DEMAGOGUERY IN THE PRESIDENTIAL
ELECTION OF 1800

THESIS

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The purpose of this thesis is to reveal the slanderous rhetoric of the Federalist and Republican parties during the American presidential election of 1800. Both parties relied on newspapers, pamphlets, sermons, and songs to influence public opinion; however, newspapers were the most effective means of swaying the voters. Although the Federalists, led by John Adams and Alexander Hamilton, had almost twice as many partisan newspapers to disseminate their propaganda, the Republicans, under the leadership of Thomas Jefferson, had a much larger number of journals that were substantially more dogmatic in their denunciations. This advantage, coupled with internal Federalist crises, enabled the Republicans to be victorious at the polls. This study proves that the campaign of 1800 was one of the most libelous and rancorous in United States history.
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CHAPTER I

THE NATIONAL DICHOTOMY

At first most Americans greeted the French Revolution with general approval, but the mass executions during the Reign of Terror alienated many individuals in the United States. A large number continued to support France when that nation declared war on England in 1793; however, both countries soon began to seize American ships. This crisis resulted in a serious split between the two major political parties in the United States. The bitter animosity between Federalists and Republicans increased in the early stages of this international struggle. As early as 1792 Federalist Alexander Hamilton charged Republican Thomas Jefferson with being "the patron and promoter of national disunion, national insignificance, public disorder, and discredit." He also accused Jefferson of hiring a newspaper publisher in order to promote his personal views for the Republican party.

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2Hamilton to John Fenno, 4 August 1792, ibid., p. 230.
Federalists, led by Hamilton, John Adams, and, indirectly by George Washington, supported Britain primarily because of political principles based upon economic interests. A great deal of American trade was with Britain, and many Americans needed these goods and could not afford to lose the British trade market. The Republicans favored France and were directed by Jefferson, James Madison, and James Monroe. France had supported the United States during the American Revolution, and Republicans desired a French victory over their old enemy.

During the presidential election of 1796, President Washington eliminated himself as a candidate for another term. This left Adams and Jefferson to struggle for the presidency. Hamilton doubted the wisdom in supporting Adams and hoped the Federalist vice-presidential candidate, Thomas Pinckney, would secure more electoral votes. Since there was then no separate electoral vote for vice-president, Pinckney was in a position to defeat Adams. The Republicans selected Jefferson as their presidential candidate while Aaron Burr was their vice-presidential nominee.

U.S. Bureau of the Census, Historical Statistics of the United States, Colonial Times to 1957. (Washington, D.C., 1960) p. 551. In 1793 the United States exported $26,000,000 worth of merchandise. Of this figure, $6,000,000 was exported to Great Britain or approximately 23 per cent of the total amount. The United States exported three times more merchandise to Great Britain than to France in 1793.
Throughout this period and until the presidential election of 1800, Federalists and Republicans had assailed one another using a variety of methods and tactics. Both parties relied on newspapers, pamphlets, sermons, songs and political clubs to influence public opinion. This campaign of verbal abuse and demagoguery intensified as the nation approached the year 1800 and faced greater internal and external dangers. As this study will show, the rhetoric of the presidential election of 1800 proved to be one of the most slanderous, malicious, and libelous in American history.
CHAPTER II

THE GREAT COMMOTION

The bid for political victory concerning the election of 1800 actually began shortly after the election of 1796 when John Adams defeated Thomas Jefferson by three electoral votes in an extremely close election. Adams repeated the oath of office as president and Jefferson took the oath as vice-president on 4 March 1797. This is the only instance in American history when the office of president and vice-president was represented by men of different political parties. Adams read his inaugural address in Philadelphia and conducted the entire ceremony devoid of pomp. Since he had been implicated as a monarchist and an admirer of pomp and ceremony, the second president began his administration with a notable absence of these characteristics. Nevertheless, Adams made a serious mistake early in his administration by retaining former President Washington's final cabinet. This mediocre group of men was loyal to Hamilton and not to the newly elected president. This situation proved to be a serious problem for the
Federalist party in the upcoming presidential election.¹

The political battles which erupted during the turbulent years from 1797 to 1800 were, to a great extent, promoted by the newspapers. Almost every state had a journalistic representative of the Republican party, but without a large number of subscribers, official favors, and state printing contracts, it was difficult for them to survive. Several of the more prominent Federalist newspapers were subsidized by leading party members, including Alexander Hamilton. One of the most important Republican newspapers was the Aurora, edited by Benjamin Franklin Bache, grandson of Benjamin Franklin. The Philadelphia editor was more emotional and impetuous than his grandfather, and these traits were reflected in his fiery editorials. Another Philadelphia paper, the Gazette of United States, was edited by John Fenno and was one of the major Federalist newspapers of the period. The invective of the Gazette was an equal match for that of the Aurora.²

There was a lack of hostility among the newspapers immediately following the election of Adams, and shortly thereafter the *Aurora* declared, "it is universally admitted that Mr. Adams is a man of incorruptible integrity, and the resources of his own mind are equal to the duties of his station . . . how characteristic of a patriot." Yet barely two months later the same paper launched a scathing attack upon Adams and referred to him as a deceiver of the people. This was an early announcement of a new split between the Republicans and Federalists following the inauguration of Adams and was largely a result of the worsening political situation in Europe. The United States had become involved in an undeclared naval war with France on the high seas, and this had caused great apprehension to many Republicans. Many Americans feared involvement in a total, declared war with their former allies of the Revolution.

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3. *Philadelphia Aurora*, 14 March 1797. Hereafter this will be cited as the *Aurora*.

4. Ibid., 19 May 1797.
By early April, Adams apparently lost patience not only with the French but with many of his fellow Federalists as well because of the European situation. He avowed that many of his few remaining friends had become "weak, envious, jealous, and spiteful, humiliated, and mortified, and duped enough by French finesse and Jacobinical rascality, to show it to me and the world." As a result of his resentment of French attacks on American ships, Adams delivered a blistering assault against the French in a message to Congress on 15 May 1797. In this speech the president recommended to Congress creation of a navy, development of coastal defenses, and strengthening of both the cavalry and artillery branches of the army. This bellicose attack on France prompted an immediate reaction from the Republican


6U.S., Congress Annals of Congress, 5th Cong., 1st sess., 54-59. In the speech to Congress, Adams avowed that the United States "shall convince France, and the world, that we are not a degraded people, humiliated under a colonial spirit of fear and sense of inferiority, fitted to be the miserable instruments of foreign influence; and regardless of national honor, character, and interest."
press and terminated the temporary atmosphere of concord between Federalists and Republicans.

At first Jefferson tried to remain neutral and work harmoniously with the president. He was, however, apprehensive and believed certain individuals would do everything possible to alienate the two men. He assumed that the main assemblage of agitators would come from the Hamiltonians. Jefferson concluded that Adams would probably become suspicious of him, believing that the vice-president was politically ambitious. 7

Jefferson did not have long to wait for the anticipated attack. In May the New York Minerva published the celebrated Mazzei letter. In April of 1796, Jefferson had written a letter to his Italian friend, Philip Mazzei, reviewing the political conditions in the United States. In this letter Jefferson noted that the Federalist party in America had become monarchical and aristocratic and wanted to establish a British form of government. He wrote that the aristocrats were already entrenched in the executive, judiciary, and

Later, referring to the letter, Jefferson proclaimed on 3 August 1797:

... the general substance of which is mine, though the diction has been considerably altered and varied in the course of its translations from English into Italian, from Italian into French, and from French into English... I could not disavow it wholly, because the greatest part was mine, in substance though not in form... I soon decided in my own mind, to be entirely silent.

Soon after the president's warlike speech to Congress, Jefferson wrote to a friend assailing the strategy of Adams. Shortly thereafter the president received a copy of this letter and angrily exploded, "It is evidence of a mind, soured, yet seeking for popularity, and eaten to a honeycomb with ambition, yet weak, confused, uninformed, and ignorant. I have been long convinced that this ambition is so inconsiderate

8 Jefferson to Mazzei, 24 April 1796, Paul L. Ford, ed., The Works of Thomas Jefferson, 12 vols. (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1904), 8:236. In the letter Jefferson stated, "It would give you a fever were I to name to you the apostates who have gone over to these heresies, men who were Samons in the field and Solomons in the council, but who have had their heads shorn by the harlot England." This portion of the letter undoubtedly referred to President Washington. As soon as the letter was made public, Washington broke off relations with Jefferson, and the two men never resumed amiable communications. Noble E. Cunningham, Jr., The Jeffersonian Republicans (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1957) p. 118.

as to be capable of going great lengths."¹⁰ Jefferson discovered that many of his letters were being tampered with and possibly being forwarded to Adams. It was at this point that he resolved not to conduct correspondence with his friends through the post office but decided to use private couriers instead.¹¹ From this time until the next presidential election, amiable relations between the two men were impossible.

A literary war soon exploded among the rival political parties. A particularly vicious campaign ensued between Federalist editor William Cobbett and Benjamin Franklin Bache of the Aurora. Cobbett wrote under the pen name of "Peter Porcupine" and edited Porcupine’s Gazette. Cobbett angered Bache early in March by printing that he was a "liar and an infamous scoundrel."¹² Bache endeavored to maintain pleasant relations with the newly elected Federalist president and did not immediately retaliate against Cobbett.

¹⁰ Adams to Uriah Forrest, 20 June 1797, Adams, Adams, 8:546-47.


¹² Philadelphia Porcupine’s Gazette, 4 March 1797. Hereafter this will be cited as Porcupine’s Gazette.
Once the rift between Adams and Jefferson was publicly known, however, the onslaught on Cobbett began.

Newspapers of the late eighteenth century often published political pamphlets, and the authors were sometimes anonymous. One of the most vile and vindictive of these pamphlets was directed against Cobbett and was entitled, *The Last Confession and Dying Speech of Peter Porcupine*. The author wrote the narrative as if 'Porcupine' (Cobbett) were revealing his autobiography. In this work "Porcupine" admitted, "such was my propensity to vice, that I could not resist the temptation to pilfer even from my grandmother. . . . Picking pockets followed, and hence I arrived at the honor of joining a gang of burglars. . . . We were all of us liars and rogues."

The tone of the attack continued in much the same manner throughout the pamphlet. Porcupine confessed that he had plotted to overthrow the American government and was receiving payment from England. He further averred that Americans had discovered the plot and hung him on the charge of high treason. The last portion of the pamphlet elaborates on what the surgeons found when they dissected Porcupine's body. The dissection revealed that he only had one intestine with no valves and "it appeared that its contents could be discharged either upwards or downwards." Toad-like animals were found
in the liver and a substance resembling a hog's "excrementies" were detected in the unusually small heart. The brain was as small as a goose's egg, and the cerebrum was hollow except for myriads of small animals.\textsuperscript{13}

Cobbet retaliated with an editorial in his gazette in which he denounced the "French faction" in America. He divulged that American seamen were dying by the score in French prisons while the French still continued to attack American ships openly. He compared the Republicans to peaceable Quakers and deduced, "if this is not French influence, if it is not treachery to the United States, I do not know what name to give it."\textsuperscript{14} Later, in a pamphlet, Cobbett defended Britain in its war with France and determined that the cause for discontent in America was the slanderous Republican newspaper abuse of Britain.\textsuperscript{15}

Passions were indeed running high during the summer of 1797 and, in a letter to his friend, Edward Rutledge, Jefferson acknowledged that these passions would not be

\textsuperscript{13}The Last Confession and Dying Speech of Peter Porcupine (Philadephia, 1797), pp. 1-32. This pamphlet was probably written by Benjamin Bache, since it was published in Philadelphia.

\textsuperscript{14}Porcupine's Gazette, 17 June 1797.

\textsuperscript{15}William Cobbett, A Bone to Gnaw, for the Democrats (Philadelphia, 1797), pp. 1-66.
alayed in their lifetimes. He had observed that men of different political views would intentionally cross the street to avoid meeting one another.\textsuperscript{16}

In June President Adams recalled James Monroe, United States Minister to France. Monroe bitterly protested that he had been a victim of party politics and cried that the press had unjustly slandered his name.\textsuperscript{17} After Monroe's recall, Jefferson returned to Virginia and corresponded with Monroe, James Madison and other Republicans in order to discuss the course of action their party should pursue.\textsuperscript{18}

The literary abuse that many public figures experienced continued throughout the summer. Cobbett and Fenno were not the only Federalists who used demagoguery to incite the people against Jefferson and his party. The Hartford Connecticut Courant assaulted Jefferson and lashed out:

\begin{quote}
I pity my countrymen if Jefferson is 'their man.'
If he is, the people of the United States had better strike their colors, attend the funeral rites of Liberty and Independence, assume the tri-colored
\end{quote}

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\textsuperscript{17}Monroe to his constituents on the eve of his election of the Virginia Assembly, December, 1797, Stanislaus M. Hamilton, ed., \textit{The Writings of James Monroe}, 6 vols. (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1900), 3:93-94 (hereafter cited as Hamilton, \textit{Monroe}).
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\textsuperscript{18}Cunningham, \textit{Jeffersonian Republicans}, p. 120.
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cockade . . . . Thomas Jefferson would then dispense the rites of the altar with pious alacrity, and Thomas Paine would be his proper deacon to distribute the sacrament of the devil's communion. 19

Jefferson resided at Monticello during the summer and autumn of 1797 and was keenly aware of the defamation of his name throughout the nation. He protested:

So many persons have of late found an interest or a passion gratified by imputing to me sayings and writings which I never said or wrote, or by endeavoring to draw me into newspapers to harass me personally, that I have found it necessary for my quiet and my other pursuits to leave them in full possession of the field, and not to take the trouble of contradicting them even in private conversation.

