.

acquiesce in these principles that would change “the whole scheme of the Constitution.”⁹⁰

While some newspapers criticized the *Enquirer*’s strictures on Adams’s message, the editors proclaimed that they would stand on long-held constitutional principles and urged others who disagreed with them to “descend into the field of argument with us, and refute the positions which we have taken” for they “frankly and fearlessly” invited this discussion.⁹¹

The editors of the *Virginian*, long supporters of Adams, reported their disappointment with his message and pointed out that the President’s opinions were in opposition to their own but were, however, consistent with those followed by Monroe’s administration. The paper examined the address and offered commentary over several issues but kept an ambivalent tone that did not support all that Adams had advocated but did not condemn him either. As for Adams’s unfortunate admonition that Congress should not be “palsied by the will of our constituents” in seeking to reap the opportunities offered by Providence, the *Virginian* argued that this was not actually Adams’s conviction but rather “the effusion of an enthusiastic moment, elicited without deliberation, and penned without reflection.”⁹²

The political climate in North Carolina became relatively calm after the presidential election. The *Register* generally avoided discussing the political controversies in Washington, such as the charges of “corrupt bargain” against Adams and Clay, but

⁹⁰*Richmond Enquirer*, December 8, 1825.

⁹¹*Ibid.*, December 24, 1825.

⁹²*Virginian* (Lynchburg), December 15, 19, 22, 1825.

adhered instead to a non-partisan path. Meanwhile, the *Star* continued to mention Jackson in a favorable light but refrained from any harsh criticism of the Adams administration. In early June, however, the *Register* voiced a measure of gratification that all the "parties" that had formally combined to attack Crawford during the last contest now appeared united in acquitting Crawford of any intrigue or political machinations.⁹³ As long as the Crawfordites remained aloof from the Adams-Clay coalition, Jackson and Calhoun partisans probably viewed them as potential allies.

The North Carolina congressional elections in August reintroduced the topic of the presidential election into the political discourse. Essayists in the *Star*, such as "A Voter," wanted to punish those representatives who had supported Crawford over Jackson. "A Voter" condemned "representative usurpation" by the congressmen who had voted in opposition to the will of the people in the presidential contest. He declared that if this defiance was passively accepted then "the transition from a nominal republic to an oppressive aristocracy will be easy and inevitable." "A Voter" further urged that it was imperative to bring before the public candidates who would serve the people. He also argued that every vote against representatives who had defied the people would "perpetuate our liberty," while each vote for them "will be a link in the chain to make us slaves."⁹⁴

"A Yeoman" echoed this sentiment and urged voters to "teach your law-givers to

⁹³ *Raleigh Register*, June 9, 1825.

⁹⁴ *Star and North Carolina State Gazette* (Raleigh), June 24, July 8, 1825.

respect your own privileges” by supporting their opponents.⁹⁵ Opposition to the incumbents, such as Richard Hines who ran against Thomas Hall, condemned the caucus. Those sounding the anti-caucus alarm warned that the “caucus system” allowed congressmen two years to “traffic and bargain” for office and patronage and that Congress would eventually control the presidency via its influence in supporting a particular candidate through a nominating caucus.⁹⁶

The overwhelming popular vote for Jackson in North Carolina had placed some members of the congressional delegation in the position of having to explain their support for Crawford in the House election. For example, John Long, Jr., expressed confidence that his course was justified, since he had never concealed his support for Crawford during the 1823 congressional elections. Long explained to his constituents that the congressional election had turned on the candidates’ preference in the presidential contest. Thus, he was obligated to vote for Crawford. He further declared that North Carolina’s delegation had used its best judgement and that Crawford was the right choice for the nation and that his principles and likely policies would be agreeable to the South.⁹⁷

Long retained his congressional seat, but his colleague Richard D. Spaight, Jr., did not fare as well. Spaight insisted that he had voted for Crawford, because Crawford was a

⁹⁵Ibid., July 15, 1825.

⁹⁶Richard Hines, “To the Freemen Electors of the Counties of Edgecomb, Pitt, Beaufort, Hyde, Washington, and Tyrrell . . .,” June 12, 1825, in *ibid.*, July 29, 1825.

⁹⁷John Long, Jr., “To the Freemen of Rowan, Davidson, Randolph, and Chatham Counties . . .,” February 16, 1825, in Noble E. Cunningham, ed., *Circular Letters of Congressmen to Their Constituents, 1789–1829* (3 vols., Chapel Hill, 1978), 3:1275–1277.

man of integrity and talent who adhered to solid Jeffersonian Republican principles.

Furthermore, he declared, Crawford "was a Southern man, and the *owner of slaves*."⁹⁸

John H. Bryan defeated Spaight, who was portrayed by his supporters as "a republican in practice as well as theory" unlike the caucus men who voted for Crawford against the popular will.⁹⁹

Eleven of the thirteen representatives faced opposition. Of the nine representatives who attended the caucus, four were defeated but four won reelection. The ninth, Hutchins G. Burton, had attended the caucus but had resigned in January 1825 to accept the governorship. The voters returned six members and elected seven new representatives, including Richard Hines.¹⁰⁰ Two of the representatives who had voted against Crawford in the House election, John Culpepper and Robert Vance lost. Ironically, Vance, a Jackson man in the Twelfth District, lost to Samuel Carson who also backed Jackson. Unsuccessful candidate James Graham, who also ran in the Twelfth District, complained that the issue of the late presidential election and Jackson's name had been used by his opponents in the race "as a passport to political promotion."¹⁰¹ Though some political observers in North Carolina insisted that attendance in the congressional caucus was not a factor in the defeat of any representatives, six of the newly elected

⁹⁸Richard Dobbs Spaight, Jr., [To Constituents], March 3, 1825, in *ibid.*, 3:1304.

⁹⁹*Star and North Carolina State Gazette* (Raleigh), July 29, 1825.

¹⁰⁰*Ibid.*, August 26, 1825; Dubin, *Congressional Elections*, 83.

¹⁰¹James Graham to William A. Graham, August 27, 1825, in Joseph G. de Roulhac Hamilton et al., eds., *The Papers of William Alexander Graham* (8 vols., Raleigh, 1957), 1:146-47.

members had expressed anti-caucus sentiments or were at least known to be against the caucus.¹⁰² Thus participation in the caucus had clearly hurt some of the incumbents' political standing.

Throughout 1825, the Crawford men in North Carolina sought to maintain a course of cautious neutrality between themselves and the partisans of Adams, Calhoun, and Jackson. Lewis Williams asserted that this impartiality was necessary to preserve the Crawford party in North Carolina despite efforts of the Jackson men to gain control of the state. Williams informed Yancey that Calhoun and Jackson partisans in Washington opposed Adams's administration but that the Crawfordites would wait and judge the administration by its acts.¹⁰³ Williams had long disliked Jackson and, in fact, eventually supported Adams.¹⁰⁴

When the North Carolina state legislature convened in late November, Governor Burton's message began with a reference to the late presidential election and the various proposed changes in the mode of electing a president. He urged the assembly to take the matter under consideration. The legislature took up resolutions concerning the selection of electors in a uniform manner by districts nationwide, and discussed means of keeping the election out of the U.S. House but did nothing more than request North Carolina's

¹⁰²*Raleigh Register*, September 9, 1825; *Star and North Carolina State Gazette* (Raleigh), September 9, 1825.

¹⁰³Lewis Williams to Bartlett Yancey, April 4, 1825, and Lewis Williams to Bartlett Yancey, [1825], in Joseph G. de Roulhac Hamilton, ed., "Letters to Bartlett Yancey," *James Sprunt Historical Publications* 10 (1911): 52-56.

¹⁰⁴Lewis Williams to James Barbour, May 30, 1825, Barbour Family Papers, University of Virginia, Charlottesville.

representatives in the House and instruct its two senators to work toward amending the Constitution on this subject.¹⁰⁵

Adams's first annual message had sounded an alarm in Virginia among the conservative Republicans, but it seemed to have little impact in North Carolina. Politicians in the state were either not as sensitive to perceived executive usurpation of power or were content to let the Virginians lead the protest. The *Register* published it on December 16 but withheld any substantive comment. The *Star* also failed to comment in any meaningful manner. Although the newspapers remained quiet on Adams's message, some members of North Carolina's Congressional delegation expressed unease with Adams's conception of the power of the federal government. For example, Nathaniel Macon warned his friend Bartlett Yancey that if Congress could establish a bank or build a road or canal, then Congress could "free every slave in the several states."¹⁰⁶ Willie P. Mangum contended that the administration of Adams "opens upon principles that I cannot approve."¹⁰⁷ Though Adams's articulation of the federal government's responsibility to encourage a progressive development did not inspire an immediate reaction in North Carolina, the state's representatives in Washington watched the young administration with caution.

¹⁰⁵*Star and North Carolina State Gazette* (Raleigh), November 25, December 2, 1825.

¹⁰⁶Nathaniel Macon to Bartlett Yancey, December 8, 1825, in Kemp P. Battle, ed., "Letters of Nathaniel Macon," *James Sprunt Historical Monographs* 2 (1900): 76.

¹⁰⁷Willie P. Mangum to Charity A. Mangum, December 11, 1825, in Shanks, ed., *Mangum Papers*, 1:211.

The election of Adams in 1825 resolved the so-called presidential question but his policies and articulation of the role of the federal government gave the conservative Republicans in Virginia and North Carolina cause for concern. The divisiveness of the campaign subsided briefly in 1825 only to reemerge during Adams's administration. The presidential elections in 1824 and in 1825 mark a transitional phase in American political development as the nation moved from the first party system to the second. This transitional period of factional politics would serve as the seed bed for the emergence of new parties in the 1830s. There was no certain heir apparent in 1824, and thus no clear winner in the presidential election. Crawford, Adams, Calhoun, Clay, and Jackson could not command a large enough following to cut through the sectional interests and jealousies that held sway in the 1820s. A coalition between two or more of the factions in the weakened Republican party was necessary to obtain enough support to win the presidency.