While many Republicans were under attack, Federalists were not immune to the same treatment. An examination of the chief executive and his administration was now undertaken by Albert Gallatin. In this pamphlet, the Pennsylvanian (of Swiss extraction) indicated that the Adams administration did everything possible to make the United States subservient to Great Britain and described the judgment of Adams as either "the grossest ignorance or the basest treachery." 21

19 Hartford Connecticut Courant, 24 July 1797. Hereafter this will be cited as Connecticut Courant.

20 Jefferson to Alexander White, 10 September 1797, Bergh, Jefferson, 9:424.

21 Albert Gallatin, An Examination of the Conduct of the Executive (Philadelphia, 1797), p. 3.
Even former President Washington suffered numerous assaults upon his character. Washington particularly mentioned the \textit{Aurora} and similar Republican papers as intending to destroy public confidence in the government.\textsuperscript{22} He was, however, unmoved by these attacks on himself and hoped for a reconciliation among opposing political factions.\textsuperscript{23} It appeared that there was a brief period of reconciliation during the autumn months. New York Federalist John Jay expressed the idea that the nation was in a better state than it had been, but that it was still not in a sound condition. He believed that the country should become more "Americanized" and attempt to escape foreign influences.\textsuperscript{24}

One reason for the lull in political warfare was the anticipation of positive diplomatic news from Europe. Earlier the United States had sent three envoys to Paris for negotiations with French Foreign Minister Talleyrand concerning the

\textsuperscript{22}Washington to Benjamin Walker, 12 January 1797, Jared Sparks, ed., \textit{The Writings of George Washington}, 12 vols. (Boston: Ferdinand Andrews, Publisher, 1838), 11:183 (hereafter cited as Sparks, \textit{Washington}).

\textsuperscript{23}Washington to John Langhorne, 15 October 1797, ibid., pp. 218-19.

losses inflicted upon American commerce by the French. Charles Cotesworth Pinckney of South Carolina, John Marshall of Virginia, and Elbridge Gerry of Massachusetts were the American envoys who hoped to obtain peace in 1798.  

The year 1800 brought a resumption of demagoguery from both parties. John Dickinson, pamphleteer of the 1760's, lashed out against those persons he believed were provoking France. He warned against "office-seeking orators, and the blinding vanity of youthful frivolists, that fiddles in declamations amidst the flames of their country." Monroe agreed that the country was in dire danger and proclaimed, "no administration was ever before in such a dilemma." He blamed Adams and his belligerent and wanton actions for the country's turmoil.

William Cobbett joined other Federalists in reciprocating against their tormentors. Cobbett published another pamphlet in which he charged Republicans with printing "the vilest and most insipid trash that ever was stamped up on paper." He avowed that a foul Republican had even stooped

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to attack his family by insinuating in a pamphlet that his wife was "a whore." Hamilton also published a pamphlet at this time entitled The Stand, in which he stated that the French government was "the most flagitious, despotic, and vindictive government that ever disgraced the annals of mankind" and indicated that he thought there was a treasonable faction in the United States that would support France in case of a French invasion.

In April President Adams received startling correspondence from the American peace envoys in Paris that the French government had attempted to bribe them as a prerequisite for negotiations. The Frenchmen that approached the peace envoy were designated as X, Y, and Z by Adams in his report to Congress. This revelation was quickly published in the Federalist newspapers and resulted in a severe lack of public confidence in the Republican party because of its prior support of France. It was during this period that the Federalists, under the leadership of Adams, enjoyed their greatest popularity with the American people.

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30 Cunningham, Jeffersonian Republicans, p. 124.
In the spring of 1798, Congress appropriated money for the organization of a provisional army and establishment of a naval department. In the summer it authorized the capture of French armed ships, suspended trade with France, and abrogated the treaties of 1778 between the two countries. In addition, Congress voted for legislation to pay for these measures and to subdue sedition within the United States. They placed a direct tax on lands, slaves, and houses; and passed the Alien and Sedition Acts.\textsuperscript{31}

The Federalists took advantage of the X, Y, Z affair and vigorously praised the president for his decisive action against France, at the same time condemning Jefferson and his party for having supported that nation. Adams was lauded for always acting in a noble manner and overcoming infamous attacks on his character. Federalists also believed that his conduct would inspire the confidence of the people during the remainder of his administration. Robert Troup, New York Federalist, concluded, "There never was, and indeed there never can be, a man of more solid popularity than he now possesses."\textsuperscript{32}

\textsuperscript{31}U.S., Congress, Annals of Congress, 5th Cong., 3rd sess., 3724, 3735, 3737, 3744, 3754, 3776, 3777.

\textsuperscript{32}Troup to King, 23 June 1798, Charles R. King, ed., The Life and Correspondence of Rufus King, 6 vols. (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1894-1900), 2:350 (hereafter cited as King, King).
In contrast, Jefferson was considered "the very life and soul of the opposition." Uriah Tracy, a Connecticut Senator, condemned both Jefferson and Monroe in his pamphlet, *Reflections on Monroe's View, or the Conduct of the Executive*. In this essay Tracy assailed Jefferson for threatening the Union and further charged, "He then taught the opponents to our government, how to mislead and deceive the people, how to excite their jealousies and to create their prejudices against the views of the administrators of the government, as well as of the legislature." Tracy also accused Monroe of having libeled both the president and administration primarily because of his resentment of having been recalled as minister to France. In Hartford, Connecticut, at a 4th of July oration aimed against Jefferson, Theodore Dwight recounted the Virginian's alliance with the atheism, philosophy, and government of France. He exclaimed that in order for the followers of the Republicans to obtain their goals in America "every member must be guilty of murder, seduction, perjury, incest, and blasphemy."

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33 Theodore Sedwick to King, 9 April 1798, ibid., p. 311.
Adams advanced his newly found popularity by speaking in several different cities in America. In Boston he asserted that America appeared to be in its greatest danger ever and called the men to arms in order to curb French aggressions on the seas. In Braintree, Massachusetts, he applauded its citizens for not succumbing to the voices of slander and demagogy.

Prior to and following the disclosure of the X. Y. Z affair, Jefferson and his party endeavored to stave off the Federalist assault with sundry charges and countercharges. Many of these opinions were expressed in private correspondence. Republicans responded that Federalists wanted the United States to return to the British Empire, that Adams hated the proposed capital city of Washington, was generally irresponsible to the needs of the country, and would bankrupt the nation. Monroe maintained, "the administration will overwhelm itself by its folly and madness." Madison best

36 Adams to the Young Men of Boston, 22 May 1798, Adams, Adams, 11:194.
37 Adams to the Inhabitants of the Town of Braintree, Mass., 2 June 1798, ibid., p. 197.
39 Monroe to Thomas Jefferson, 4 May 1798, Hamilton, Monroe, 3:120.
expressed the sentiments of the Republicans by asserting "the palpable urgency of the Executive and its partizans to press war in proportion to the apparent change of avoiding it, ought to open every eye to the hypocrisy which has hitherto deceived so many good people."  

For the most part, Republicans were on the defensive during the X, Y, Z crisis and suffered a great deal at the hands of the Federalist press. In January, Jefferson complained of the "furious abuse" he had received from the Baltimore press and in the next month professed he was used by all newspapers as "a fair mark for every man's dirt."  He cautioned those with whom he corresponded not to divulge anything to the press, because he feared it would result in months of abuse and persecution.

Jefferson hesitated in involving himself personally in writing pamphlets and for the newspapers, nevertheless, he urged others to write in defense of the Republican party. In the spring of 1798 he encouraged Madison to reply to

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40 Madison to Thomas Jefferson, 3 June 1798, Hunt, Madison, 6:323.

41 Jefferson to Mann Page, 2 January 1798, Bergh, Jefferson, 10:1; Jefferson to Peregrin Fitzhugh, 23 February 1798, ibid., 9:428.

42 Jefferson to John Taylor, 1 June 1798, ibid., 10:47.
articles written by "Marcellus" (Hamilton) in the Gazette of the United States. He pleaded, "You must, my dear Sir, take up your pen against this champion. You know the ingenuity of his talents; and there is not a person but yourself who can foil him. For heaven's sake, then, take up your pen, and do not desert the public cause altogether."43

The greatest crisis of the year 1798, and one of the major issues in the forthcoming election of 1800, was the passage of the Alien and Sedition Acts. These were four separate statutes that Congress passed without waiting for a formal declaration of war against France. They limited freedom of the press and of speech and imposed curbs on foreigners in the United States. These acts were the Naturalization Act (18 June 1798); the Act Concerning Aliens (27 June 1798); the Act Respecting Alien Enemies (6 July 1798); and the Act for the Punishment of Certain Crimes, commonly known as the Sedition Act, (14 July 1798).44

43 Jefferson to Madison, 5 April 1798, ibid., p. 23.

44 John C. Miller, The Federalist Era, 1789-1801 (New York: Harper, 1960) p. 229-31. The Alien Enemies Act and The Alien Act enabled the president to imprison or deport suspected aliens. Neither of these acts ever went into effect but Republicans viewed them as a threat to their natural rights. The Naturalization Act raised the term of probationary residence from five to fourteen years. The Sedition Act prohibited anyone from publishing, writing, or speaking against the government or any of its officers.
Many Federalists believed the United States would soon be involved in a declared war with France and did not question the constitutionality of these laws. The question of constitutionality resulted in many Republican charges against the chief executive in an attempt to incite the people against these laws. The Republican press cursed Adams as "the blasted tyrant of America" and as "a ruffian deserving of the curses of mankind." One of the first victims of the Sedition Act was Benjamin Franklin Bache, editor of the Aurora. Having been charged with libeling the President, Bache wrote a pamphlet in his defense. In Truth Will Out, he retorted that the Adams' administration was a British political faction and labeled its supporters as fools. Bache died of yellow fever before his trial could begin.

So intense were the passions during the summer of 1798 that a congressman was brought to trial for violation of the Sedition Act. During the previous year a Republican

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45 Boston Columbian Centinel, 7 July 1798. Hereafter this will be cited as Columbian Centinel.

46 Benjamin Franklin Bache, Truth Will Out (Philadelphia, 1798) Preface. William Duane became the editor of the Aurora after the death of Bache. John Fenno, Senior, also died in the same epidemic that killed Bache. His son replaced him as editor of the Gazette of the United States.
representative from Vermont, Matthew Lyon, had spit in the face of a Federalist representative from Connecticut, Roger Griswold. The fight ended quickly but many Federalists wanted to remove Lyon permanently from public office. Charged with making libelous statements against the president, Lyon was indicted in July, 1798. He was found guilty and sentenced to four months' imprisonment and fined $1,000.47

Republicans greatly resented passage of the Alien and Sedition Acts and denounced them openly. The crux of their arguments was that the acts were unconstitutional and that the principal purpose for Congress's passing the laws was the establishment of an aristocracy and nobility in the United States. Newspapers exploded with anger over the legislature's control of their rights concerning the freedom of the press. They believed that if American liberty were to survive, the power of the federal government must be curtailed.48 Two states that were extremely dogmatic in their attacks were Virginia and Kentucky. One pamphlet published in Virginia openly censured the acts as a flagrant violation of the Constitution, especially with regard to

47 Miller, Crisis in Freedom, pp. 102, 108.

the immigration of aliens. 49 George Nicholas, one of the Kentucky organizers against the Alien and Sedition Acts, condemned President Adams for unprofessional ethics and labeled the new laws as "political monsters." 50

Not all Virginians agreed that the Alien and Sedition Acts were unconstitutional. Charles Lee, one of the Old Dominion's leading Federalists and patriots, defended the acts as being necessary for the safety of the United States. He estimated that there were at least 20,000 French aliens in America ready at a moment's notice to take up arms for the Directory of France against the United States. He determined that in order for America to remain safe, agitators and deceivers should be expelled from the country. 51 Other

49 Thomas Evans, An Address to the People of Virginia Respecting the Alien and Sedition Laws (Richmond, Virginia, 1798) pp. 1-63. James Morton Smith, Freedom's Fetters; The Alien and Sedition Laws and American Civil Liberties (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1956) pp. 23-24. For the most part Federalists were against the immigration of aliens because many of these immigrants became Republicans, especially the Irish. In 1798 a revolt in Ireland forced many Irish to the United States. These Irishmen were extremely anti-British and maintained a contempt for the pro-British Federalists in America.

50 George Nicholas, A Letter from George Nicholas (Lexington, Kentucky, 1798) pp. 1-42.

pamphleteers urged Americans to unite behind the Adams Administration in order to prove to France that the United States could not be invaded. They implored Americans not to believe "those lying newspapers, lying pamphlets, lying letters, and lying conversations" of the Republican party; instead they were encouraged to silence the slanderers. 52

Jefferson suffered numerous personal attacks during this crisis. One assailant, while referring to Jefferson, remarked, "The democratic philosophy and Gallic attachments, which so pointedly distinguish your character from that of the Federal American, have insured you the affections and gained you the applause of every villain in the community." He further stated that Jefferson was unfit to be the director of such "a powerful and desperate faction." The author concluded, "Every vehicle of sedition, from Georgia to Maine, has been active in your service, nor have your admirers, in their zeal of panegyric, stopped a moment to consult either reason or truth . . . ." 53

Many individuals tried to persuade the nation that Jefferson was an atheist who would destroy the Christian


53 John Sylvester, Remarks on the Jacobiniad (Boston, 1798) pp. 5-6.
religion if his party came into power. Robert Troup testified that Jefferson:

was indiscreet enough to accept of [sic] the honor of a public entertainment in Virginia on a Sunday. This fact has been trumpeted from one end of the continent to the other as an irrefragable proof of his contempt for the Christian religion and his devotion to the new religion of France.54

Jefferson, however, maintained that the public sentiment would eventually turn against the Federalists because of their proposal to increase taxes.55

Federalist attempted to use the popularity of the prestigious George Washington to arouse support for the administration. A typical comment pointed out, "Even Washington, the noblest fabrick of humanity that ever came from the hands of the creator--even his name, fairest on the list of mortals, the ornament and savior of his country, has not withered the tongue of slander."56 Washington stood by Adams and learned through a traveller that citizens in North Carolina, South Carolina, and the governor of Georgia also professed strong attachments to the government.57

54 Troup to King, 2 October 1798, King, King, 2:432.
Among those Republicans who viewed the quasi war with France and the domestic policies of the Federalists with more reservations than most were Thomas Jefferson and James Madison. Jefferson returned to Virginia in July 1798 and visited Madison for two days. He later left for Monticello and by October had completed writing the final draft of his protest against the Alien and Sedition Acts. He determined that each individual state had the right to ascertain for itself violations of the Constitution. Wilson Cary Nicholas, a Virginia Republican, received the draft and intended to take it to the North Carolina legislature. But this body came under Federalist control and, John Breckinridge of Kentucky convinced Nicholas to give him the resolutions in order to forward them to the Kentucky legislature. By October Madison had completed similar resolutions for the Virginia legislature. With the exception of close friends, Jefferson's and Madison's authorship remained anonymous. These resolutions resulted in strong protests from the Virginia and Kentucky legislatures and were known as the Virginia and Kentucky Resolutions.  

In the summer of 1798, President Adams informed Congress that he would not send another minister to France without assurances he would be honorably received and justly respected as the representative of an independent country. By early 1799, the French government had convinced Adams that it was prepared to honor these conditions. It had released captured American ships, controlled West Indian privateers, and French admiralty courts had halted their condemnation of American vessels. Also, diplomatic news from American diplomats in other European countries was encouraging. As a consequence of these events, Adams requested in January that Secretary of State Timothy Pickering draft a consular convention and treaty that might be presented to the United States by France. This was a definite indication that he wanted peace with France.\(^{59}\)

This move toward peace created a serious split within the Federalist party. Since Adams had kept Washington's cabinet intact, he discovered at this time that these officials, especially Timothy Pickering, James McHenry, and Oliver Wolcott, were more loyal to Hamilton than to him. Many of the cabinet members and other Hamiltonians did not

\(^{59}\)Adams to Pickering, 15 January 1799, Adams, Adams, 8:621-22.
want to send a peace envoy to France. Hamilton participated in military affairs since he was an officer (retired) in the United States Army; therefore he wanted to bolster the armed forces. This plan would be easier if there were a state of war or an atmosphere of war with France. Nevertheless, Adams decided to act on his own accord and nominated William Vans Murray of Maryland on 18 February 1799 as a new plenipotentiary to France. This was done without prior consultation of either the Federalist leaders or his cabinet. This left Hamilton's pro-war faction stunned. Jefferson and his party welcomed the good news and even the Aurora printed, "Whatever sentiments to English modes of government or to English connections, every one must applaud his appointment of Mr. Murray to go to Paris."\footnote{Aurora, 20 February 1799; Nathan Schachner, Thomas Jefferson; A Biography (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1951) pp. 622-23; Peter P. Hill, William Vans Murray, Federalist Diplomat: The Shaping of Peace with France, 1797-1801 (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1971) pp. 135-46.}

Porcupine's Gazette labeled the news of Murray's nomination as nothing but a sordid rumor.\footnote{Porcupine's Gazette, 19 February 1799.} This surprise move by the president disgusted several Federalist leaders. Robert Troup complained, "The faux pax he committed in the late nomination of Minister
to France has so shaken the public spirit and the public mind, that he can never regain the ground on which he lately stood . . . ."62

John Adams encountered another difficult problem at the end of 1798. The cost of the undeclared war with France forced Congress to impose a stamp duty, a direct tax on houses, slaves, and land, and to increase the custom duties. The burden of these taxes created resentment among both Republicans and Federalists. Such was the discontentment in eastern Pennsylvania that an armed rebellion occurred in the autumn and winter of 1798-99. John Fries, an auctioneer, and his followers rebelled against these taxes and forced Adams to send federal troops into Pennsylvania to quell the protest. This move by the president convinced many Republicans that the army had been strengthened in 1798 to enforce the Alien and Sedition Acts and other Federalist policies. The use of the military to quell a domestic uprising was blasted by Republican journalists. They observed that citizens were threatened with death by soldiers and sailors even as they walked down their city streets. They concluded that citizens:

62 Troup to King, 6 May 1799, King, King, 3:14.
are exposed to the insolence and impudence of every wretch who has sufficient interest to procure a commission . . . . A government cannot long remain popular, when its hirlings tyrannize with impunity over the people and are despised by them. Military establishments are fruitful sources of despotism . . . .

Eventually Fries and two other men were captured, tried, and convicted of treason. Early in the year 1800, Adams pardoned them for their crimes without consulting his cabinet or the federal judge. This act engendered a feeling of bitterness in the cabinet and among many Federalists.  

While the Federalists received political disappointments early in 1799, the Republican party also lost support during the same period. Public reaction to the Virginia and Kentucky Resolutions was generally unfavorable. The Gazette of the United States responded:

the danger of our situation cannot be exaggerated . . . . They have dared . . . to condemn one of the first of all constitutional functions in a representative government, the passing of laws by a majority; they have censured the chosen executive of the people for carrying these laws into effect . . . . What shadow of reason can be given for supposing they will stop here . . . .

63 Aurora, 10 July 1799.


65 Philadelphia Gazette of the United States, 9 February 1799. Hereafter this will be cited Gazette of the United States.
Not only did Federalists attack the Virginia and Kentucky Resolutions, but they continued to support the Alien and Sedition Acts. They argued that the president was authorized to expel only foreigners who were considered dangerous to the safety of the country, not the decent and intelligent citizens. Federalists surmised that only those persons conscious of their guilt could be against the laws.66

The Republican press supported the peace efforts of Adams and attempted to convince the people that there was not an immediate danger of foreign intrusion. The Aurora predicted that the probability of a French invasion was as great as that of an invasion from Saturn.67 It also noted British atrocities on the high seas and referred to the British navy as "the great sea robbers."68

Personal confrontation between the partisan press also continued. The Aurora commented on a political editorial that the Gazette of the United States had published and emphasized that it was "the strange mixture of the incomprehensible and the ridiculous--of vapidity, and bombast--egregious vanity and naked hypocrisy--pitiful whining and

66 Columbian Centinel, 2 March 1799.
67 Aurora, 20 February 1799.
68 Ibid., 8 January 1799.
outrageous rant . . . that has ever appeared in a newspaper . . . ."\(^{69}\)

As a result of the adverse reaction to the Alien and Sedition Acts, Fries' Rebellion, and the prospect of peace with France, Jefferson believed that the public sentiment now favored the Republican party. He personally urged every man to contribute monetary aid and support the cause. \(^{70}\) In a letter to Elbridge Gerry, he formulated a remarkably concise platform for his party. He averred:

I am for relying, for internal defence, on our militia solely, till actual invasion, and for such a naval force only as may protect our coasts and harbors from such depredations as we have experienced; and not for a standing army in time of peace, which may overawe the public sentiment; nor for a navy, which, by its own expenses and the eternal wars in which it will implicate us, will grind us with public burdens, and sink us under them. \(^{71}\)

Neither side, however, conceded defeat and continually attempted to incite the people against the other's party by using any means available. Written attacks against individuals remained commonplace. In one pamphlet William Cobbett was called an "abandoned wretch," a "hirling of a British

\(^{69}\) Ibid., 5 March 1799.

\(^{70}\) Jefferson to James Madison, 5 February 1799, Bergh, Jefferson, 10:96.

\(^{71}\) Jefferson to Gerry, 26 January 1799, ibid., p. 77.
minister," and a "foul leper of iniquity." In another pamphlet, the author referred to Cobbett as "the most execrable wretch that heaven in its wrath ever allowed to invest a country, and arm citizen against citizen . . . ." Cobbett retaliated by relating how two of Benjamin Bache's apprentices were apprehended for breaking into a shop and that stolen merchandise was found at Bache's house. Political clubs were also formed by both parties to influence the people further. One such Federalist organization, The Anchor Club, proclaimed, "It is the avowed policy of Mr. Jefferson to confine all our citizens to the cultivation of the earth . . . . This is a miserable policy." Insults of this type were innumerable and were to be found in almost every edition of every partisan paper or political pamphlet.

Newspapers and pamphlets were not the only means of demagoguery available. Ministers often used the pulpit to express political opinions, especially the Federalist clergy in New England. Abraham Cummings, a minister at


74 Porcupine's Gazette, 17 October 1798.

75 Gazette of the United States, 24 January 1799.
Castine, Maine, warned that the United States was in danger of losing its Christian religion if it followed the wicked ways of France and the Republicans in America. He announced from the pulpit that because of the atheism of France, three million persons had recently been killed in that country. Another pastor suggested that those newspapers that supported the Republicans should be burned. He added, "That a Christian people should take such newspapers and tolerate such sentiments as disturb the peace, injure the government and would destroy the religion of our country, denote either gross deception, or great depravity." One Republican in New London, Connecticut, responded to this type of political chicanery by making a sign in town which stated that the pastor was paid "for preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ and not that of John Adams."

By the autumn of 1799, the war cry had dropped to a whisper, nevertheless, the Hamiltonians were still dissatisfied with Adams as their president. One cause of this discontentment

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77 Hezekiah Packard, Federal Republicanism (Boston, 1799) p. 15.

78 Baltimore American and Commercial Advertiser, 16 May 1799. Hereafter this will be cited as American and Commercial Advertiser.
was the president's frequent absence from the capital, Philadelphia. Adams loved his country home at Braintree (Quincy, Massachusetts) and hated Philadelphia. In his four year term as President he was absent a total of 385 days from Philadelphia, which included a seven-month stretch in 1799 from March to November.\(^79\)

In February Adams had nominated William Vans Murray as peace plenipotentary to France, but the Hamiltonians had managed to detain him until November. They insisted that he be accompanied by two other men. In November 1799, Chief Justice Oliver Ellsworth and Governor William R. Davie of North Carolina sailed for France, without the blessings of many Federalists and joined Murray, who jouried from the Netherlands.\(^80\) So disconcerted was Cobbett that he left Philadelphia that winter, and Fenno, angered, quit publishing his newspaper.\(^81\)

\(^{79}\) Roseboom, A History of Presidential Elections, p. 36.

\(^{80}\) Alexander DeConde, The Quasi-War; The Politics and Diplomacy of the Undeclared War with France 1797-1801 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1966) p. 223. This corrects the erroneous statement found in John C. Miller's, The Federalist Era, 1789-1801, p. 246. In this citation Miller stated that William Vans Murray departed for France with Oliver Ellsworth and William R. Davie. Murray was already in Europe at the time Ellsworth and Davie left the United States for France.

Numerous Federalists felt forsaken and turned to the most popular man in America to save their party, George Washington. Several men expressed the hope that he would run again for President instead of the unpopular Adams, but Washington never commented on this possibility. In December the Federalists received shocking news that would change their strategy in the upcoming presidential election. On Saturday, 14 December 1799, George Washington unexpectedly died from a severe throat infection and shattered the hopes of a united Federal party. Federalists now thoroughly appreciated the desperation of their situation. They had alienated many followers, divided their party, and lost their most popular leader.


CHAPTER III

SEDITION, SMEAR, AND SLANDER IN THE STATES

Although many Federalists were despondent by the end of 1799, the party also had sufficient reason to be optimistic. By 1800 Federalists had guided the United States through eleven perilous years. In 1785 the nation could not even pay the interest on its debt, but by 1800 the United States Government easily collected $10,500,000 in revenue. With the national treasury filled with gold and silver, the country possessed approximately $29,000,000 of capital in twenty-nine banks. American industry and commerce expanded tremendously during this period. By 1800 the nation exported almost twice the amount of wheat and flour as in 1790. The invention of the cotton gin in 1793 enabled the southern states to export 25,000 bales of cotton annually. The gross imports and exports in 1800 balanced at approximately $75,000,000 dollars. The amount of foreign merchandise consumed was about $40,000,000 or $50,000,000. A modest navy of nine frigates and twenty-five smaller vessels protected this trade.¹

¹Henry Adams, History of the United States of America During the First Administration of Thomas Jefferson (New
The population of the United States also increased substantially from 1790 to 1800. The estimated population in 1790 was 3,929,000, and by 1800 it had grown to 5,308,483. In comparison the French Republic had over 27,000,000 inhabitants, while Great Britain contained more than 15,000,000. Almost one fifth of the American population was in bondage.