In North Carolina the adherents of Calhoun, Jackson, and Adams had formed an alliance to defeat Crawford, but they could not accomplish this task in Virginia, because they did not pool their strength. At the national level, Adams and Clay formed a coalition that placed Adams in the presidency. For many, including Jackson and Calhoun, this need for coalition within the political system appeared to be a corrupting process. Ironically, the Jacksonians, Calhounites, and Crawfordites would have to combine in their own coalition to defeat the Adams-Clay wing of the Republican party.

Chapter 5

***“Opposition to Jackson is support of Adams”:* The Factional Opposition and the Emergence of the Jacksonian Coalition**

After Adams's election in 1825, Crawfordites in Virginia and North Carolina cautiously watched his administration. They had been initially willing to support him, if he had adhered to an acceptable philosophy of government. These Old Republicans, however, reacted negatively to Adams's first annual message in December 1825 in which he laid out a grand vision concerning the power and responsibility of the federal government. Adams had, in their view, committed heresy against the Constitution, and his subsequent actions over the course of his administration only further aggravated the Crawfordites. When Adams failed to live up to their expectations, many of the conservative Crawfordites joined the Jacksonians and Calhounites and moved into the opposition. Adams's mis-steps as president and his pursuit of a progressive nationalist agenda encouraged the flourishing of the Jacksonian alliance in Virginia and North Carolina. The period from 1826 to the presidential election of 1828 marks the transition from the “factional opposition” against Adams's administration to the Jacksonian coalition composed of Jackson supporters, Calhoun partisans, and the Crawfordite wing of the Republican party led by Martin Van Buren.

The Old Republicans in Virginia and North Carolina had learned the lessons of the 1824 presidential campaign in which rivalry among the various factions had splintered the unity of the party and forced the election into the House of Representatives. They

eventually supported Jackson, because he was the one candidate who could defeat Adams. In 1828, the campaign focused on the character of the contestants and on their principles. The rhetoric of corruption, both public and personal, remained a constant theme in the political discourse. Thus, the Crawfordites who joined the Jacksonian and Calhoun factions did not necessarily support Jackson so much as they opposed Adams, his policies, and his concept of the power and role of the federal government. For example, at a public dinner held to honor John Randolph in early March 1827, a participant gave a toast that summarized conservative support for Jackson: "Andrew Jackson—*Opposition* to Jackson is *support* of Adams."¹

Although the Nineteenth Congress initially took an uncommitted attitude toward Adams's administration, three major factions soon emerged: supporters of the administration, Jacksonians allied with Calhounites, and Old Republicans led by Martin Van Buren.² The latter group originally remained aloof from the Jackson-Calhoun alliance. Quintessential Old Republican Nathaniel Macon doubted a cohesive opposition to the administration could be formed. He noted that those who objected to the election of Adams did not agree on who should take his place and that the different factions did not adhere to the same political principles.³ Henry Clay thought that the administration

¹*Richmond Enquirer*, March 10, 1827.

²Alvin W. Lynn, "Party Formation and Operation in the House of Representatives, 1824–1837" (Ph.D. diss., Rutgers University, 1972), 147–48; Robert V. Remini, *The Election of Andrew Jackson* (Philadelphia, 1963), 34–35.

³Nathaniel Macon to Bartlett Yancey, January 29, 1826, in Kemp P. Battle, ed., "Letters of Nathaniel Macon to John R. Eaton and Bartlett Yancey," *James Sprunt Historical Monographs* 2 (1900): 79–80.

supporters outnumbered the fragmented opposition, but he watched warily as Van Buren and Calhoun sought to come to terms with each other. He surmised that they would at least consent to oppose the administration for the present, with an understanding that they might work out the details later.⁴

In 1825 representatives of Colombia and Mexico invited the United States to Panama to attend a congress of Latin American states to discuss diplomatic relations. Adams's appointment of two representatives in late December 1826 to the proposed Panama conference provided the opposition with an issue to test its strength in the Senate. The senators from Virginia and North Carolina, John Randolph, Littleton W. Tazewell, Nathaniel Macon, and John Branch, played a prominent role in opposing Adams's administration.⁵

The Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, appointed by Vice President Calhoun, was composed of Calhoun and Crawford supporters. Macon chaired the committee and Tazewell wrote the report critical of the Panama mission. The Senate did eventually vote to support the U.S. mission but the delays in reaching consensus on the issue, plus opposition in the House of Representatives to appropriating the necessary funds, postponed the mission until the conference had adjourned.⁶ Virginia's

⁴Henry Clay to [Peter B. Porter], February 22, 1826, in James F. Hopkins et al., eds., *The Papers of Henry Clay* (11 vols., Lexington, 1959-92), 5:126.

⁵Henry Clay to [Peter B. Porter], February 22, 1826, in *ibid.*, 126; Remini, *Election of Andrew Jackson*, 40-41.

⁶Mary W. Hargreaves, *The Presidency of John Quincy Adams* (Lawrence, Kans., 1985), 147-53.

Congressional delegation largely opposed the Panama mission, except for a few members, such as Thomas Newton, Charles F. Mercer, William Armstrong, and Alfred Powell, who supported both it and Adams. All but one of North Carolina's representatives opposed the Panama mission.⁷

The maneuvering by the partisans of Jackson, Calhoun, and Crawford thus frustrated Adams, who complained of their efforts "to baffle the friends of the Administration."⁸ Though the president actually won the contest over the deployment of delegates to Panama, the controversy solidified the opposition forces in the Senate and illustrated the value of cooperation.⁹

During the debate over the Panama mission, John Randolph boldly declared his opposition to the administration and castigated the Adams and Clay coalition as a "combination, unheard of until then, of the Puritan and blackleg."¹⁰ Clay challenged John Randolph to a duel over these disparaging remarks. The two men met on April 8, 1827, but came away from their rendezvous with pride and honor (and body) intact, though Clay

⁷Trenton E. Hizer, "Virginia Is Now Divided: Politics in the Old Dominion, 1820-1830" (Ph.D. diss., University of South Carolina, 1997), 150-51. See also the votes for appropriation of the Panama mission in *Register of Debates*, 19 Cong., 1 Sess., 2514.

⁸Charles F. Adams, ed., *Memoirs of John Quincy Adams, Comprising Portions of His Diary from 1795-1848* (12 vols., Philadelphia, 1874-77), 7:111-12.

⁹Richard H. Brown, "Southern Planters and Plain Republicans of the North: Martin Van Buren's Formula for National Politics" (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1955), 75-76; Charles M. Wiltse, *John C. Calhoun, Nationalist, 1782-1828* (Indianapolis, 1944), 324-27.

¹⁰*Register of Debates*, 19 Cong., 1 Sess., 389-404.

did put a hole in Randolph's coat.¹¹ John H. Pleasants, editor of the *Richmond Constitutional Whig*, told Clay that news of the duel had produced great excitement in Richmond and had raised Clay's standing immeasurably. Pleasants expressed his hope that Clay's willingness to defend his reputation "will stop the mouths of your illiberal enemies." Others, however, did not approve of the confrontation, and one of Clay's friends informed him "that it would have been better to have disregarded the phrensy [*sic*] of the madman." The strained relations within the administration gave rise to bizarre rumors in Kentucky that claimed Clay had also challenged Calhoun to a duel and had killed him.¹²

Criticism of the President on the Panama issue focused on his language used in informing Congress of his decision to send delegates to the meeting. Adams had announced that the invitation to the conference *had been accepted* and that ministers *would be appointed* to it, thereby semantically omitting the Senate from its role of giving advice and consent in matters of foreign affairs.¹³ Opponents of the Panama mission also pointed to more substantial issues, such as how the presence there of the United States would affect its relations with Spain. Moreover, the *Enquirer* conceded that the proposed Panama Congress was a wise strategy for the South America states, for they had a

¹¹For Clay's challenge and Randolph's response see Clay to Randolph, March 31, 1827, and Randolph to Clay, April 1, 1827, both in Hopkins et al., eds., *Clay Papers*, 5:208, 211–12. For a description of the events of the duel see Thomas Hart Benton, *Thirty Years View* (2 vols., reprint, New York, 1968), 1:70–77.

¹²John H. Pleasants to Henry Clay, April 10, [1826], and John J. Crittenden to Henry Clay, April 27, 1826, both in Hopkins et al., eds., *Clay Papers*, 5:227–28, 277–78.

¹³*Richmond Enquirer*, February 9, 1826.

common enemy, Spain, and mutual concerns. But, the newspaper observed, the United States had no compelling interests that required its participation. Furthermore, the country should heed the advice of Washington and Jefferson to have little connection with foreign nations and entangling alliances.¹⁴

Opponents of the mission also insisted that Adams's willingness to commit the United States to participation without asking the Senate's advice or consent illustrated his expansive view of presidential power. On the other hand, the Lynchburg *Virginian* declared that opposition to the Panama Congress was "strange and unwarrantable" and was nothing more than an exhibition of faction and intrigue carried out solely to embarrass the administration. This opposition, asserted the newspaper, was the work of Calhoun, whom it labeled "the ambitious leader and instigator of the opposition" and "the master spirit of the organized Congressional faction."¹⁵

Throughout the spring of 1826, the *Virginian* continued to criticize Calhoun but refrained from criticizing Crawfordites. The newspaper pointed out that the Virginia friends of Crawford had not participated "in the disgraceful opposition waged against the present administration." By late summer, however, the newspaper included John Randolph among those working against Adams and Clay. It avowed that this factious opposition was composed of partisans with different political views and was primarily motivated by the goal of forcing Adams and Clay out of office.¹⁶

¹⁴Ibid., March 21, 1826.

¹⁵*Virginian* (Lynchburg), January 26, 1826.

¹⁶Ibid., April 13, August 31, 1827.

The *Enquirer*, on the other hand, dismissed charges of an organized anti-administration coalition by wryly noting that "every cuckoo of an editor repeats the cry, so it is with the parasitical advocates of the administration." The paper derided the conversion of politics into personalities where "honest independence is to be put down by the cuckoo note of 'opposition, opposition.'" According to the *Enquirer*, Adams had given many reasons to doubt "his judgement and the justness of his principles," and had demonstrated his encouragement of extending the power of the federal government.¹⁷

The *Enquirer* also defended Calhoun against charges of opposition intrigue by declaring that, while the Vice President might oppose the administration on a variety of issues, he would not scheme to injure Adams and Clay. Calhoun, argued the newspaper, was "a man of genius . . . and not easily to be kept in the back ground by all the puppets of the administration." Furthermore, any opposition to Adams was due to his own actions and principles that were "sufficient to arouse the jealousy of a free people." Virginians who opposed Adams, declared the *Enquirer*, were not partisans of Calhoun and would "take their own ground and will pursue their own course."¹⁸

In the summer of 1826, the editors of both the *Enquirer* and the *Virginian* expressed reluctance to tackle the subject of the next presidential election. Growing support for Jackson in Pennsylvania caused the *Virginian* to lament the early agitation of the 1828 election, for the editors had hoped that they would be spared another three-year

¹⁷*Richmond Enquirer*, March 24, 1826.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, April 28, 1826.

war over the presidency.¹⁹ The *Enquirer* also professed a desire to postpone discussion of the next presidential election, because the sooner the question was engaged “the greater the ravages of discord.” Yet it did announce that it distrusted Adams’s administration and disapproved of its principles, but was unwilling to “to rush into an indiscriminate and heedless opposition to all its future measures.” The paper did, however, give notice that the voice of the people would be heard at the proper time, and “when the time to act arrives, if we cannot get the man we like, we will take the least of the evils that may be forced upon us.”²⁰

Increasingly, the “least of evils” looked more like Andrew Jackson. As Crawfordites scanned the political landscape, they realized their options were limited. Thomas W. Cobb of Georgia complained to Claiborne Gooch, co-editor of the *Enquirer*, that although he despised Adams and Clay, he had “but little less horror at the idea of supporting Jackson, who is [and] will be an unthinking tyrant, if ever there was one.” The Crawfordites had no champion in national politics and they needed a rallying point, someone who adhered to old school doctrines of the Republican party. Crawford still suffered from poor health, had difficulty with his speech, and some questioned his mental abilities. Moreover, Nathaniel Macon, a long-time favorite of the Old Republicans, was simply too old.²¹

¹⁹*Virginian* (Lynchburg), June 8, 1826.

²⁰*Richmond Enquirer*, August 25, 1826.

²¹Thomas W. Cobb to Claiborne Gooch, June 18, 182[6], Gooch Family Papers, University of Virginia, Charlottesville.

Though the public mind was unsettled on the upcoming presidential election, some political observers in Virginia recognized the growing momentum of Jackson's candidacy. By mid-1826 many of the most zealous men of the Old Republican ranks looked to Jackson, but probably would have supported anyone in preference to Adams.²² Others in Virginia who disliked Adams were, however, bothered by Jackson's past conduct. For example, his suspension of *habeas corpus* in New Orleans and apparent disregard for orders during the Seminole campaign in 1818, and other similar incidents, led many to consider him too dangerous.²³

As Jackson's political star began to rise in Virginia, Adams supporters asserted that Jackson's military career illustrated his propensity, if he felt justified, to disregard laws and instructions. Adams men also contended that Jackson's Senate votes on the tariff of 1824 demonstrated his advocacy of the measure to protect manufacturing interests. Furthermore, they declared, he favored a general system of internal improvements sponsored by the federal government.²⁴ As Jackson continued to gain in popularity, the *Virginian* conceded that Adams and Jackson were about even in the state. The editors predicted that it would be "a whipping race at the polls" in 1828.²⁵

²²Benjamin Watkins Leigh to Henry Lee, July 30, 1826, Benjamin Watkins Leigh Papers, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond. See also P. N. Nicholas to Martin Van Buren, October 13, 1826, Martin Van Buren Papers, LC.

²³Claiborne Watkins to Henry Clay, September 30, 1826, in Hopkins et al., eds., *Clay Papers*, 5:738.

²⁴*Virginian* (Lynchburg), October 12, 1826.

²⁵*Ibid.*, November 13, 1826.

The political situation in North Carolina was similar to that in Virginia. Those who had supported Crawford in the 1824 presidential election initially took a neutral course toward Adams and waited to gauge his performance. When the controversy over the Panama Congress erupted in early 1826, the *Raleigh Register*, a Crawford paper in the last presidential election, asserted that it would be impolitic for the United States to join the proposed pan-American confederation. The newspaper, however, cautiously endorsed the mission and conceded that the nation at least ought to send diplomatic representatives to observe the proceedings.²⁶

While the *Register* supported the administration on the Panama issue, it expressed regret that Adams's announcement of the acceptance of the invitation implied a loose construction of the Constitution concerning powers delegated to the Senate. In answer to charges that an organized opposition to the administration existed in the Senate, the *Register* defended those who opposed the Panama mission as acting out of principle.²⁷ The *Star* avoided any outright partisan commentary on this controversy in its columns.²⁸ Throughout 1826, both papers refrained from provocative political rhetoric. The *Register's* lukewarm defense of Adams, however, illustrated dissatisfaction with the President in the state.

Meanwhile, Calhoun worked hard to cultivate the North Carolina Congressional

²⁶*Raleigh Register*, February 3, 1826.

²⁷*Ibid.*, April 7, 1826.

²⁸*Star and North Carolina State Gazette* (Raleigh), March 24, 31, and April 7, 14, 1826.

delegation in early 1826 in an attempt to attract them into the Jacksonian-Calhoun coalition. Calhoun's efforts were not entirely successful. Crawfordite Lewis Williams, no doubt motivated by his ardently anti-Jackson feelings, moved into the Adams camp, while other Crawfordites, such as Willie P. Mangum, remained aloof. Mangum expressed misgivings that Adams's administration would be conducted on corrupt principles and "bargaining and compromise will be the order of the day."²⁹ Old Republican leaders in the state, such as Bartlett Yancey, agreed with Mangum's assessment and thought the Crawford party best served by preserving its independence and standing with neither the Adams party nor the gathering Jackson partisans. Yancey asserted that the interests of the South would not benefit from either Adams or Jackson; therefore, he hoped for a third alternative.³⁰

Before the first session of the Nineteenth Congress adjourned, however, North Carolina Crawfordites generally became more accepting of Jackson as the only man "to put down Adams."³¹ Yet Macon, who had already determined that he would not support Adams unless he changed his policies, still hesitated to support Jackson for the

²⁹Willie P. Mangum to Bartlett Yancey, January 15, 1826, in Henry T. Shanks, ed., *The Papers of Willie Person Mangum* (5 vols., Raleigh, 1950-56), 1:230-34.

³⁰Bartlett Yancey to Willie P. Mangum, January 25, 1826, in *ibid.*, 1:238-41.

³¹Willie P. Mangum to Charity A. Mangum, April 8, 1826, in *ibid.*, 1:268; Romulus Saunders to Bartlett Yancey, April 17, 1826, in Albert R. Newsome, ed., "Letters of Romulus M. Saunders to Bartlett Yancey," *North Carolina Historical Review* 8 (1931): 456-57.

presidency.³² The administration did try to reach out to friends of Crawford in North Carolina by offering Bartlett Yancey a diplomatic appointment as *chargé d'affaires* to Peru. Yancey, however, declined the position, a decision praised by some Old Republicans as a rebuff to the administration's effort to divide and conquer the Crawfordites.³³ After that attempt, the administration conceded the state to the Jacksonians.

Some Old Republicans hoped that DeWitt Clinton might come forward as a candidate and thereby offer an alternative to Old Hickory. Newspaper reports in early 1827, however, proclaimed that Clinton would not get into the race; thus, the opposition to Adams's election would have to concentrate on Jackson.³⁴ Faced with the choice between Adams and Jackson, Old Republicans in Virginia and North Carolina reluctantly sided with the Jackson-Calhoun forces.

Many historians dismiss the presidential election of 1828 as a contest of personalities rather than of substance. Yet this narrow view misses the importance of the discussions of the candidates' character and how each contender would administer the government. In short, character and policy were inseparable. The campaign also involved issues, as Adams had laid out a program of nationalism, buttressed by Clay's "American

³²Nathaniel Macon to Bartlett Yancey, March 31, 1826, in Battle, ed., "Letters of Macon," 84-86.

³³Henry Clay to Bartlett Yancey, March 2, 1826, and Bartlett Yancey to Henry Clay, March 20, 1826, abstracts, both in Hopkins et al., eds., *Clay Papers*, 5:141-42. See also *Richmond Enquirer*, April 11, 1826, and *Star and North Carolina State Gazette*, April 21, 1826.

³⁴*Richmond Enquirer*, February 6, 1827.

System,” and had expressed a progressive view of the government’s role in American life. Adams’s vision offended Southern Old Republicans’ Jeffersonian principles and gave them the rallying cry of states rights and limited government with which they hammered the administration on everything from the proposed Panama mission to the President’s conflict with Georgia over its efforts to obtain Creek lands within the state.