There remained less than 1,000,000 white males to conduct the business and responsibilities of the young nation.

There were six cities with more than 5,000 persons and an additional five cities that contained more than 20,000 inhabitants.  

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The struggle for the presidency centered not only on the national issues but on the local and state campaigns as well during the first half of 1800. Politics on a national level was poorly organized; therefore, emphasis on political organization remained in the state governments. Small groups of men in the sixteen states generally formulated policies for the two major political parties. At this time there was no uniform method of selecting presidential electors. State legislatures chose electors in ten states; therefore, it was vitally important for the two parties to gain a majority in these state legislatures. Once either Republicans or Federalists secured a majority in a legislature, it almost assured them control of that state's electoral vote. In Rhode Island and Virginia the people voted for electors on an at large ticket. Maryland, North Carolina, and Kentucky established a different system. In these states the people only voted for electors in the congressional district in which they resided, plus two at large. In Tennessee the state legislature selected three men in each county of the state to chose electors. These representatives then selected one elector in the district in which they resided (there were three districts).³

³U.S. Bureau of the Census, Historical Statistics, p. 681; Cunningham, Jeffersonian Republicans, p. 176; Arthur M.
Before the states decided on the final method of selecting electors listed above, political parties vied for control of the state legislatures in order to designate the method of selection which offered the greatest partisan advantage. Several newspapers suggested that every state should change their election laws if there was a danger of losing electoral votes as a "duty from a principle of self preservation." 4

The first state to change its method of selecting electors was Virginia. In January, 1800, its Republican-controlled legislature passed an act providing for the election of presidential electors on a general or at large ticket instead of by congressional districts as in the previous elections. In the past, voters voted in their respective districts for one resident candidate within

Schlesinger, Jr. et al., eds., History of American Presidential Elections, 1789-1968, 4 vols. (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1971), 1:104-08 (hereafter cited as Schlesinger, History). This corrects the erroneous citation listed in Eugene Roseboom's A History of Presidential Elections, p. 44 and in Edward Stanwood's A History of the Presidency, p. 63. The authors of these works stated that there were only four states in which electors were selected by popular vote: Rhode Island, Maryland, Virginia, and North Carolina. Both accounts omit Kentucky. In 1800 there were sixteen states with a total of 138 electoral votes (see Appendix II for a list of each state, their respective number of electoral votes, and how they selected presidential electors). 4

Columbia Centinel, 8 February 1800.
their district. The new law required every eligible voter in the state to vote for one person in each of the twenty-one electoral districts. This tactic was severely criticized by Federalists in Virginia and in other states. Those who wished to change the existing system were designated as "the great enemy of mankind surveying maliciously the first abodes of happiness and peace." Federalists also referred to Republicans as "blind and foolish." They argued that the new method of selection deprived the majority of the people's will from selecting the president.

Republicans were not idle during this particular crisis. The Aurora mildly observed that Federalists had begun "to pop at the Vice President." It further noted that Luther Martin of Baltimore, a Federalist, had attacked Jefferson and the new law in Virginia. The paper claimed that Martin was "totally dead to public shame" and that his assault "makes the living blood curdle." During this time Jefferson quietly

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5 George Hay, A Vindication of the General Ticket Law, Passed by the Legislature of Virginia, on the 18th Day of January, 1800 (Richmond, 1800), p. 3.

6 William Fowler, An Address to the Voters for Electors of President and Vice President of the United States, in the State of Virginia (Alexandria, 1800), p. 1.


8 Aurora, 20 January 1800.
collected and distributed several political pamphlets to his friends in Virginia and cited these as "the most precious gifts that can be made to us."  This change in electioneering procedure was a major political victory for the Republicans. It virtually assured them a sweep of all of Virginia's twenty-one electoral votes.

Federalists countered the Republican-inspired move in Virginia and decided to change the method of choosing electors in Massachusetts. They controlled the legislature in the Bay State and ultimately replaced the popular election by districts with selection of electors by the state legislature. Similarly, a legislative choice of electors replaced the general ticket in New Hampshire. New York Federalists defeated a Republican effort to change the legislative choice of choosing electors to one of election by districts. In Pennsylvania the Federalist Senate and Republican House of Representatives deadlocked over the method to be used. In a compromise repugnant to all, they decided to divide the fifteen electoral votes--eight to Republicans and seven

to Federalists. Denunciations were numerous from both parties during these legislative battles. In Delaware a Republican follower avowed that Jefferson and his party had been "the theme of incessant slander and abuse." He further averred that Federalists believed "no poor man ought to be entitled to vote!" The pamphleteer concluded, "If you give up the right of electing electors for President, you may next be called on to surrender the right of returning delegates to your assembly and to Congress." After all the changes in electoral procedures had been completed, only Rhode Island, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, and Kentucky still had popularly elected presidential electors.

In the midst of the state legislative battles, the two parties managed to continue their verbal assaults over long-standing national issues. The question of the necessity of a standing army had been a serious national issue for several months. Republicans referred to the taxes that


11 James Wilson, Address to the Citizens of Kent, on the Approaching Election (Wilmington, Delaware, 1800), pp. 4, 13-14.

12 Schlesinger, History, p. 105.
Federalists imposed to raise the army as "ruinous," "wasteful," and "extravagant." In one vindictive story the Aurora reported that 500 women had been employed by the army and were stationed at various military camps. The paper questioned whether the women were to be trained as "American cavalry or light infantry." The next day that paper announced that the women had been hired by Federalists "to raise a corps of infantry."  

The perseverance of Republicans resulted in the passage of an act by Congress on 20 February 1800 to suspend enlistments in the army until its next session or a declaration of war. This transaction greatly exasperated the Hamiltonian Federalists, who wanted a large standing army. Soon another law provided for the discharge of officers and men who had already enlisted. President Adams realized that taxes to support the army were unpopular and wanted to satisfy the majority of the people, since this was a

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13 Aurora, 15 January 1800; Alexander DeConde, The Quasi War; The Politics and Diplomacy of the Undeclared War with France 1797-1801 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1966) p. 191 (hereafter cited as DeConde, The Quasi War). The steady increase of the federal budget from 1796 to 1800 reflected the high cost of maintaining a standing army. Congress approved a total budget of $5,800,000 in 1796. The next year it increased by only $200,000. The budget rose substantially in 1798 to $7,600,000, and even more in 1797 to $9,300,000.

14 Ibid., 9 January 1800, 10 January 1800.
presidential election year. For these reasons and because the peace negotiations in Paris were proceeding favorably, Adams signed the act into law on the last day of the congressional session, 14 May 1800. It provided for the release of the officers and men from the service in the additional volunteer army by 15 June 1800.¹⁵

The most extraordinary crisis dealing with military affairs in the first half of the year 1800 was the Jonathan Robbins case. During the Adams administration the problem of British impressment of American sailors was particularly upsetting to Federalists and Republicans alike. This misunderstanding between the Americans and British exploded over the issue of one Thomas Nash, alias Jonathan Robbins. In 1797 Nash was a petty officer on the British frigate Hermione, whose crew mutinied and murdered most of the ship's officers. Many of the crew fled to the American merchant marine. The British consul in Charleston discovered Nash in 1799 on an American vessel and demanded his return. Nash swore that he had been impressed by the British and had

not taken part in the mutiny, although he was on board the Hermione at that time. He produced an affidavit to prove that he was Jonathan Robbins, an American, born in Danbury, Connecticut. President Adams investigated the case himself and became convinced that Nash was not an American. The British incarcerated Nash, tried him, found him guilty, and sent him to the gallows.16 This controversial episode soon became a political issue. Republicans insisted that Nash was an American and had been betrayed by Adams. They referred to the incident as "an outrage" and considered Adams to be "the king of America." The supporters of Nash further testified that the hands of Adams were "reeking with the blood of the poor, friendless Connecticut sailor."17 The protest was so strong that Republicans tried to censure the President, and it was not until March 1800 that the House defeated this particular resolution.18


Federalists contended that Nash was a British subject and had been justly executed. They not only vindicated Adams on this matter but attacked Jefferson for his conduct while serving as governor of Virginia during the American Revolution. In the latter stages of that war the British had invaded Virginia, and Federalists swore that Jefferson had fled. Almost twenty years after this event occurred, the question of Jefferson's bravery surfaced in the campaign of 1800. Federalists maintained that Virginia, under the leadership of Jefferson, "made a more feeble defence . . . against the common enemy, than any other state in the union." They further alleged that Virginians had suffered tremendous losses because of Jefferson's cowardice and mismanagement of governmental responsibilities. They concluded that the Republican leader would be equally incompetent if elected to the presidency.19

Republicans promptly defended their leader and surmised that the conduct of Jefferson while governor of Virginia "was such as every wise and prudent statesman would have

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19 Henry William Desaussure, Address to the Citizens of South Carolina, on the Approaching Election of President and Vice-President of the United States (Charleston, 1800), p. 10.
pursued under similar circumstances." Republican newspapers imparted their usual support for Jefferson one stated, "a thousand times we have had occasion to observe . . . the stupidity of the tools of the anglo federal party . . . they are eternally blundering forth . . . ." Another deduced that Federalist chances for winning the presidential election were "so desperate, that it appears to be almost madness in them to attempt the contest . . . ." 21

Republican were especially quick to denounce rival newspaper editors, not only in their own cities, but in distant ones as well. In March of 1800, an antagonistic Federalist paper in Boston printed five reasons why Jefferson should not be elected president. The Aurora re-printed this list as follows:

1st. He is a Deist--a man that disregards the volume of divine inspiration, and ridicules the Christian religion. 2nd. He has uniformly opposed the wise and energetic measures of this government--calculated to support its dignity and ensure its prosperity. 3rd. He is confessedly at the head of a party in this country, whose object is opposition to the laws, subversion of order, and destruction of religious principles. 4th. As a wise and political legislature,

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21 Aurora, 24 March 1800; New York American Citizen, 14 April 1800 (hereafter cited as American Citizen).
his abilities are suspected, though his heart were untainted. 5th. His household is French--his language, his dress, his manners, his associates are French.

The *Aurora* labeled these accusations as "silly," "preposterous," and "humorous." Additional Republican charges followed. Even though John Ward Fenno had relinquished the *Gazette of the United States*, the *Aurora* continued to assail him. That paper avowed that Fenno was "a scoundrel and a liar" and had printed "the grossest falsehood that ever disgraced any paper of the United States."23

At various times Jefferson and Adams both expressed their views concerning the widespread abuse they encountered. Jefferson affirmed, "It has been so impossible to contradict all their lies that I have determined to contradict none; for while I should be engaged with one, they would publish twenty new ones."24 He further proclaimed when he wrote to his daughter, Martha Jefferson Randolph, that "politics are such a torment that I would advise every one I love not to mix with them."25 Adams reflected on his past forty

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22 Aurora, 31 March 1800.
23 Ibid.
years of public service and determined, "From the year 1760 to this moment has appeared one uniform state of doubt, uncertainty, and danger to me."26

After the Jonathan Robbins affair both parties concentrated on the elections in the different state legislatures. Since in a majority of states the legislature named the presidential electors, the outcome of the national election depended heavily upon the result of the state elections. The states held these elections on different days and often at different times of the year. Both parties wanted impressive victories in the early contests in order to influence subsequent elections in other states.

Federalists exhibited a definite lack of confidence in their ability to win the presidential election during the early months of 1800. New York Federalist Robert Troup confessed that his party had lost a great deal of support and attributed the loss to President Adams.27


Hamilton, in a letter to Minister to England Rufus King concurred with Troup in his estimate of the president. The situation perplexed Hamilton, and he was at a loss as to the best course of action to pursue. He reported, "The leading friends of the government, are in a sad dilemma. Shall they risk a serious schism by an attempt to change?"  

Fisher Ames, leading Massachusetts Federalist, admitted "things are gloomy enough." He believed in order to facilitate a victory the Federalist press must be "a terror to evil-doers." Candidly he admitted, "the turgid bombast of our [Federalist] papers has been abominable."  

Conversely, the Republicans gained more and more confidence as the campaign progressed. Republicans believed the majority of the voters now supported their party; however, Federalists were strongly entrenched in many of the state legislatures. Republicans learned that many Federalists, in both public and private demeanor, lacked confidence and expressed alarm over the election. Jefferson thought that, excluding

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28 Hamilton to King, 5 January 1800, ibid., p. 173.


Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and New York, the remainder of the states were equally divided. He therefore concluded that the outcome of the presidential election would depend on the result of contests in the three states of Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and New York. He predicted that Pennsylvania would deadlock in its voting procedure and that New Jersey would vote Republican. He was uncertain as to what would be the outcome of the New York elections but realized it would be extremely close. The two parties were so evenly matched in the legislature that the state's electoral vote hinged on the result of the vote in New York City.³¹

In 1796 John Adams had carried New York. Since his total margin of victory was only three electoral votes, a victory in the Empire State was essential to both parties. Federalists, however, lacked qualified personnel to run for office. Nevertheless, Hamilton attempted to find capable men but with little success.³² Republicans were better organized throughout the nation and presented a popular list of candidates for the New York election and as that election


drew near, demagoguery intensified. One Federalist asserted that Republicans were:

bent to introduce into every department of the State governments unprincipled tools of a daring faction, to render more certain the election to the Presidency, of the great arch priest of Jacobinism and infidelity. God grant that they may be caught in their own craft, and that shame and confusion may overwhelm these base plotters against the peace, safety and felicity of the United States.\textsuperscript{33}

Secretary of State Timothy Pickering observed that Republicans would "stop at nothing" to obtain their goals. He noted that the "Jacobin Papers . . . daily teem with atrocious lies and perverse misrepresentations against the President and all the chief officers of government and leading members in Congress."\textsuperscript{34}

Republican assaults accelerated. A political broadside stated that the policies and philosophy of Adams would "lead to slavery and ruin, to empty pockets, hungry bellies, and naked backs--Reject him . . . ." The author further resolved


\textsuperscript{34} Timothy Pickering to John Pickering, 7 March 1800, Timothy Pickering Papers Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston (on microfilm at N.T.S.U. library).
that Federalists could not "have either sense or morals enough for the state prison, much less the state legislature."  

The primary Republican leader in New York who formulated the electioneering strategy was Aaron Burr. "If we carry this election," said a Republican follower, "it may be ascribed principally to Col. Burr's management and perseverance." Burr also received a great deal of support from a group of men whom he personally organized into a viable political power in New York. This group was known as "the Tenth Legion" and proved extremely influential in the Empire State campaign. Burr and his followers organized the Republican ticket in New York City and included on that list many of the state's most prominent leaders. Some of the more prestigious names were George Clinton, ex-governor of New York, General Horatio Gates, former revolutionary war leader, and Henry Brockholst Livingston, well-known lawyer.

The polls in New York remained open for three days once the voting began on 29 April. Many political leaders


36 Matthew L. Davis to Albert Gallatin, 29 March 1800, Adams, Gallatin, 1:234.
stationed themselves at the places of voting in an attempt to influence the final outcome. The most active men during the three days of voting were Burr and Hamilton. They addressed the people, debated the issues before the voters, and constantly encouraged their political associates. After the polls closed, a tally of the votes indicated a Republican victory for the assembly by an average majority of almost 500 votes per district. This virtually assured Republicans that New York's twelve electoral votes would belong to Jefferson.37

The Republican victory stunned Federalists and elated Republicans. The victorious party had spent a reported $50,000 on the New York campaign, and its leaders were justifiably blissful over the result.38 The nation's capital, Philadelphia, soon received the news of a Republican

37 Nathan Schachner, Aaron Burr; A Biography (New York: Frederick A. Stokes Company, 1937) pp. 169-77. A contradiction exists concerning the influence of the Tammany Society in New York elections. (Tammany was a separate political organization from "the Tenth Legion.") According to Noble Cunningham's Jeffersonian Republicans, p. 181, the Tammany Society did not greatly influence the political events in New York nor was Burr its leader. Cunningham concluded that in Gustavus Myers' The History of Tammany Hall, Myers erroneously stated that the Tammany Hall Society was an important instrument in the winning of the New York elections. This conclusion was repeated in Nathan Schachner's Jefferson and Hamilton: The Struggle for Democracy in America, p. 451.

victory and in a short time the newspapers publicly reported the event. On 6 May 1800, the Aurora announced, "The result of the New York elections must speak to the federal administration in a very emphatical manner, how general and decisive the public opinion is against their measures, and the baleful policy which they have pursued." In Baltimore a partisan paper proclaimed, "The Goddess of Liberty has put to flight the demon of Aristocracy . . . Huzza for Jefferson!"

The Federalists were understandably despondent. The Aurora contended that it had received a letter which stated that several Federalists in New York believed "a civil war would be preferable to having Jefferson for President." In Boston the Columbian Centinel even incorrectly reported the New York results. It announced, "thank God . . . it is reduced to an absolute certainty that the Federalists will have a majority in our next House of Assembly." Hamilton thought the only possible way to save Federalists "from the fangs of Jefferson" was to equally support John Adams and Charles Cotesworth Pinckney for President and

39 Aurora, 6 May 1800.
40 Baltimore American, 16 June 1800.
41 Aurora, 7 May 1800.
42 Columbian Centinel, 14 May 1800.
Vice President. Hamilton, however, believed there was still a possibility of salvaging the twelve presidential electoral votes of New York. He personally wrote to John Jay, governor of New York, and proposed that Jay convene an extra session of the existing Federalist legislature before the newly-elected legislature met in July. He wanted the lame duck Federalist-dominated legislature to pass a bill that would deprive the new legislature of its right to chose presidential electors. Jay, however, did not comply with the request and wrote at the bottom of Hamilton's letter, "Proposing a measure for party purposes, which I think it would not become me to adopt."

Shortly after the Republican victory in New York, several Republican congressmen caucused to decide officially on the presidential and vice presidential nominees. The group knew Jefferson would be their presidential choice but had not predetermined his running mate. The caucus first decided that the vice presidential candidate must be a New Yorker and suggested three possible men--George Clinton,
Robert Livingston, or Aaron Burr. The group doubted the leadership ability of Livingston, thought Clinton too old, and on 11 May 1800 finally unanimously agreed to support Burr.45

Federalists held their caucus on 3 May 1800 to determine that party's presidential and vice presidential candidates. The caucus convened in Philadelphia and selected Charles Cotesworth Pinckney of South Carolina as the Vice presidential nominee and Adams as the presidential choice. Federalist leaders hoped that a southern candidate would strengthen their party in the South and compensate for the loss of New York. Secretly Hamilton expected Adams and Pinckney to receive the same number of electoral votes in every state except South Carolina. In that state Hamilton anticipated that Pinckney would receive more votes than Adams and would become president. If that occurred, Hamilton could assume a major role in formulating the foreign and domestic policies of the nation.46

When Adams learned of the Federalist defeat in New York, he exploded against the supporters of Hamilton. He


blamed Hamilton for the New York defeat, and once that state surrendered to Jefferson, he decided to change his cabinet. James McHenry, secretary of war, Timothy Pickering, secretary of state, and Oliver Wolcott, secretary of treasury, had spied for Hamilton during the Adams administration. Adams called McHenry into his office and severely criticized him for his performance of duty. On 6 May 1800, McHenry offered his resignation, and Adams eagerly accepted it. Adams next asked for the resignation of Pickering on 10 May. Two days later Pickering explained that for financial and personal reasons he would remain in office until next March, when Jefferson would probably become president. This defiance infuriated Adams. He then sent a terse note which stated, "you are hereby discharged from any further service as Secretary of State." The Republican press howled with delight when they discovered the serious split within the Federalist party. The *Aurora* disclosed,

If ever a man went out of a public station loaded with the universal execrations of an injured country, it is Mr. Timothy Pickering . . . . Let him be

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48 Adams to Pickering, 10 May 1800, ibid., p. 53.
49 Adams to Pickering, 12 May 1800, ibid., p. 55.
watched, for men never come out of office with infamy, who do not take care to be loaded with plunder to counterbalance it.

The New York American Citizen referred to Pickering as "faithless" and proclaimed his party was "composed of men equally destitute of morality and talents . . . . The only security we have against their unparalleled attacks on our liberties and our morals, is their stupidity and ignorance." In Hartford, Connecticut, the American Mercury disclosed that Pickering had threatened the life of President Adams after his dismissal.

Federalist newspapers naturally attempted to underplay the latest crisis and allotted little coverage to the event. A Vermont newspaper offered a typical explanation of the dismissal which stated, "The step is generally conceived to have been taken on political grounds."

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50 Aurora, 9 May 1800. Several newspapers began to predict the final presidential electoral count during this period. On 21 May, the Aurora determined that Jefferson would receive ninety-four votes while Adams would have only forty-four. The American Mercury made the same prediction on 29 May 1800.

51 New York American Citizen, 23 May 1800. Hereafter this will be cited as American Citizen.

52 American Mercury, 29 May 1800.

In private correspondence Pickering assailed the character of the president in extremely strong language. In his opinion Adams was "opinionated, capricious, and immeasurably vain" and had "long disgusted those decided federalists who were his truest friends." In a letter to his son, John, the former secretary of state noted that Adams was "perhaps the most unequal man in the world, and as unstable as unequal." He concluded, "A thousand lies and ridiculous conjectures will be inserted in the newspapers, to account for my removal; they already begin to appear." After Pickering's removal Hamilton resolved never to be responsible for Adams, even though it might mean the election of Jefferson.

Adams allowed Oliver Wolcott to remain as secretary of the treasury even though he was subservient to Hamilton. The president then nominated Samuel Dexter, a Massachusetts senator, as secretary of war, and a Virginian, John Marshall, as secretary of state.

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54 Pickering to Timothy Williams, 19 May 1800, Pickering Papers.
55 Timothy Pickering to John Pickering, 27 May 1800, ibid., p. 531.
56 Hamilton to Theodore Sedgwick, 10 May 1800, Lodge, Hamilton, 10:375.
57 DeConde, The Quasi War, p. 272. This corrects the erroneous citation listed in John C. Miller's The Federalist
Shortly after the dismissal of Pickering, rumors began to circulate among Federalists and Republicans that Adams had clandestinely made a deal with Jefferson concerning the election. One individual in South Carolina learned that Adams and Jefferson had twice met to discuss the possibility of Adams being vice president under Jefferson.58 A Virginian declared that "a whisper has produced a complacent communication between these Gentlemen; so that the question is not so much whether J[efferson] shall be president or not, but whether A[dsams] or P[ickney] shall be Vice [President] . . . ."59 Similar accounts appeared from numerous sources throughout the United States in May and June of 1800.60 The former secretary of state shed further light on the subject.

Pickering stated that the president had told McHenry that

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Era, p. 261. Miller stated that Dexter was a Virginian, when, in fact, he was born in Massachusetts.

58James Gunn to John Rutledge, 12 May 1800, John Rutledge Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill (on microfilm at N.T.S.U. library).


"he would sooner serve as Vice-President under him [Jefferson], or even as Minister resident at the Hague than be indebted for his election to such a being as Hamilton." Pickering also reported that Adams referred to Hamilton as a "bastard."61

Another serious problem arose for Federalists during the spring of 1800 to add to their election woes. In late 1798 John Fries and his followers revolted against high taxes in eastern Pennsylvania, but the uprising was short lived. The court found Fries and two other men, Frederic Heyney and John Getman, guilty; however, they appealed the verdict and were granted a new trial in April 1800. Again the verdict was "guilty," and the three men were sentenced to be hanged. Fries appealed the verdict to President Adams, who in turn sought the advice of his cabinet.62 His cabinet replied that, in their opinion, the three men had committed treason and should be executed.63 Adams ignored their advice and on 21 May 1800 pardoned all participants in

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61 Pickering to Rufus King, 26 June 1800, King, King, 3:262.


the insurrection. Pickering referred to the pardoning of Fries as "an outrage on decency, propriety, justice and sound policy . . . ." Pickering also heard that a prominent lawyer, upon learning of the pardons, exclaimed, "The P[resident] ought to have a straight jacket."

Federalists attempted to counteract their series of unfortunate calamities with renewed attacks on Jefferson's religious philosophy. Earlier, in 1785, Jefferson had published *Notes on the State of Virginia* (the only book he ever wrote and published) in which he expressed, among other subjects, his religious views. In his *Notes* concerning religion he stated, "But it does me no injury for my neighbors to say there are twenty gods, or no god. It neither picks my pocket nor breaks my leg." Federalists

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64 Adams to Charles Lee, 21 May 1800, ibid., p. 60.


66 Timothy Pickering to John Pickering, 7 June 1800, Pickering Papers.

knew this passage and now reiterated attacks on Jefferson as an atheist. One such denunciation appeared in a pamphlet and declared:

Shall THOMAS JEFFERSON be the chief magistrate of these states? . . . I have listened to the pleas and admonitions of others, and I have, finally, answered from my inmost soul--GOD FORBID! . . . he is no Christian . . . Shall Thomas Jefferson, who denies the truth, and avows the pernicious folly of all religion, be your governor? . . . You cannot be blind to the flagrant inconsistency of raising one to the supreme office, who is not a Christian. You cannot but see that this is an open renunciation of your faith.

Many other attacks on Jefferson appeared. The Gazette of the United States professed to fight against "the raging madness of Jacobinism" because "that vile faction . . . would place at the head of affairs, an atheist, and a traitor to his country."\(^{69}\)

Naturally Jefferson's supporters defended their presidential choice with a great deal of enthusiasm. William Duane, editor of the Aurora, replied that "a republican administration, will have no occasion to cajole the people with the solemn mockery of political religion: they leave


\(^{69}\)Gazette of the United States, 15 May 1800.
this to such church-going sinners as Mr. Fenno and his
gang . . . who laugh at religion in private . . . ."70

The Alien and Sedition Laws were still a major political
issue during the first half of 1800. Federalist pressure
resulted in the indictment of at least seventeen persons
under the Sedition Law. Although the majority of these
individuals were indicted in 1798 and 1799, most of the
cases did not come to trial until the spring and early summer
of 1800.71

Charles Holt, editor of the New London, Connecticut,
Bee, had attacked Federalist policies in his paper and
was indicted as "a wicked, malicious, seditious and ill-
disposed person" in October 1799. On 12 April 1800, a jury
found Holt guilty and sentenced him to three months in

70Aurora, 28 May 1800.