For the Crawfordite Republicans, Jackson’s candidacy had to be based on more than personal appeal, because they had never been enamored of him or his military fame and in fact had eagerly criticized his military record in 1824. Jacksonians built on the themes they had laid out in the previous presidential election which portrayed him as above Washington intrigue and corruption and as a true disinterested Republican eager only to serve his nation. This depiction, according to historian Mary W. M. Hargreaves, provided the “ideological counter thrust” to Adams’s program of nationalism and laid the foundation for Jackson’s ties with the Old Republicans in Virginia and North Carolina.³⁵

Jackson articulated his opposition to Adams’s administration in Old Republican terms.³⁶ Aside from the charge of “corrupt bargain,” Jackson condemned Adams’s 1825 message to Congress and warned that if Adams’s expansive conception of federal power was “not checked by the voice of the people, it must end in consolidation, [and] then in despotism.” He also declared that the acceptance of the invitation to the Panama Congress, without the advice and consent of the Senate, was “an attempt to destroy the

³⁵Hargreaves, *Presidency of John Quincy Adams*, 27–29, 247, 313.

³⁶Robert V. Remini, *Andrew Jackson and the Course of American Freedom, 1822–1832* (New York, 1981), 35.

constitutional checks of our government [*sic*]” and “gave much alarm to the republicans of the old school of 1798–9.” In Jackson’s view, there was no need for the United States to attend the meeting.

According to Jackson, the proper sphere for the federal government was to concentrate on paying off the national debt, prepare the country’s defenses, and apportion any surplus revenue.³⁷ Regarding internal improvements, Jackson held a limited view of the powers granted by the Constitution. The federal government did not have the right to construct roads or canals within a state without the state’s approval, unless the construction was for a military road or fortification. A federally-sponsored program of internal improvements provided the executive with too much patronage, so Jackson thought, that could be misused for political purposes.³⁸

Though his political principles generally adhered to Old Republican guidelines, Jackson’s friends cautioned him about efforts by administration supporters in Virginia to draw him out regarding his interpretation of the Constitution. Jackson answered this warning by assuring his friends that, “I have no disguise with my friends, but am not in the habit of gratifying enemies—I have nothing in my political creed to keep secret, it was formed in the old republican school, and is without change.”³⁹ Echoing his earlier advice

³⁷Andrew Jackson to John Branch, March 3, 1826, *The Papers of Andrew Jackson* (1986 microfilm).

³⁸Andrew Jackson to Hugh Lawson White, March 16, 1826, *ibid.*

³⁹James K. Polk to Andrew Jackson, December 4, 1826; Andrew Jackson to James K. Polk, December [2]4, 1826, both in Herbert Weaver et al., eds., *Correspondence of James K. Polk* (9 vols. to date, Nashville, 1969–), 1:51–54, 63–65.

to Jackson in the 1824 presidential campaign, John H. Eaton urged Old Hickory to be aware of attempts by his opponents to entice him into a conflict and "bear their charges & accusations what ever they be."⁴⁰

John C. Calhoun decided early in 1826 that he would not compete for the presidency in 1828, but he expressed dissatisfaction with Adams's administration and believed that Henry Clay was manipulating Adams. Convinced that Clay viewed him as a future rival for the presidency, Calhoun also thought that Clay was exerting the power of the administration and its patronage to build a base of support.⁴¹ The Vice President continued to watch the course of the administration with disapproval and by late spring of 1826 voiced concern that Adams's and Clay's use of executive power and patronage would set a dangerous precedent by which the president, through the power of his office, could name his successor. Calhoun viewed the political struggle he found himself in as one between liberty and power. He informed Jackson that he wished for Old Hickory's triumph over Adams, for it would be the victory of the people and liberty over the corrupting forces of power.⁴² Jackson responded that he trusted that his name "will always be found on the side of the people, and as their confidence in your talents and virtue has placed you in the second office of the government, that we shall march hand in

⁴⁰John H. Eaton to Andrew Jackson, February 4, 1827, Andrew Jackson Papers, LC.

⁴¹John C. Calhoun to Micah Sterling, February 4, 1826, in Robert L. Meriwether et al., eds., *The Papers of John C. Calhoun* (24 vols. to date, Columbia, 1959-), 10:72-73.

⁴²John C. Calhoun to Micah Sterling, May 31, 1826; John C. Calhoun to Andrew Jackson, June 4, 1826, in *ibid.*, 10:107-09, 110-11.

hand in their cause."⁴³

William H. Crawford was no longer a viable force in national politics. His debilitating illness in 1823 and defeat in the 1824 presidential election ended his hopes of obtaining the presidency; and those who had backed him in that contest had to look elsewhere for a champion. Nevertheless, Crawford tried to influence the upcoming presidential contest by attempting to block Calhoun from positioning himself as Jackson's successor. At one point he even suggested Nathaniel Macon as a suitable vice-presidential candidate in place of his old nemesis, Calhoun.⁴⁴ Crawford warned Jackson supporter Hugh Lawson White that Calhoun's association hampered Jackson's cause in Georgia and the other Atlantic states.⁴⁵ Though Crawford affirmed that he would not oppose Jackson, he stopped short of publicly endorsing Old Hickory. He did, however, tacitly support the General and authorized Martin Van Buren to make his opinion known "upon every proper occasion."⁴⁶

Van Buren's role in formulating a viable opposition to Adams is well known,

⁴³Andrew Jackson to John C. Calhoun, [July 18, 1826], in *ibid.*, 10:159–60.

⁴⁴William H. Crawford to Martin Van Buren, December 21, 1827, in William H. Williams, ed., "Ten Letters from William Harris Crawford to Martin Van Buren," *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 49 (1965): 70–71.

⁴⁵William H. Crawford to Hugh L. White, May 27, 1827, in John S. Bassett, ed., *Correspondence of Andrew Jackson* (7 vols., Washington, 1926–35), 3:365.

⁴⁶William H. Crawford to Martin Van Buren, August 17, 1827, in Williams, ed., "Ten Letters," 70; William H. Crawford to Alfred Balch, December 14, 1827, in *National Banner and Nashville Whig*, March 4, 1831.

thanks to the works of several historians, and need not be recounted here.⁴⁷ Although Van Buren was a committed partisan politician and adhered to Old Republican principles, he was more pragmatist than ideologue. He realized that the combination of Jackson's personal popularity with the Old Republican political principles would be enough to defeat Adams. Van Buren pitched his case to Thomas Ritchie to get the influential editor into the newly-evolving Jacksonian coalition.⁴⁸ His efforts to obtain the support of the Southern Old Republicans for Jackson melded the Jackson, Calhoun, and Crawford factions of 1824 into a viable political proto-party of sorts that could successfully oppose Adams and Clay in the upcoming presidential election.

The year 1827 marks the pivotal moment in the formation of the coalition that backed Jackson's 1828 candidacy for the presidency. Many Old Republicans in Virginia and North Carolina who had looked to Crawford as their standard-bearer in 1824 now accepted Jackson as the candidate to defeat Adams. A few of the Old Republicans, however, retained their dislike and distrust of Jackson and went into the Adams camp. Still others viewed Jackson as less of a threat than Adams, who had already demonstrated

⁴⁷For example, see Henry H. Simms, *The Rise of the Whigs in Virginia, 1824–1840* (Richmond, 1929); Charles S. Sydnor, *The Development of Southern Sectionalism, 1819–1848* (Baton Rouge, 1948); Brown, "Southern Planters and Plain Republicans"; Robert V. Remini's works, *Martin Van Buren and the Making of the Democratic Party* (New York, 1959) and *The Election of Andrew Jackson*; John Niven, *Martin Van Buren: The Romantic Age of American Politics* (New York, 1983); Donald B. Cole, *Martin Van Buren and the American Political System* (Princeton, 1984); and most recently, William G. Shade, *Democratizing the Old Dominion: Virginia and the Second Party System, 1824–1861* (Charlottesville, 1996).

⁴⁸Martin Van Buren to Thomas Ritchie, January 13, 1827, Martin Van Buren Papers, LC.

that he would not sustain the tenets of Jeffersonian Republicanism.

In early 1827 three factions populated the political landscape in Virginia: those who supported the administration, those generally against the administration, and those inclined to favor Jackson.⁴⁹ Administration supporters claimed a victory when John Randolph, who had routinely criticized and condemned Adams and Clay, lost the Senate seat he had won in 1825. Some historians have asserted that John Tyler's victory over Randolph motivated uncommitted Crawfordites, such as Thomas Ritchie, to accept Jackson's candidacy. Indeed, Ritchie had confidently asserted that Randolph would be easily reelected and may have seen Randolph's defeat as a sign of the administration's political viability in Virginia. A coalition of Tyler's friends, Adams men, and those in the state legislature who disliked Randolph enabled Tyler to defeat Randolph by a slim majority of five votes.⁵⁰ The *Virginian* applauded Randolph's defeat, while the *Enquirer* voiced regret at the results and asserted that, nevertheless, a majority of the Virginia legislature opposed the administration. The *Enquirer* also declared that Randolph would no doubt resume his seat in the House of Representatives that he had resigned in 1825.⁵¹

Any victory claimed by the Adams forces in Virginia proved short lived, however,

⁴⁹Francis T. Brooke to Henry Clay, February 11, 1827, in Hopkins et al., eds., *Clay Papers*, 6:185–86.

⁵⁰Remini, *Election of Andrew Jackson*, 58; Simms, *Whigs in Virginia*, 22–24; John H. Pleasants to Henry Clay, December 24, [1826], in Hopkins et al., eds., *Clay Papers*, 5:1030–31.