71James M. Smith, Freedom's Fetters, The Alien and
Sedition Laws and American Civil Liberties (Ithaca, New
York: Cornell University Press, 1956) pp. 185-86. In the
summer of 1797, Secretary of State Pickering began a
campaign to prosecute the five leading Republican papers--
the Philadelphia Aurora, the Boston Independent Chronicle,
the New York Argus, the Richmond Examiner, and the Baltimore
American under the Sedition Law. Federalists brought suits
against all these papers except the Baltimore American.
Pickering planned his strategy so that their trials would
occur in the early months of 1800 in order to remove them
from the presidential campaign.
prison and a $200 fine. On 19 April 1800, the trial of Thomas Cooper, editor of the Northumberland, Pennsylvania, Gazette, opened, and the court eventually found him guilty. The presiding judge was Samuel Chase, associate justice of the Supreme Court, and he fined Cooper $400 and pronounced a prison sentence of four months. Also in April 1800, Anthony Haswell, editor of the Bennington Vermont Gazette, received a two months jail sentence and a $200 fine. William Duane, editor of the Aurora, was arrested in July 1797 for sedition, but because of technicalities in his trial he was never convicted.

The most publicized and the last trial under the Sedition Law was that of James T. Callender. In early 1800 he wrote a pamphlet entitled, The Prospect Before Us. In this work he blasted Adams and produced one of the most invective pamphlets in the year 1800. Callender believed that "nothing but the dismissal [sic] of Mr. Adams can save the United

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73 Ibid., pp. 203-09.
74 Ibid., pp. 123-25.
75 Ibid., pp. 197-202.
States." He offered the nation a choice "between Adams, war, and beggary, and Jefferson, peace and competency." On 24 May 1800, the district attorney indicted Callender for sedition and charged him as being "a person of wicked, depraved, civil disposed, disquiet and turbulent mind and disposition." Justice Chase also presided over the Callender trial and on 3 June 1800, after the jury reached a guilty verdict, he assessed a $200 fine and a nine month jail sentence. Callender was still in jail when the Sedition Law expired on 3 March 1801.

Many Federalists rejoiced over the outcome of these trials. One such pamphleteer referred to Republican editors and avowed "these wretches are fools, villains and lyars of the first magnitude, the very foster-fathers of rebellion and every foul and unnatural crime; it is their vocation to cry down reason and honesty, and to propagate error and delusion of the grossest kind." Another such view proclaimed that

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all honest and truthful men must admire and support the Sedition Law in order to maintain peace within the United States.\textsuperscript{79}

Republicans not only alleged that those indicted had not received fair trials, because the judges and juries were biased, but they discovered a new area to attack—embezzlement of public funds.\textsuperscript{80} The \textit{Aurora} accused Jonathan Dayton, Federalist senator from New Jersey, of speculating $30,000 of public money for his own use.\textsuperscript{81} On 17 June 1800 that same paper indicated that $8,000,000 of public funds was missing and that fourteen Federalists were responsible. The paper accused former Secretary of State Pickering of possessing over $300,000 of this money.\textsuperscript{82}

As the first half of the year 1800 closed, Federalists discovered that they had lost a great deal of their former support. They had lost presidential electoral votes in New York and Virginia, divided the party over internal conflicts, and alienated numerous persons over the trials

\textsuperscript{79}John Martin Slump, \textit{Animodversions on James Holland's Strictures on General Joseph Dickson's Circular} (Lincolnton, North Carolina, 1800), p. 11.

\textsuperscript{80}\textit{Aurora}, 2 June 1800.

\textsuperscript{81}\textit{Ibid.}, 23 May 1800.

\textsuperscript{82}\textit{Ibid.}, 17 June 1800.
of the Sedition Law. As the presidential election entered into the final six months, their situation was desperate. Unless drastic measures were initiated, Jefferson would be the next president. Republicans, on the other hand, found new admirers almost daily. As a result of this popularity, they efficiently consolidated and organized their forces in every state to prepare for the final slanderous six months of the campaign.
CHAPTER IV

PASSIONS, POLITICS, AND PREJUDICES

The last six months of the campaign teemed with the most vicious and scathing attacks on both presidential contenders that the American people had yet witnessed. Since the Federalists had lost valuable support in New York and Virginia, they resorted to desperate tactics during the final months in order to sway public support to their cause. Republicans gained confidence in the first half of the year 1800 but believed verbal assaults had to be intensified in order to ensure final victory. The complicated situation caused one Federalist to remark, "Never was there a more singular and mysterious state of parties. The plot of an old Spanish play is not more complicated with underplot."¹

National affairs became more confused when a Baltimore newspaper announced on 30 June 1800 that Thomas Jefferson had died. The paper revealed that three gentlemen had

recently arrived in Baltimore from Winchester, Virginia, and while in that town had learned of Jefferson's death. The newspaper further acknowledged that the three individuals had heard the story from a man who had visited Charlottesville, near Jefferson's home at Monticello. According to their report, the Republican presidential candidate had died on 24 June, after an illness of only forty-eight hours.²

The Philadelphia Gazette, a Federalist organ, copied the story on 2 July but contradicted it the next day.³ On 3 July the Gazette of the United States, also a Federalist paper in Philadelphia, proclaimed, "the accounts of Mr. Jefferson's death are contradictory."⁴ Two days later that same paper learned that an individual had dined with Jefferson during the past week at Monticello.⁵

The story of Jefferson's passing quickly spread to other sections of the United States and on 7 July, the Connecticut Courant skeptically reported:

We have often remarked that during a dearth of news there were always hatched a variety of reports, etc., which found their way into the public prints. At

²Baltimore American, 30 June 1800.
³Philadelphia Gazette, 2, 3 July 1800.
⁴Gazette of the United States, 3 July 1800.
⁵Ibid., 5 July 1800.
this time, the politician is hungry, and it is probable that some compassionate being, in order to prevent starvation, has very humanely killed Mr. Jefferson.  

The rumor of the tragedy ended almost as soon as it had begun. By 11 July the Massachusetts Mercury pronounced that the report had "completely evaporated." The story of Jefferson's death had proved to be false, and one explanation of its origin was that a slave named Thomas Jefferson had died at Monticello. The death of the slave Thomas Jefferson was soon associated with the death of Vice President Thomas Jefferson. Republicans naturally rejoiced when they learned that their leader was still alive. One Republican wrote Jefferson after he had learned the truth to express his relief and concluded that "blundering attempts at slander nearly always prove to be a boomerang."  

The false rumor soon developed into a political issue. Republicans believed Federalists started the false report as "a fabrication intended to damp the festivity of the

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6 Connecticut Courant, 7 July 1800.
7 Massachusetts Mercury, 11 July 1800.
8 Gazette of the United States, 3 July 1800.
4th of July." The *Aurora* determined, "When lions fall, assed bray . . . the asses of aristocracy, fearing the paws of the republican lion, reported his death--because they wished him so!" That same paper attempted to arouse the passions of the people by condemning Federalist activity during the height of the rumor. It observed that there was "Snickering, and Ogleing, and . . . nods of the head, and . . . winks of congratulation" by Federalists when they learned of Jefferson's death. During this period Republicans also condemned Federalists for not participating in the annual 4th of July celebrations and hinted that Federalists were unpatriotic.

Even before the rumor of Jefferson's death became widespread, Federalists were diligently combating Republicans with slanderous statements. A Republican paper in Maryland reprinted a story started by Federalists in Vermont. According to the anecdote a five year old child in Vermont had the rare ability to forecast the future. One of his predictions was:

that before the year 1808, the Jacobins are to swarm in this country to overthrow our present government,

10 *Aurora*, 3 July 1800.
11 Ibid., 7 July 1800.
12 Ibid., 12 July 1800.
and to put to death all the clergy and the religious of both sexes. That having affected this revolution, they will then fall out for the supremacy, and finally destroy each other with the sword; after which the present government will again be restored, and the country flourish for one hundred years etc.

Republicans viewed this prognostication with humor and considered this maneuver to be a despicable example of Federalist chicanery.\textsuperscript{13} Shortly after this story appeared, Noah Webster, a Federalist editor in New York, observed, "The falsehoods circulated through the Jacobin prints make a great impression on the minds of people at a distance, especially when asserted with confidence . . . but for God's sake let not falsehoods circulate without reproof . . ."\textsuperscript{14}

Although Federalists continued to assail Republicans, a serious dichotomy had emerged within the internal framework of the Adams party. In midsummer 1800 Hamilton made a concerted effort to convince Federalists to support C.C. Pinckney for president rather than John Adams. In the early summer months he travelled to Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Rhode Island to promote this idea. The campaign trip convinced Hamilton that these states would

\textsuperscript{13}Baltimore American, 19 June 1800.

elect Federalist electors; however, he doubted if they would uniformly support Pickney. This persuaded Hamilton that he had to inform a select group of Federalists that Adams was unfit for the highest office in the nation. The situation convinced him that, unless he took this course of action, the supporters of John Adams and Republicans would "completely run us down in the public opinion." He also believed that Republican demagoguery produced "harm with the ignorant, who are the greatest in number." Throughout the late summer and autumn Hamilton continued to gather support for Pinckney, for the most part by semisecret machinations.

Even though the split within the Federalist party widened, Federalist attacks upon the character of Jefferson did not reflect it. In early August the Connecticut Courant released a vicious canard questioning Jefferson's governmental and fiscal philosophy. It noted that if Jefferson were elected President, the government would be reorganized to satisfy his party and that this reorganization would include


16 Hamilton to Oliver Wolcott, 3 August 1800, ibid., 10:383.
the total and complete destruction of the Treasury Department. The paper further recorded that the Republican press had, on numerous occasions, denounced the fiscal system as "flagitious, destructive, and tyrannical."\textsuperscript{17} A short time later the same newspaper published a more scathing assault on Jefferson when it proclaimed, "if Mr. Jefferson is President, the navy is to be laid up, the ships are to rot at our wharves, our commerce is to again be plundered and our country produce to perish on our hands, our farmers are to be impoverished, and our merchants ruined . . . ." The \textit{Courant} concluded the editorial by denouncing the Republican \textit{Aurora} as "a name synonymous with the blackest falsehood and villainy" and observed that it was "under the patronage of---MR. JEFFERSON!"\textsuperscript{18} The \textit{Aurora} calmly replied that Federalists were "so unfortunate in their tricks and strategems, that every successive step they take serves only to involve them in further contempt and disgrace."\textsuperscript{19}

Federalist condemnations persisted throughout August and were particularly dogmatic in New England. In Massachusetts the \textit{Columbian Centinel} forecasted ruin for the holders of

\textsuperscript{17}\textit{Connecticut Courant}, 4 August 1800.

\textsuperscript{18}\textit{Ibid.}, 21 August 1800.

\textsuperscript{19}\textit{Aurora}, 23 August 1800.
public securities upon the election of Jefferson. The paper also predicted that if Jefferson was elected "old men who have retired . . . widows and orphans . . . public banks, insurance companies, literary and charitable institutions . . . will be involved in one common, certain, and not very distant ruin."\(^{20}\) In the *Connecticut Courant* an article signed by "BURLEIGH" stated that if Jefferson were elected, the United States would be overrun with hundreds of men who would disseminate false and slanderous information through the post office in order to overthrow the government. When this event occurred, Americans "must prepare to depart with our religion, our property, and our lives . . . [for] the flood of mischiefs that will pour in upon us, will be such as cannot be withstood, nor avoided."\(^{21}\) Republicans countered this charge and declared that the post office, under Federalist administration, had destroyed letters and newspapers which they believed were not in accordance with its political views.\(^{22}\)

During the summer of 1800 several Federalist representatives and senators chose not to run for reelection because

\(^{20}\) *Columbian Centinel*, 27 August 1800.

\(^{21}\) *Connecticut Courant*, 28 August 1800.

\(^{22}\) *Aurora*, 8 August 1800.
of the political turmoil within their party. The Republican press took advantage of this situation and compared personages who resigned to rats deserting a sinking ship. This journalistic practice was copied extensively throughout the United States with stories of retiring Federalists captioned "ANOTHER OF THE RATS." One such story announced the retirement of John Wilkes Kittera, Federalist representative from Pennsylvania. The *Aurora* avowed, "We could tell some curious things of this federal rat, but we prefer rather letting him sink into oblivion which he never should have been drawn forth from."\(^{23}\)

Republicans continued to assail other leading Federalists besides President Adams and the retiring congressmen. Alexander Hamilton experienced special condemnation during the late summer months. No campaign of this era would be complete without reference to sexual infidelity. In 1791 Hamilton, while Secretary of the Treasury, had enjoyed the favors of Mrs. Maria Reynolds, wife of a professional swindler named James Reynolds. Actually Hamilton had been trapped

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\(^{23}\)Ibid., 5 August 1800; *Baltimore American*, 5 December 1800. On 5 December 1800, the *Baltimore American* listed two Federalist senators and eleven Federalist representatives who chose not to seek reelection. *Aurora*, 28 November 1800. The *Aurora* learned that Oliver Wolcott, secretary of the treasury, planned to resign and printed, "Better late than never! Better had it been four years before."
into this affair, and when Reynolds discovered Hamilton's relationship with his wife he appeared to be extremely irrate and demanded monetary compensation. Hamilton paid approximately $1000 before Reynolds was later arrested for defrauding the government in another matter. While in jail, Reynolds attempted to convince members of Congress that Hamilton had misused public funds. Three members of Congress confronted Hamilton about this accusation, and the secretary of the treasury convinced them that he was only guilty of an illicit affair with Mrs. Reynolds. The three congressmen swore themselves to secrecy, but this matter was later divulged to Thomas Jefferson by James Monroe, one of the three. This illicit affair soon became common knowledge to the public once the press learned of the story. The infidelity of Hamilton once again became a part of the smear and slander campaign published in Republican newspapers during the final electioneering months. One Republican newspaper asserted, "The great and gallant Major General, we do not mean the brave, but the amorous hero . . . might triumph over MARIA; but his gallantry in other instances has squinted rather low toward bashfulness." Associate

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25 Aurora, 11 August 1800.
Justice Samuel Chase, who presided over several of the sedition trials, also witnessed a great deal of personal abuse during this time. Republican opinion of Chase was summed up in one vicious couplet: "Cursed of thy father, scum of all that's base/Thy sight is odious and thy name is [Chase]." In addition Republicans accused the justice of electioneering tricks in Maryland and in the Supreme Court during the campaign and quipped that "those who are looking for Justice . . . are taking a nap in Philadelphia until JUDGE CHASE shall have concluded his gambels!! [sic] Hail Columbia, happy land!"27

Federalists attempted to defend their leaders from malicious statements published in Republican newspapers. One Philadelphia journal asserted that Hamilton possessed more extraordinary qualities than any man in America. The

26 Ibid., 8 August 1800.

27 Ibid., 11 August 1800; Fawn M. Brodie, Thomas Jefferson: An Intimate History (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1974) p. 322. Chase had earlier presided over the sedition trial of James T. Callender and had sentenced him to prison. While in prison Callender wrote volume two of The Prospect Before Us. In this pamphlet Callender was extremely critical of Judge Chase and President Adams. He referred to Adams as "a repulsive pendant, a gross hypocrite, and an unprincipled oppressor . . . in private life, one of the most egregious fools on the continent" and "a ruffian supereminently entitled not only to laughter, but likewise to the curses of mankind."
paper further remarked that "all his faculties are so perfectly formed and so distinctly marked, that they appear to have been produced, by the strongest energies of nature." The author compared the cowardice of Cicero to that of Jefferson and concluded that Hamilton had "a soul as brave as Caesar, and a heart as pure as Cato . . . ."

Religion, or the absence of it, produced perhaps more slanderous material than any other issue during the election campaign. The months of August and September witnessed more bitterness and vindictiveness concerning religion than any other months of the campaign. One of the most controversial pamphlets that emerged was *Serious Considerations on the Election of a President; Addressed to the Citizens of the United States*. Written by a New York minister named William Linn, it strongly denounced the religious views of Jefferson. Linn related the story in which a friend of Jefferson supposedly pointed to a deteriorated church and told Jefferson that he was surprised the people had let the church run down. Jefferson allegedly replied, "It is good enough for him that was born in a manger." The pamphleteer retorted, "Such a contemptuous fling at the blessed Jesus, could issue from the lips of no other than

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28 *Gazette of the United States*, 10 September 1800.
a deadly foe to his name and his cause." Furthermore the author believed that Jefferson had promoted slavery and condemned him for degrading the status of slaves as human beings. He disclosed that the effects of Jefferson's election "would be to destroy religion, introduce immorality, and loosen all the bonds of society." The author deduced that a vote for Jefferson "must be construed into no less than a rebellion against God."²⁹

Soon another Federalist followed Serious Considerations with a new pamphlet, The Voice of Warning, To Christians, on the Ensuing Election of a President of the United States. The pamphlet repeated many of the charges found in Serious Considerations and added several more libelous and derogatory statements about Jefferson. Its author, John Mitchel Mason, argued that Jefferson had ridiculed the Bible and discounted the existence of the universal deluge. In the author's opinion Jefferson would be responsible "for wrestling the bible from the hands of your children." He determined that all true Christians must "lay your hands upon your hearts; lift up your hearts to heaven, and pronounce on Mr. Jefferson's

Christianity. You cannot stifle your emotions; nor forebear uttering your indignant sentence--INFIDEL!!"\(^{30}\)

Republicans quickly reciprocated Federalist allegations with several of their own rancorous pamphlets. One of the first to appear avowed that not only was Charles Cotesworth Pinckney, Federalist vice presidential candidate, a Diest, but that Thomas Jefferson was probably a better Christian than John Adams. The author was especially critical of Alexander Hamilton. He accused Hamilton of being the ruin of countless families and orphans because of his funding system and insisted that if Hamilton's policies continued, all Americans would become enslaved and impoverished. Since several ministers with Federalist sympathies had written pamphlets against Jefferson, the author believed they "prostitute Christianity into a cloak to shield and cover political villainy . . . what lengths unworthy priests will take, when they forsake the altars of their God, and descend upon the stage of politics."\(^{31}\) The Aurora now referred to Linn's *Serious Considerations* as "nothing but the most


rancorous political hatred, lurking under the veil of religion" and resolved that "the pamphleteering pastor many expect promotion as soon as knavery becomes the order of the day . . . ."32

Numerous other Republican pamphlets followed which were just as vindictive. One such pamphlet sarcastically testified, "Have mercy upon us! ye well-fed, well-dressed, chariot-rolling, caucus-keeping, levee-revelling federalists; for we are poor and wretched and ignorant and miserable." The author concluded that Jefferson was one of the most religious men in America and had even personally supported a minister for a number of years.33 Another Republican pamphlet blamed Federalist attacks on Jefferson's religious philosophy as the cause for all internal division within the United States and then proceeded to assail President Adams. According to its author, Adams frequently violated the Sabbath by entertaining guests when he was the United States minister to Great Britain.34 An anonymous Republican author

32 Aurora, 25, 27 August 1800.
34 Tench Coxe, To the Republican Citizens of the State of Pennsylvania (Lancaster, 1800), pp. 2, 5. John Adams was the first minister to Great Britain for the United States and served in that capacity from 1785 to 1788.
published a pamphlet in Wilmington, Delaware, which declared that Federalists wantonly attempted to discredit Jefferson by attacking his religious principles, and stated, "God knows, there is nothing so lame and so base as the attacks, except the moral and religious principles of his revilers." 

In addition to the pamphlets, both parties relied heavily upon newspapers to disseminate their spiteful and malicious propaganda. Throughout September the Gazette of the United States tersely expressed the issue:

THE GRAND QUESTION StATED.

At the present solemn and momentous epoch, the only question to be asked by every American, laying his hand on his heart, is 'shall I continue in allegiance to GOD--AND A RELIGIOUS PRESIDENT:
Or impiously declare for JEFFERSON--AND NO GOD!!'

In Connecticut a Federalist newspaper associated Republicans with the Jacobins in France and predicted that upon Jefferson's election religion would be destroyed. It continued, "Are you prepared to see your dwellings in flames, hoary hairs bathed in blood, female chastity violated, or children writhing on the pike and the halbert? . . . GREAT GOD OF

35 \_, To the People of Cecil (Wilmington, Delaware, 1800), p. 4.

36 Gazette of the United States, 11, 12, 16, 17, 18 September 1800.
COMPASSION AND JUSTICE, SHIELD MY COUNTRY FROM DESTRUCTION."\(^{37}\)

A New York paper commented that from all the commotion made over Jefferson's religious views, it appeared he was a candidate for the papacy rather than the presidency.\(^{38}\)

Republican newspapers distributed a barrage of invective to defend their presidential choice. The Aurora referred to Federalist party as a "detestable group" that was "lurking in every part of the United States" in an attempt to spread the most vile falsehoods imaginable.\(^{39}\) In a later issue that same paper maintained,

Thus whilst Mr. Jefferson is fulfilling and practicing the blessed Religion of Jesus Christ, by acts of Charity, Benevolence, and Piety, these political Parsons are abusing that holy Religion and profaning the Temples of God, by fulminating Lies and Slander against Mr. Jefferson . . . .\(^{40}\)

In the final months of the campaign, both Jefferson and Adams, for the most part, remained silent concerning their tormentors. Jefferson, however, became agitated over the abuse he encountered, and in a rare instance of anger wrote to an acquaintance about the matter. According

\(^{37}\)Connecticut Courant, 9 October 1800.

\(^{38}\)New York American Citizen, 18 August 1800.

\(^{39}\)Aurora, 18 August 1800.

\(^{40}\)Ibid., 20 September 1800.
to Jefferson the Reverend Cotton Mather Smith told several individuals that the vice president had obtained his property at Monticello by fraud and robbery and in one instance had robbed a widow and her children of their estate valued at ten thousand pounds sterling. Jefferson disavowed the accusations and protested, "Every tittle of it is fable . . . ."41 Jefferson believed that Federalists printed "lying pamphlets" against him because he had "sworn upon the altar of God, eternal hostility against every form of tyranny over the mind of man."42 Adams, on the other hand, resignedly accepted the daily abuse with a minimum of complaints. In his opinion, if he attempted to vindicate himself by writing pamphlets or through the newspapers, it would take a lifetime and he would have to neglect his presidential duties.43

With slightly less than three months left in the campaign, many Federalists despaired over their party's desperate


42 Jefferson to Benjamin Rush, 23 September 1800, ibid., p. 175.

plight. One New Yorker lamented, "I cannot describe to you how broken and scattered your federal friends are! At present we have no rallying point . . . . Shadows, clouds, and darkness rest on our future prospects." Hamilton now believed the situation was so critical that immediate action had to be taken. Although he continued to gather support for Pinckney in the different areas of the United States, he decided something positive must be done to persuade leading Federalists to support Pinckney over Adams. In early August he wrote directly to the president to question him about a charge Adams had made against him. Adams had earlier commented that Hamilton was the leader of a British faction in America, and this had led Hamilton to inquire about this accusation.45

While Hamilton waited for an answer from Adams, some of the more prominent Federalists wrote Hamilton to disclose their opinions on the best course of action to pursue. Fisher Ames, Massachusetts Federalist, agreed with Hamilton that Adams had acted "strangely and unaccountably, and that his re-election would be very inauspicious to the United

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44 Robert Troup to Rufus King, 1 October 1800, King, King, 3:315.
45 Hamilton to Adams, 1 August 1800, Lodge, Hamilton, 7:365.
States," but he advised Hamilton not to publish anything that could be traced back to him concerning a change in the presidency. In September former Secretary of State Timothy Pickering reported that "the people believe their President is crazy. This is the honest truth . . ." He also urged Hamilton to support Pinckney. By the end of September, Hamilton had decided to draft a letter concerning the conduct of John Adams as president. He intended to send the letter to influential Federalists to promote the election of Pinckney and to vindicate himself and his friends of the charges made by Adams. Because Adams did not reply to Hamilton's August letter, Hamilton wrote again to the president in October and referred to the charges made by Adams as "a base, wicked, and cruel calumny." Hamilton waited almost until the end of October for a reply, but when none was forthcoming he decided to publish

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48 Hamilton to Oliver Wolcott, 26 September 1800, Lodge, Hamilton, 10:389.

49 Hamilton to Adams, 1 October 1800, ibid., 7:365.
his letter. He completed the draft, signed it, and sent it to the editor of the New York Gazette for publication. Hamilton instructed the editor to send it only to influential Federalists and not to the general public.50

Not surprisingly, Aaron Burr, Republican vice presidential candidate, received a copy of this pamphlet even before Hamilton. How he obtained a copy has never been determined, although there are various theories. When Burr read the pamphlet, he immediately rushed a copy to the Aurora and the New London Bee for circulation to the public.51

The pamphlet was entitled, The Public Conduct and Character of John Adams, Esq., President of the United States, and was the most controversial pamphlet published


51 Ibid., pp. 478-79. One theory of how Burr obtained a copy of the pamphlet was that someone told him a copy was in print and gave it to him. Another explanation is more fanciful. One morning Burr passed near Hamilton's house and stopped a young boy carrying a basket. He asked what was in the basket and the boy replied that he was carrying pamphlets for Mr. Hamilton. At this time Burr asked for and received a copy of the pamphlet. Still another hypothesis reveals that the editor of the New York Gazette misunderstood Hamilton's instructions and wanted to exonerate him by revealing to the American citizens the unjust character of President Adams.
during the presidential campaign of 1800. In this work

Hamilton emphatically condemned Adams and disclosed:

I should be deficient in candor, were I to conceal
the conviction that he does not possess the talents
adapted to the administration of government, and that
there are great and intrinsic defects in his character,
which unfit him for the office of chief magistrate.
I then adopted an opinion, which all my
subsequent experience has confirmed, that he is a man
of imagination sublimated and eccentric; propitious
neither to the regular display of sound judgment, nor
to steady perseverance in a systematic plan of conduct;
and I began to perceive what has been since too manifest,
that to this defect are added the unfortunate foibles
of a vanity without bounds, and a jealousy capable
of discoloring every object.