⁵¹*Virginian* (Lynchburg), January 18, 1827; *Richmond Enquirer*, January 16, 1827.

because Tyler announced that he, like Randolph, also opposed the administration.⁵² A small controversy erupted shortly after Tyler's election when word circulated that he had written a letter to Clay in March 1825 lauding Clay's decisions to vote for Adams and accept Adams's offer of the state department.⁵³ The *Enquirer* defended Tyler and asserted that a majority of Virginians had supported Adams as their second choice in 1824 and had been willing to support him before "the alarming developments" of his administration. In a public statement, Tyler explained that Adams had been his second choice in 1824 after Crawford, because, at that time, he believed Adams better qualified than Jackson. This initial support for Adams, he asserted, did not bind him to the administration or its policies.⁵⁴

The question of measures and men hung over the 1828 presidential contest just as it had in 1824. This time those who backed Adams claimed that Jackson's partisans were a factious lot motivated solely by political ambition. For example, the *Virginian* claimed that Jackson supported the tariff as did Adams; and that if the Jackson men truly disagreed with the administration on principles, then they would support someone else such as DeWitt Clinton.⁵⁵ The editors of the paper, however, insisted that they advocated

⁵²*Richmond Enquirer*, February 1, 1827.

⁵³For Tyler's letter, see John Tyler to Henry Clay, March 27, 1825, in Hopkins et al., eds., *Clay Papers*, 4:189–90.

⁵⁴*Richmond Enquirer*, February 8, 15, 1827.

⁵⁵*Virginian* (Lynchburg), February 13, 1827.

Adams's reelection solely on principle.⁵⁶

The charge that the opposition was a factious and unprincipled alliance was a constant theme in pro-Adams rhetoric. The Adams presses seized on a speech by John Floyd at a February 1827 public dinner in Richmond in which he declared that "combinations have been formed, and are forming" to combat the corrupt administration.⁵⁷ Now charges of a corrupt Adams-Clay coalition were met with a counter charge of a self serving "combination," organized and headed by Martin Van Buren, devoted to defeating Adams and Clay merely for power and political gain.⁵⁸

In response to the charge by Adams newspapers that the opposition was unprincipled and only after power and office, the *Enquirer* declared that "the people" cried out for a change of administration. According to the newspaper, the offenses of the administration included Adams's extravagant vision put forth in his first message to Congress, his advocacy of the Panama mission, the loss of the West India trade through a diplomatic dispute with Great Britain, and the use of patronage for political purposes. The *Enquirer* admitted that Jackson did not completely measure up to the Old Republican creed but maintained that his positions on the tariff and internal improvements were not as extreme as Adams's and Clay's. Furthermore, the paper proclaimed that, though it had been critical of Old Hickory on several counts, "we cannot but choose that which we regard as the lesser evil of the two." The *Enquirer* insisted that it would not be the

⁵⁶Ibid., March 13, 1827.

⁵⁷*Richmond Enquirer*, February 22, 1827.

⁵⁸Ibid., March 23; April 13, 1827.

sycophantic instrument of Jackson and would "take sides with the People; and not with their oppressors."⁵⁹ By the fall of 1827 the *Enquirer* contended that the presidential battle in Virginia was already largely decided and predicted that Jackson would get every vote from the Potomac River to Florida.⁶⁰

Traditionally, the legislature in Virginia recommended a ticket of presidential electors for the Republican nominee. The splintering of the Republican party in 1824 had caused four separate electoral tickets that year, but with only two likely candidates in 1828, there was a consolidation of political forces on the two sides. In 1827 those opposed to Jackson, echoing the rhetoric of the 1824 campaign, criticized the legislature's selection of an electoral ticket, arguing that it deprived the people of their rights. In September the administration forces in Virginia called for a convention to choose a slate of electors opposed to Jackson "without intrigue or corruption" and invited freeholders to form their own "People's Ticket" at a statewide convention in Richmond slated for January 1828.⁶¹

The organizers of the gatherings that followed generally billed them as "anti-Jackson" meetings and those who attended usually expressed support for the present administration and derided Jackson as unqualified for the presidency. Some of the conclaves admitted that Adams had deviated from preferred principles, such as a strict construction of the Constitution, but noted that his policies were generally in accord with

⁵⁹Ibid., April 27, 1827.

⁶⁰Ibid., September 18, 1827.

⁶¹Ibid., September 28, 1827.

previous administrations. Almost all of the meetings, however, castigated the “factious opposition” of Jackson partisans as unprincipled and motivated by the desire for political gain or dazzled by Old Hickory’s military fame.⁶²

The rhetoric of the anti-Jackson gatherings focused on the qualifications of the two candidates and repeatedly asserted that there were no true policy differences between Adams and Jackson. Thus, the meetings emphasized personality, defined Jackson as impetuous and headstrong, and pointed to the lessons of history illustrating, in their view, that republics had often fallen at the hand of military tyrants. While the *Virginian* praised these meetings and declared that they illustrated the triumph of the people against the “Metropolitan demagogues” in Richmond, the *Enquirer* pointed out that administration presses always remarked on the “respectable character” of those present, yet seldom reported how many actually attended.⁶³ The *Enquirer* also reiterated its view that Adams and Jackson differed on constitutional principles.⁶⁴

The “Administration Convention” met on January 8, 1828, in the borrowed chambers of the Hall of Delegates. Almost 200 participants attended and elected Francis T. Brooke, Clay’s long-time friend and supporter, chair of the meeting. This conclave lasted five days before the designated committee produced an electoral ticket. The address declared that the members feared the results of Jackson’s election. Furthermore,

⁶²Ibid., October 5, 16, 19, 25, 26, 30, November 13, 1827; *Virginian* (Lynchburg), October 29, November 15, 1827.

⁶³*Virginian* (Lynchburg), October 8, November 1, 1827; *Richmond Enquirer*, December 18, 1827.

⁶⁴*Richmond Enquirer*, October 16, 1827.

it insisted Jackson had not distinguished himself, outside of his military accomplishments, and had violated the law and the Constitution during his military adventures. The address conceded, however, that even though many convention delegates did not completely agree with Adams's measures, they generally approved of the administration's virtue and patriotism. Furthermore, the assemblage dismissed the charge of a "corrupt bargain" as unproven and without merit.⁶⁵

In a sly effort to draw James Madison and James Monroe into the political fray on the side of Adams, the participants nominated the two former presidents as electors. Adams partisans hoped that the two men would consider the seriousness of the election and consent to serve, thereby endorsing Adams candidacy.⁶⁶ The Adams committee of correspondence delayed formally notifying Madison and Monroe until after several copies of the ticket had been printed and distributed. This hesitation put the two former presidents in an awkward position. Constrained by their sense of propriety, Madison and Monroe thought it inappropriate to involve themselves further in the issue and could not publicly refuse the "honor" until notified by the Adams committee.⁶⁷ Once officially notified, however, Madison and Monroe promptly declined and communicated their high

⁶⁵Ibid., January 10, 15, 17, 1828; *Virginian* (Lynchburg), January 14, 17, 1828. See also Simms, *Whigs in Virginia*, 30–31; and Remini, *Election of Andrew Jackson*, 132–33.

⁶⁶Francis T. Brooke to Henry Clay, January 14, 1828, in Hopkins et al., eds., *Clay Papers*, 7:33–34.

⁶⁷See John Sullivan, "Indecorous Argument: The Use of Madison and Monroe in the Election of 1828," *Southern Speech Communication Journal* 45 (1980): 378–93.

estimation of both candidates.⁶⁸

Whereas the Adams gatherings focused on the qualifications and character of the two candidates, the Jackson meetings generally criticized the origin and policies of Adams's administration. Jackson supporters condemned the "corrupt bargain" between Adams and Clay, blasted the ill-fated Panama mission, the administration's failure to come to terms with Great Britain over the West India trade, and Adams's handling of the controversy between Georgia and the Creek Indians. These gatherings also occasionally derided Adams's character and political judgement. For example, the attendees charged that Adams had spent too much time in the royal courts of Europe and had become enamored of monarchical forms of government. Jacksonians also criticized Adams for his life in public service (emphasizing the salaries he had drawn), while they portrayed Jackson as "the architect of his own fortune." These meetings often passed resolutions supporting the formation of a pro-Jackson electoral ticket by the state legislature.⁶⁹ Unimpressed by the show of public support for Old Hickory, however, the *Virginian* dismissed the conclaves as "court house and bar-room frolics" and "ridiculous farces" devoid of influence and importance.⁷⁰

The state legislature selected the Jackson electoral ticket, much as it had designated the Crawford slate in the previous presidential election. Members of the

⁶⁸Francis T. Brooke to Henry Clay, February 28, 1828, in Hopkins et al., eds., *Clay Papers*, 7:124.

⁶⁹*Richmond Enquirer*, February 22, March 15, 23, 27, April 10, 13, November 20, 1827; *Virginian* (Lynchburg), November 1, December 10, 1827.

⁷⁰*Virginian* (Lynchburg), April 17, 27, 1827.

legislature in favor of Jackson met on December 13, 1827, in the Hall of Delegates but conducted no business, other than agreeing to adjourn and reconvene on January 14 to allow those who had not yet arrived in Richmond an opportunity to attend.⁷¹ On that designated day, 193 legislators and special delegates convened and resolved to support Jackson for the presidency and nominated an electoral ticket. There was, however, some difference of opinion concerning a suitable candidate for vice president. The nominees included Calhoun, Crawford, Nathaniel Macon, and others. Calhoun garnered an overwhelming majority of the votes.⁷² Thus with the nomination of electors by the Virginia legislature, the Old Republicans in the Old Dominion affirmed their support for the two candidates they had denounced in 1824. Attendance at the Jackson convention numbered 193, whereas the Adams conclave had attracted about 200 participants. The *Enquirer* discounted the slightly larger Adams turnout by pointing out that ninety-six counties and four boroughs were represented at the Jackson meeting while only seventy-two counties and five boroughs were represented at the Adams conclave.⁷³

The political situation in North Carolina resembled Virginia's. Though Jackson had received an overwhelming majority of the state's vote in the 1824 presidential contest, many Old Republicans in North Carolina remained aloof, until it was certain that Adams and Jackson would be the only two competitors in 1828. Bartlett Yancey, a leader of the

⁷¹*Richmond Enquirer*, December 13, 15, 1827.

⁷²Calhoun obtained 164 votes, Macon 20, and Crawford 3. *Ibid.*, January 15, 1828.

⁷³*Ibid.*, January 17, 1828.

North Carolina Crawfordites, distrusted Jackson but came to consider Adams as the greater evil of the two.⁷⁴ For some Old Republicans, Adams's first message was enough to send them into opposition to the administration.⁷⁵ Others, such as Romulus M. Saunders, decided early in 1827 that Jackson was "better fitted for the times" and he therefore urged his friends in North Carolina to support the General against the administration.⁷⁶

The upcoming presidential campaign did not evoke a great deal of newspaper comment in North Carolina in 1827. Given the strength of Jackson in the state in the previous election, there did not appear much to dispute. The *Register*, adhering to a quiet pro-Adams position, did not engage in the strident rhetoric of the Adams papers in other states. In June 1827 it published two articles concerning presidential politics but declared that it wished to avoid the subject as premature. The paper did announce, however, that it would open its columns to a "rational and temperate" discussion of the presidential question and called on the friends of the administration "to come out and take a stand."⁷⁷ The *Star* backed Jackson's candidacy but did not generally comment on the campaign, except for reprinting pieces from the *Richmond Enquirer* critical of the administration. In

⁷⁴William S. Hoffman, *Andrew Jackson and North Carolina Politics* (Chapel Hill, 1958), 14–17.

⁷⁵Nathaniel Macon to Weldon N. Edwards, January 4, 1828, Nathaniel Macon Papers, North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh.

⁷⁶Romulus M. Saunders to Bartlett Yancey, January 20, 1827, in Joseph G. de Roulhac Hamilton, ed., "Letters to Bartlett Yancey," *James Sprunt Historical Publications* 10 (1911): 61–62.

⁷⁷*Raleigh Register*, June 1, 1827.

late 1827, the *Star* smugly explained its reserve regarding its coverage of presidential politics thus: "It requires rivalry to beget contention."⁷⁸

As in the 1824 campaign, the partisans of each candidate looked to local meetings to galvanize popular support for their favorite. In June 1827, a correspondent to the *Register* urged the friends of Adams in North Carolina to call gatherings to promote the President's prospects for reelection and form an Adams electoral ticket.⁷⁹ The Adams conclaves usually passed resolutions dismissing the charge of "corrupt bargain" leveled by the opposition and scorned Jackson's lack of qualifications for the presidency. The Adams men argued that Jackson's popularity derived solely from his military accomplishments and warned that the elevation of a military hero set a dangerous precedent for a republic. At times the pro-administration gatherings acknowledged that not all of Adams's policies were popular, but pointed out that his measures generally conformed to those enacted during Madison's and Monroe's administrations.⁸⁰ The primary objective of these Adams conclaves was to select delegates to an Adams convention scheduled for December 20, in Raleigh. That proposed assemblage would in turn nominate a slate of presidential electors.⁸¹ In typically partisan terms, the *Star* dismissed the administration gatherings as "mere specks in the political horizon" that

⁷⁸*Star and North Carolina State Gazette* (Raleigh), December 20, 1827.

⁷⁹*Raleigh Register*, June 1, 1827.

⁸⁰*Ibid.*, November 23, 30; December 7, 11, 21, 1827.

⁸¹*Star and North Carolina State Gazette* (Raleigh), November 15, 1827.

excited "neither attention or alarm."⁸²

Fifty-five delegates attended the administration convention on December 20, and selected a slate of presidential electors. The *Register* emphasized that the ticket had been "formed openly and above board" and was not the work of a "secret cabal."⁸³ The conclave issued an address that reiterated the themes presented in the earlier Adams meetings and declared that the election was not "between opposing principles, but a conflict between opposing men, and combinations of men, . . . for power and place." Furthermore, the council defended Adams against charges of a corrupt bargain and hailed him as a proven leader who possessed the necessary wisdom and experience for the office. Jackson, according to the Adams men, was unqualified and had at best an undistinguished civil career. The address also charged that Jackson's supporters portrayed him as all things to all men and pointed out that the Jacksonians characterized the Hero as pro-tariff in Pennsylvania and other northern states but anti-tariff in the South.⁸⁴

Jackson partisans in North Carolina began calling for local meetings to support his candidacy in the spring of 1827. They managed a few gatherings in May, but the movement did not begin in earnest until late 1827 and continued into 1828. These conclaves were similar to the Jackson meetings held in Virginia. At times they attacked

⁸²Ibid., December 20, 1827.

⁸³*Raleigh Register*, December 25, 1827. Thomas E. Jeffrey, *State Parties and National Politics: North Carolina, 1815-1861* (Athens, Ga., 1989), 34.

⁸⁴*Address of the Administration Convention* (Raleigh, 1827), pamphlet, North Caroliniana Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill; *Virginian* (Lynchburg), April 7, 1828.

Adams's character and questioned his honesty and integrity. Nearly all of the assemblies surveyed, however, condemned Adams's policies—ranging from his expansive view of federal power to his administration's use of patronage. Jacksonians also criticized the Panama mission, the loss of the West India trade, and charged Adams and Clay with the "corrupt bargain." These gatherings also praised Jackson's character and noted his sterling honesty and patriotism.⁸⁵

In contrast to the campaign of 1824, the state legislature put together the 1828 Jackson electoral ticket. The *Star* published a slate of "probable" electors on January 10, 1828. According to the newspaper, this list had been derived from conversations with various members of the legislature. When the *Register* asserted that the legislature had, in fact, named the Jackson ticket, the *Star* quickly explained that the list of electors they had published were not recommended by legislators, but were individuals who would be the most likely candidates for the Jackson ticket.⁸⁶ The Jackson councils held thereafter usually nominated electors for the ticket in "district conventions." This innovation called for local gatherings within the counties of a given congressional district to select delegates to a district-wide convention to choose an elector. The Jackson forces finally announced the complete ticket in early July. With the exception of one elector, the ticket was identical to the list published by the *Star* six months earlier.⁸⁷

⁸⁵*Star and North Carolina State Gazette* (Raleigh), May 10, 24; December 6, 13, 27, 1827; January 31, February 28, April 3, and May 15, all 1828.

⁸⁶*Ibid.*, January 10, 17, 1828.

⁸⁷*Ibid.*, April 10, July 3, 1828.

The formation of the Jackson ticket illustrates a transition in North Carolina politics. The Crawfordites, still a powerful force in the legislature, backed Jackson in an organized operation that appealed to the popular will to legitimize the ticket. Cries of legislative corruption sounded by the *Star* in 1823 and 1824 were not heard from the Jackson-Calhoun-Old Republican alliance in 1828. The Adams forces tried to reinvigorate the anti-caucus spirit of the previous campaign but made little headway against Jackson's popularity.

By the end of 1827 the Jacksonian coalition had positioned itself as an imposing opponent to the administration. When Congress convened in December 1827, Adams men viewed the contest for the speakership of the House as a crucial event. The administration backed John M. Taylor of New York, while the Jacksonians supported Andrew Stevenson of Virginia.⁸⁸ Some Jacksonians, however, had preferred Philip P. Barbour over Stevenson. Stevenson supporters contended that with Barbour's brother James serving in Adams's administration, he might not be firm enough in his opposition to the administration.⁸⁹ Stevenson defeated Taylor, a victory that signaled the strength of the Jacksonians.⁹⁰

⁸⁸Henry Clay to Francis T. Brooke, November 29, 1827, in Hopkins et al., eds., *Clay Papers*, 6:1331.

⁸⁹J[ohn] S[trode] Barbour to P[hilip] P. Barbour, February 5, 1827, Ambler Family Papers, University of Virginia, Charlottesville; William C. Rives to Thomas Walker Gilmer, December 5, 1827, in "Letters of William C. Rives," *Tyler's Historical and Genealogical Register* 7 (1926): 205.

⁹⁰Lynnwood M. Dent, Jr., "The Virginia Democratic Party, 1824-1847" (2 vols., Ph.D. diss., Louisiana State University, 1974), 1:65.

Adams gloomily noted in his journal that a "decided majority" of both houses of Congress opposed his administration, "a state of things which has never before occurred under the Government of the United States."⁹¹ Clay, at least, shrugged off the setback and consoled himself that if the opposition controlled the committees in Congress, then "they assume all the responsibility of public measures." On the other hand, if Congress did not enact any substantial changes, Clay thought that "it will be a virtual admission that no change of measures is desirable." Thus, according to Clay, the triumph of the opposition might prove to be an embarrassment.⁹²

For their part, the Jacksonians hailed the victory of Stevenson as an indicator of their success. A few Jacksonians, such as John Branch, feared that there might be some strains in the coalition between the old Crawfordites and Calhounites, but he felt certain that these uneasy allies would hold the line. The legislative strategy for the Jacksonians was "to act calmly and dispassionately and to adjourn as soon as a proper regard to the public interest will permit."⁹³ Jackson's trusted friend John H. Eaton assured Old Hickory that the contest was, for all purposes, over and that he would garner at least 170 electoral votes. He also counseled Old Hickory that the majority in Congress would "take care of your cause and interest without any interference on your part; they only ask of you under

⁹¹Adams, ed., *Memoirs of John Quincy Adams*, 7:367.

⁹²Henry Clay to Francis T. Brooke, December 6, 1827, in Hopkins et al., eds., *Clay Papers*, 6:1342-43.

⁹³John Branch to Andrew Jackson, December 11, 1827, in Bassett, ed., *Correspondence of Jackson*, 3:385.

any and all circumstances to be *still* and let them manage whatever is to be done.”⁹⁴

By early 1828 there had been a change in the support for Jackson in Virginia. In 1827 backing for Old Hickory derived largely from opposition to Adams. In 1828, however, it now became a positive preference for Jackson.⁹⁵ The Adams papers, such as the *Virginian*, contrasted the *Enquirer's* advocacy of Jackson with its attacks on him in 1824 and hammered the newspaper with charges of inconsistency. The *Enquirer* responded that Adams had exhibited a contempt for the popular will. Moreover, it explained that it might have been too harsh on Old Hickory in 1824, for his errors were “dictated by necessity and not by choice.” Furthermore, the *Enquirer* emphasized that the candidates held different principles. For example, the newspaper admitted that although Jackson had voted for a “judicious tariff” in 1824, it had been a tariff designed for revenue and not for protection of industry, whereas Adams had chained himself to Clay’s “American System.”⁹⁶

The Jacksonians had been strong in North Carolina even in the 1824 election and had further entrenched themselves in the state with the addition of the Crawfordites to their coalition. Nevertheless, Adams forces tried to maintain an optimistic outlook in the face of Jackson’s popularity and superior organization in the state. Adams partisans urged more activity and zeal to motivate support for Adams and told each other the President’s

⁹⁴John H. Eaton to Andrew Jackson, January 21, 1828, in *ibid.*, 3:389–90.

⁹⁵Benjamin Watkins Leigh to William Leigh, February 3, 1828, Francis Otway Byrd Papers, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond.

⁹⁶*Richmond Enquirer*, September 12, 1828.

prospects were improving in the state.⁹⁷

The Jacksonian coalition scored massive majorities in Virginia and North Carolina in the 1828 election. For example, Jackson garnered 69 percent of the popular vote in Virginia and 73.1 percent in North Carolina.⁹⁸ The election also induced more voters to the polls in both states. Turnout in Virginia increased by 16.1 percent over the 1824 election and by 15.1 percent in North Carolina.⁹⁹ The “factious opposition” had coalesced into a formidable proto-party centered around the appeal of Jackson, a rhetorical emphasis on Jeffersonian principles, and, just as importantly, a dislike for Adams and his policies. Jackson was not the first choice of the Crawfordite-Old Republicans in Virginia and North Carolina, but Adams’s expansive view of federal power and his administration’s policies forced many of them into the Jackson camp. Thus, Old Republicans such as Thomas Ritchie and Nathaniel Macon did not vote *for* Jackson so much as vote *against* Adams in 1828.

Just as in 1824, personality, or more aptly character, was an issue in the campaign but so was principle and policies. Though the 1824 presidential election is often

⁹⁷Jesse Turner to Henry Clay, March 22, 1828, in Hopkins et al., eds., *Clay Papers*, 7:181–82.

⁹⁸*Congressional Quarterly’s Guide to U.S. Elections* (3rd ed., Washington, 1994), 429. Jackson won eighty-three counties in Virginia while Adams prevailed in nineteen. The candidates tied in Elizabeth City County. In North Carolina, Jackson dominated the state winning fifty-five counties to Adams’s eight. For the official returns, see the *Richmond Enquirer*, November 28, 1828, and *Star and North Carolina State Gazette*, November 27, 1828.

⁹⁹United States Bureau of the Census, *Historical Statistics of the United States Colonial Times to 1970* (2 vols., Washington, 1970), 2:1072.

overshadowed by the 1828 election, important trends appeared in the former, such as active campaigning directed at garnering popular support and a focus on the candidates' character and suitability for the office of president. After Adams's election in 1825, conservative politicians in Virginia and North Carolina cautiously watched his administration. Adams's nationalist agenda, however, pushed these conservatives into the Jacksonian coalition. The presidential campaign of 1828 stands out as one of the most colorful and hard fought political events in American history. A full examination of the campaign in Virginia and North Carolina, however, is beyond the scope of the present study. This election marks the emergence of two distinct factions, the Jacksonians and the Adams-Clay coalition, that provided the basis of the second party system that developed in the 1830s. The chaos of the 1824 presidential election illustrated the necessity of coalition building and compromise and set the stage for Jackson's victory in 1828.

Epilogue

Shortly after James Monroe's second inauguration, the combatants for the 1824 presidential election readied to enter the arena. From the start of the contest, many political observers speculated that the unusual number of candidates would force the election into the House of Representatives. The Federalist party had all but disappeared and the five contenders all claimed allegiance to the Republican party. Since Monroe had refused to designate a successor, the partisans of Crawford, Adams, Calhoun, Clay, and Jackson sought to legitimize their man as the true choice of "the people." In the ensuing free-for-all, charges of intrigue and corruption became the staples of political rhetoric as each faction endeavored to advance its candidate at the expense of others. The chaos of this election would drive the factions into coalitions for the next contest and lay the foundation for the emergence of the second party system in the 1830s.

Before the 1824 election, public service at the highest levels of government had been an asset, if not a requirement, in the quest for the presidency. Jackson's candidacy, however, demonstrated that the status of being a "Washington outsider" and broad popular appeal could be advantages in presidential politics. Thus, in this era of transitional politics, charisma and fame could be as important as a record of statesmanship. Yet popularity was not enough to rally the necessary votes to win the election. Jackson won a plurality of the electoral vote, for example, but failed to garner the majority needed for an outright victory. With no winner, the election went to the House and partisans of Crawford, Adams, and Jackson scrambled to build support for their candidate. In a

political system torn by faction, coalitions became essential to the political process.

This period between the first and second party systems was a time of transition. In the 1820s, the politics of *faction* gave way to the politics of *coalition*. The 1824 presidential election serves as the bridge spanning a political system split by faction to a system that recognized the necessity of coalitions to assemble broad-based support. Since no faction was strong enough to elect its candidate, adversaries had to form alliances in order to carry the election. In North Carolina, for example, supporters of Calhoun, Jackson, and Adams assembled a fusion electoral ticket pledged to vote for the man most likely to defeat Crawford. Jackson's tremendous popular appeal and Calhoun's withdrawal from the contest probably avoided any potential discord from any intra-coalition tensions.

Politicians in Virginia, however, remained mired in the politics of faction. The political leadership in that state, as in North Carolina, largely backed Crawford. The supporters of the other candidates refused to combine their efforts and insisted on autonomous campaigns. In a state that still maintained property requirements for voters, campaigns directed toward generating mass support among the people did not seem necessary.¹ On election day the partisans of the four remaining candidates offered four separate tickets. After Crawford's defeat, however, coalitions became more palatable, as Crawfordites and Jacksonians in the state joined to oppose Adams and Clay.

¹One had to possess twenty-five acres of land with a house, or fifty acres of uncultivated land in order to vote. Urban dwellers needed only a lot in a town or city with a house to vote. See Julian A. C. Chandler, *The History of Suffrage in Virginia* (Baltimore, 1901), 17-21.

The emergence of a fully developed party system was still a decade away, but one can see in the 1824 campaign the introduction of mechanisms that would become essential building blocks of the second party system. For example, these innovations included public meetings to generate support, appeals for reform of the corruption in Washington, and a combative, democratic rhetoric that urged "the people" to protect and exercise their right to elect a president. Charges of corruption and bargaining filled the political atmosphere before the formation of the Adams-Clay coalition in 1825, and continued throughout the next presidential campaign.

Adams's nationalist agenda, as outlined in his First Annual Message, and his support of Clay's American System forced the other factions to come to terms. In the 1828 campaign, Jackson, heretofore a moderate nationalist, followed the Old Republican philosophy of states rights, economy in public expenditures, and a strict construction of the Constitution. In Virginia and North Carolina, Adams's pro-active view of the role of the federal government drove the Crawfordites into the Jackson camp. Guided by these conservative principles and propelled by Jackson's popularity, the Jacksonian coalition soundly defeated Adams in 1828.

When Jackson took the oath of office on March 4, 1829, it marked the culmination of a prolonged campaign that began during Monroe's second term. In his inaugural address, Jackson, careful to incorporate the tenets of Old Republicanism, promised to "keep steadily in view the limitations as well as the extent of the Executive power, trusting to discharge the functions of my office without transcending its authority." Jackson also vowed to maintain a proper respect for states rights and to observe "a strict and faithful

economy” in the management of the public revenue.² Interestingly, in each of his annual messages, Jackson urged Congress to amend the Constitution to allow the people to vote directly for president, so that their choice would not “be defeated, either by the intervention of electoral colleges or by the agency confided, under certain contingencies, to the House of Representatives.”³ Thus, Jackson emerged from the 1828 campaign as the champion of democracy and as the defender of Old Republican conservatism.

After this election, the mantle of leadership of the Adams-Clay coalition fell upon Henry Clay. He immediately set his sights on the 1832 contest but warned others that “we should alike avoid professions of support or declarations of opposition, in advance.” Clay reasoned that after the agitation of the presidential question over the last six years “the nation wants repose.” Furthermore, any overt partisan hostility would only serve to keep the Jacksonians united.⁴

Indeed, before the close of the year, rumors circulating in Washington indicated that tension between the partisans of Calhoun and Van Buren had already surfaced.⁵ By the end of the following year, Jackson, upset over the role Calhoun and his wife played in

²Inaugural Address, March 4, 1829, in James D. Richardson, comp., *A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents* (10 vols., Washington, 1896–99), 2:436–38.

³First Annual Message, December 8, 1829, in *ibid.*, 2:447. For Jackson’s comments on the direct election of presidents in his other annual messages see *ibid.*, 2:518–19, 557, 605; 3:34, 117, 176–77, 259.

⁴Henry Clay to Daniel Webster, November 30, 1828, in James F. Hopkins et al., eds., *The Papers of Henry Clay* (11 vols., Lexington, 1959–92), 7:552–53.

⁵Henry Clay to Francis T. Brooke, December 26, 1828 in *ibid.*, 7:575–76.

snubbing the wife of John H. Eaton, had already settled on Van Buren as his choice to succeed him.⁶ In a letter to his old friend John Overton, Jackson declared that the New Yorker was an "able and prudent Republican" and well qualified for the presidency. As for Calhoun, however, Jackson suspected his partisans of causing "most of the troubles, vexations and difficulties I have had to encounter, since my arrival in this City."⁷

Jackson's tenure in office was nothing if not controversial. The nullification controversy over the tariff and Jackson's forceful "Proclamation to the People of South Carolina" asserting the sovereignty of the federal government offended many states rights advocates in Virginia and North Carolina. These Old Republicans, who had backed Crawford in 1824 and Jackson in 1828, also disliked Old Hickory's authoritarian stance in his war on the Bank of the United States. Though these Southern conservatives did not support the Bank, they questioned Jackson's power to remove government deposits arbitrarily from the Bank and place the funds in state "pet banks." Some of these Virginia and North Carolina conservatives, alarmed at Jackson's assertion of executive power, derided the administration and a few moved into the opposition and joined the newly emerging Whig party.⁸

⁶For a discussion of the "Eaton Affair" and the rivalry between Van Buren and Calhoun see Robert V. Remini, *Andrew Jackson and the Course of American Freedom, 1822-1832* (New York, 1981), 203-16, 230-47.

⁷Andrew Jackson to John Overton, December 31, 1829, in John S. Bassett, ed., *Correspondence of Andrew Jackson* (7 vols., Washington, 1926-35), 4:108-109.

⁸William G. Shade, *Democratizing the Old Dominion: Virginia and the Second Party System, 1824-1861* (Charlottesville, 1996), 91-94, 238-40; and Thomas E. Jeffrey, *State Parties and National Politics: North Carolina, 1815-1861* (Athens, Ga., 1989), 39-43.

The 1824 presidential election stands out as a key event in the era of transition that marked the 1820s. This contest evoked the tension among the second generation political leaders that had remained submerged during Monroe's first term. The struggle among competing factions for the presidency triggered the creation of an aggressive democratic rhetoric that was critical of corruption in government and supportive of the people's exercise of their political rights. Though Crawford partisans attempted to portray the congressional caucus as the best means to designate a consensus candidate, others attacked the caucus as a device used by conniving politicians to usurp the people's will.

This election finished off the ailing caucus and inspired politicians to seek new ways of nominating presidential candidates, mindful of the importance of generating support among "the people." The election of Adams through an alleged corrupt bargain reinforced perceptions of corruption in politics and handed the Jacksonians a ready-made battle cry for 1828. The events of 1824 transformed Jackson from a popular military figure to a symbol of the common man, the champion of democracy and reform, and protector of southern Old Republican conservatism. This election also inspired the formation of two coalitions that later developed into the Democratic and Whig parties in the 1830s.

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APPENDICES

Appendix I

North Carolina Public Meetings on the 1824 Presidential Election.¹

Date	Place	Meeting/ Recommendation
1-8-24	Washington, Beaufort Co.	Calhoun
2-18-24	Salisbury	People's ticket
2-21-24	Concord, Cabarrus Co.	anti-caucus
2-21-24	Halifax Co.	People's ticket/ Jackson
3-6-24	Orange Co.	muster/ Jackson
3-13-24	Guilford, Co.	"accidental meeting"/ Crawford
3-18-24	Hillsborough, Orange Co.	Jackson
[3-23-24]	Hillsborough	Crawford
3-27-24	Orange Co.	Jackson
3-27-24	Guilford Co.	Adams
4-2-24	Wake Co.	Jackson
4-7-24	Charlotte, Mecklenburg Co.	Jackson
4-14-24	Surry Co.	grand jury/ Jackson
4-17-24	Gates Co.	muster/ Jackson
4-18-24	Lincolnton, Lincoln Co.	Jackson
4-26-24	Orange Co.	Jackson
[5-1-24]	Greene Co.	muster/ Jackson
5-4-24	Randolph Co.	Crawford
5-8-24	Edgecomb Co.	muster/ Jackson
5-17-24	Rockingham	muster/ Jackson
[5-19-24]	Raleigh, Wake Co.	muster/ Jackson
5-21-24	Waynesville, Haywood Co.	Jackson
5-27-24	Hamptonville, Surry Co.	muster/ Jackson
5-28-24	Haywood Co.	muster/ Jackson
5-29-24	Nash Co.	muster/ Crawford
5-29-24	Wake Forest	Jackson
5-29-24	Orange Co.	Adams
5-29-24	Charleston, Stokes Co.	Jackson
5-29-24	Lincoln Co.	Jackson

¹Information gathered from a survey of the *Star and North Carolina State Gazette* (Raleigh) and the *Raleigh Register* from January to November 1824.

5-29-24	Burke Co.	muster/ Jackson
6-5-24	Richmond Co.	muster/ Jackson
6-10-24	Richmond Co.	muster/ Jackson
6-11-24	Rowan Co.	muster/ Jackson
6-12-24	Wake Forest	muster/ Jackson
6-12-24	Edenton, Chowan Co.	muster/ Jackson
6-12-24	Charlotte, Mecklenberg Co.	muster/ Jackson
6-12-24	Caswell, Co.	muster/ Jackson
6-13-24	Hertford Co.	muster/ Jackson
6-19-24	Hertford Co.	muster/ Jackson
6-26-24	McClellandtown, Fayette Co.	Crawford
6-26-24	Rowan Co.	muster/ Jackson
7-3-24	Tyrrel Co.	muster/ Jackson
7-3-24	Rowan Co.	muster/ Jackson
7-3-24	Wilkes Co.	muster/ Jackson
7-3-24	Germanton, Stokes Co.	muster/ Jackson
7-3-24	Rutherford Co.	muster/ Jackson
7-10-24	Lincoln Co.	muster/ Jackson
7-15-24	Caswell Co.	grand jury/ Crawford
7-17-24	Richmond Co.	muster/ Jackson
7-17-24	Bertie Co.	muster/ Jackson
7-17-24	Burke Co.	muster/ Jackson
7-17-24	Rowan Co.	Jackson
7-17-24	Stokes Co.	"collection of people"/ Jackson
7-22-24	[Surry Co.]	muster/ Jackson
7-29-24	Richmond Co.	muster/ Jackson
7-29-24	Wayne Co.	muster/ Jackson
7-31-24	Montgomery Co.	muster/ Adams
7-31-24	Orange Co.	Adams
7-31-24	Rowan Co.	Jackson
7-31-24	Stokes Co.	Jackson
7-31-24	Cabarrus Co.	muster/ Adams
7-31-24	Iredell Co.	muster/ Jackson
[7- ?-24]	Franklin Co.	muster/ Jackson
8-6-24	Orange Co.	Jackson
8-6-24	Cabarrus Co.	militia officers/ Jackson
8-7-24	Mocksville, Rowan Co.	"collection of people"/ Jackson
8-7-24	Orange Co.	muster/ Jackson

[8-10-24]	Richmond Co.	Adams
8-11-24	Burke Co.	muster/ Jackson
8-13-24	Pasquotauk Co.	Jackson
8-14-24	Granville Co.	muster/ Crawford
9-4-24	[Orange Co.]	Jackson
9-25-24	Newbern, Craven Co.	anti-caucus/ People's ticket
9-30-24	Hertford Co.	grand jury/ Jackson
10-1-24	Statesville, Iredell Co.	muster/ Jackson
10-2-24	Cumberland Co.	muster/ Jackson
10-2-24	Orange Co.	muster/ Jackson

Appendix II

Virginia Public Meetings on the 1824 Presidential Election.¹

Date	Place	Meeting/ Recommendation
3-7-24	Suffolk, Nansemond Co.	Adams
3-13-24	Fredericksburg, Stafford Co.	Adams
3-17-24	Fredericksburg, Stafford Co.	Jackson
3-27,29-24	Norfolk, Co.	Adams
3-30-24	Norfolk, Co.	Adams
4-5-24	Winchester, Frederick Co.	Jackson
4-7-24	Suffolk, Nansemond Co.	Adams
4-9-24	Winchester, Frederick Co.	Jackson
4-12-24	Warrenton, Fauquier Co.	Jackson
4-16-24	Portsmouth	Jackson
4-20-24	Franklin Co.	Adams
4-24-24	Norfolk (Borough)	Jackson
4-29-24	Franklin Co.	Adams
5-3-24	Winchester, Frederick Co.	Adams
5-3-24	Rockingham Co.	Jackson
5-11-24	Matthews Co.	Adams
5-20-24	Charlestown, Kanawha Co.	muster/ Jackson
6-4-24	Lancaster Co.	Adams
6-12-24	Essex Co.	Jackson
6-14-24	Fredericksburg, Stafford Co.	Jackson
6-14-24	Berkeley Co.	Clay
6-26-24	Manchester, Chesterfield Co.	Adams
6-26-24	Ohio Co.	Clay
6- ? -24	Fairfax, Co.	Jackson
7-3-24	Wheeling, Ohio Co.	Clay
7-3-24	Greenbrier Co.	Adams
7-25-24	Hampshire Co.	Jackson
7-26-24	Warrenton, Farquier Co.	Adams
7-26-24	Westmoreland Co.	Adams

¹Information gathered from a survey of the *Richmond Enquirer*, the *Virginian* (Lynchburg), the *Virginia Herald* (Fredericksburg), and the *Star and North Carolina State Gazette* (Raleigh) from January to November 1824.

7-28-24	Fredericksburg, Stafford Co.	Jackson
8-3-24	Lynchburg, Campbell Co.	Adams
8-6-24	Richmond, Henrico Co.	Adams
8-10-24	Hardy Co.	Adams
8-23-24	Liberty, Bedford Co.	Adams
8-23-24	Urbana, Middlesex Co.	Crawford
8-23-24	Nelson Co.	Adams
8-24-24	Greenbrier Co.	Adams
8-27-24	Hampton, Elizabeth City Co.	Adams
8-28-24	Bedford Co.	Adams
8- ? -24	Middleton, Monongalia Co.	Adams
8- ? -24	Amherst Co.	Adams

VITA

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