Hamilton also commented on the foreign and domestic policies
of Adams, declaring,

It has sunk the tone of the public mind--it has
impaired the confidence of the friends of the govern-
ment in the Executive Chief--it has distracted public
opinion--it has unnerved public councils--it has
sown the seeds of discord at home, and lowered the
reputation of the government abroad.

He finally concluded that Adams "is often liable to paroxysms
of anger, which deprive him of self-command, and produce
very outrageous behavior to those who approach him."\(^\text{52}\)

Extracted portions of the pamphlet first appeared in
the *Aurora* on 22 October 1800 and produced a wide and varied

\(^{52}\) Alexander Hamilton, *The Public Conduct and Character
of John Adams, Esq., President of the United States* (New
York, 1800), pp. 4, 7, 23, 38.
reaction. Most Federalists who replied to Hamilton's pamphlet were critical and attempted to blast its author and defend Adams. Republicans naturally agreed with Hamilton's work and avowed that it "proceeds to give evidence of Mr. Adam's extravagance of character, extreme and dangerous vanity, exclusive jealousy, sudden changability . . . and unwarrantable deportment to the offices of the government . . . ."54

Several Federalists were disappointed with the conduct of Hamilton during the course of the campaign even before this latest publication, and were especially upset afterwards. One month before the pamphlet emerged Noah Webster, famous lexicographer, bemoaned Hamilton's behavior and concluded, "your conduct on this occasion will be deemed little short of insanity."55 Soon after Webster read Hamilton's "Letter" he wrote a reply. He cited Hamilton as the principal cause for the division within the Federal party and proclaimed that if Republicans won the next election, Hamilton and his supporters would be responsible.56

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53 Aurora, 22 October 1800.
54 Ibid., 4 November 1800.
Many replies were more severe and censured Hamilton with scathing pamphlets. William Pinckney thought Hamilton had written his tract because of "disappointed ambition." The author further deduced, "When a Little Alexander dreams himself to be ALEXANDER THE GREAT, and through vanity restrains from counselling with wisdom and uprightness, he is very apt to fall into miserable intrigues... where his ambition may long flutter but never, never soar."\(^57\) Another pamphleteer thought the charges against Adams were frivolous and trivial, and commented, "Though, Sir, you may 'dream' yourself to a SOLOMON, it is manifest, with respect to the council you offered in this business, you possessed capacity but little superior to that of an IDIOT!"\(^58\)

Other Federalists feared the public reaction against their administration and called their party members to rally around Adams. They were extremely apprehensive as to how much of an advantage Republicans had gained since the pamphlet was published. One such Federalist alleged that Republicans were "glorying in the success that has hitherto

\(^{57}\)William Pinkney, *A Few Remarks on Mr. Hamilton's Late Letter, Concerning the Public Conduct and Character, of the President* (Baltimore, 1800), pp. 3, 11.

crown'd their hell-born schemes . . . they already count
us subdued, whetting their beaks for our blood, and if they
succeed our ruin is inevitable." 59 Another pointed out
the confusion that many citizens now faced—whether to
support Adams or Pinckney for president. 60

Of course, not all the pamphlets concerning Hamilton's
work were written by Federalists. Several Republicans also
wrote pamphlets and managed to add their propaganda to
that of Hamilton's performance. One such production reproved
the conduct of both Adams and Pinckney. It argued that if
Americans elected Pinckney, the principles of the Constitu-
tion would be destroyed, and if the voters chose Adams,
the result would be the same, or worse. Therefore, the
only logical choice for the next president was Thomas
Jefferson. 61

Federalist private correspondence reveals general
disgust, regret, and indignation over Hamilton's pamphlet.

59 "Cincinnatus," A Reply to Alexander Hamilton's Letter
Concerning the Public Conduct and Character of John Adams
(New York, 1800), pp. 15, 16.

60 Peter Burtsell, A Vindication of the Conduct and
Character of John Adams, Esq. in Reply to the Letter of
General Hamilton (New York, 1800), p. 3.

61 James Cheetham, An Address to Alexander Hamilton's
Letter Concerning the Public Conduct and Character of John
Adams (New York, 1800), pp. 5, 6, 14, 31.
New York Federalist Robert Troup wrote to Rufus King after he learned of Hamilton's reaction to the sordid affair. Troup explained that at first the turn of events confused Hamilton, but he soon recovered and endorsed the widespread publication of his essay. Troup, on the other hand, was less optimistic than Hamilton and lamented, "my heart really bleeds at the prospect before us." Other Federalist reaction included the president's son, John Quincy Adams, who determined that his father had acted admirably, unlike Hamilton, by not sacrificing the interests of the United States in order to enhance his party's position.

In December of 1800 the president commented on Hamilton's conduct and his controversial pamphlet. He avowed that Hamilton had never been his enemy. He furthermore believed that Hamilton had useful talents "if he would correct himself." He concluded that he was not afraid of any pamphlets Hamilton might publish and would not attempt to answer any of them while he was in public office. The

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62 Troup to King, 9 November 1800, King, King, 3:331.


64 Adams to Dr. Ogden, 3 December 1800, Adams, Adams, 10:576.
pamphlet caused such a furor that even after twenty years, citizens still commented on it. In 1824 a friend wrote John Adams and asserted that Hamilton's pamphlet was "the most malicious, foolish, and inexcusable composition, which was ever produced by a tolerable mind."\textsuperscript{65} The best and simplest example of Republican evaluation of the pamphlet in private correspondence was expressed by James Monroe, governor of Virginia, when he stated, "it will do their whole party more harm than good."\textsuperscript{66} There was even a movement by some Republicans to indict Hamilton under the Sedition Act for slander against the president of the United States. However, this enterprise never materialized, but it did add to Federalist embarrassment.\textsuperscript{67}

Before, during, and after the publication of Hamilton's pamphlet the usual propagandizing of long standing issues continued from both parties. The Federalist position was not critical, and their newspapers reflected this desperation. Most of the dogmatic denunciations of Jefferson came from

\textsuperscript{65}John Taylor to Adams, 8 April 1824, ibid., p. 412.


\textsuperscript{67}Aurora, 20 November 1800.
the New England states. In September the *Connecticut Courant* cried that if Republicans won the election their policies would consist of "the introduction of general national depravity, and a total overthrow of integrity, justice, benevolence, friendship, and affection; and substituting dishonesty, injustice, cruelty, revenge, and hatred."\(^{68}\) In the same month a Boston paper told its citizens, many of whom were shippers, about Jefferson's "contempt for commerce and commercial men," how he despised mechanics, and preferred the foreign carrying trade to American trade.\(^{69}\) In New Jersey a pamphleteer pleaded with its voters to vote for Adams in order to save the United States from anarchy.\(^{70}\)

In New England Republicans were less influential than their adversaries, nevertheless, they attempted to combat slander with slander. A Republican newspaper in Boston criticized Adams and asserted that his "kingdom has departed from him." The paper continued against the Federalist party: "Now is the time, when the head of federal robbers shall be

\(^{68}\) *Connecticut Courant*, 15 September 1800.

\(^{69}\) *Columbian Centinel*, 20 September 1800.

hunted from their den; when public indignation shall overtake them in their race of infamy."\textsuperscript{71} In other areas of the United States, Republicans were more formidable opponents. In Baltimore the \textit{American} cited the traits of Federalism as being "a certain supercilious pride and overbearing haughtiness."\textsuperscript{72} In Philadelphia the \textit{Aurora} printed its version of the Republican party platform:

\textbf{ATTENTION}

\textbf{Citizens of Philadelphia}
\textbf{Take Your Choice}

\textbf{FEDERAL} \hspace{2cm} \textbf{REPUBLICAN}

\textbf{Things As They Have Been}

1. The principles and patriots of the Revolution condemned and stigmatized.
2. Republicanism, a badge for persecution, and federalism a mask for monarchy.
3. The Nation in arms without a foe, and divided without a cause.
4. Federalists graduating a scale of 'hatred and animosity,' for the benefit of the people; and aiming 'a few bold strokes' at political opposition, for the benefit of themselves.

\textbf{Things As They Will Be}

1. The Principles of the Revolution restored; its Patriots honored and beloved.
2. Republicanism proved to mean something, and Federalism found to mean nothing.
3. The Nation at peace with the world, and united in itself.
4. Republicanism allaying the fever of domestic feuds, and subduing the opposition by the force of reason and rectitude.

\textsuperscript{71}\textit{Boston Independent Chronicle}, 30 October 1800.

\textsuperscript{72}\textit{Baltimore American}, 20 December 1800.
5. The reign of terror created by false alarms, to promote domestic feud and foreign war.
7. Priests and Judges incorporated with the Government for political purposes, and equally polluting the holy altars of religion, and the seats of Justice.
8. Increase of Public Debt
   Additional Taxes
   Further Loans
   New Excises
   Higher Public Salaries, and Wasteful Expenditure of public money.
9. Quixotish embassies to the Turks, the Russians, Prussians, and Portuguese, for Quixotish purposes of holding the balance of Europe.
10. A Sedition Law to protect corrupt magistrates and public defaulters.
11. An established church, a religious test, and an order of Priesthood.

5. Unity, peace, and concord produced by republican measures and equal laws.
6. Public plunders and defaulters called to strict account, and public servants compelled to do their duty.
7. Good government without the aid of priestcraft, or religious politics, and Justice administered without political intolerance.
8. Decrease of Public Debt
   Reduced Taxes
   No Loans
   No Excises
   Reduced Public Salaries, and a system of economy and care of the public money.
9. The republican maxim of our departed Washington, 'Not to intermeddle with European politics.'
10. The Liberty of the Press, and free enquiry into public character, and our constitutional charter.
11. Religious liberty, the rights of conscience, no Priesthood, truth and Jefferson.

Although the Federalists had suffered severe setbacks in the closing months of the campaign, this did not assure Republican victory. Federalist strength was still formidable, especially in New England. In that section Adams' supporters

73Aurora, 14 October 1800.
could count on every state except Rhode Island. The parties expected a divided vote in Maryland, Pennsylvania, and North Carolina, while Republicans anticipated victory in New York, Virginia, Tennessee, and Kentucky. The most hotly contested state figured to be South Carolina.  

On 4 December 1800, electors began to assemble in various states, and by 8 December the first results were known in Philadelphia. The results of the voting in Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Maryland gave Adams and Pinckney nineteen electoral votes, while Jefferson and Burr received thirteen. Republicans protested that they would have received another electoral vote in Maryland had it not been for Federalist chicanery. According to local Republicans, Federalists set fire to the woods in one of their districts which prevented the farmers from going to the polls. Republicans also complained of tactics used in New Jersey. In that state the legislature chose the electors,

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and in the autumn months the state had held its elections for members to the state legislature. Republicans stated that Federalists took the votes of "Aliens, of persons under age, of non-residents, of married women, of paupers supported by the town, of blacks not possessing the property required by law, and of actual slaves . . . ." 76

Federalists gained more votes when the returns from Delaware and Connecticut were counted on 9 December; however, this was offset by the New York returns on the same day. On 10 December Federalists learned of their victory in Massachusetts, and the next day Republicans won in Virginia. 77 Voting difficulties also were reported in Massachusetts. The Boston Mercury grumbled that at times the crowds were so unruly as "to endanger the limbs and even the lives of the legal voters" and "prevented many an honest and worthy, but infirm, aged, or timid citizen from giving his vote at those meetings . . . ." 78

As of 11 December Adams had forty-seven votes and Jefferson forty-six. It appeared that the election would


78 Boston Mercury, 10 February 1801.
be decided from the vote in South Carolina. Traditionally South Carolina was the most Federalist of all southern states, and the Federalist vice presidential candidate, Charles Cotesworth Pinckney, was a native son of the Palmetto state. However, his second cousin, Charles Pinckney, was Republican campaign manager in the state and was feverishly working to win South Carolina for Jefferson. South Carolina's legislature selected its electoral votes, and voting for the candidates for the state legislature began in the autumn. In October 1800 voting commenced in Charleston. On 16 October, Charles Pinckney reported to Jefferson that Federalists had won in that city. He bitterly bemoaned Federalist tactics and grieved that "several Hundred more Voted than paid taxes. The Lame, Crippled, diseased and blind were either led, lifted, or brought in Carriages to the Poll." As a result, Federalists won eleven of Charleston's fifteen seats in the state legislature.

Pinckney next travelled 130 miles to Columbia, where the state legislature was to choose the presidential electors.

The legislature assembled on 17 November 1800, soon after Charles Cotesworth Pinckney arrived in that city. On 2 December the legislature voted, and on that same day Charles Pinckney wrote to Jefferson and proclaimed, "The Election is just finished and We Have, Thanks to Heaven's Goodness, carried it." Because of Pinckney's efforts, pressure and offers of patronage, all of South Carolina's eight electoral votes went to Jefferson and Burr. 81

After the South Carolina victory, Republicans learned of their triumph in both Kentucky and Tennessee. Immediately after the electoral votes were counted there was a great confusion because Jefferson and Burr had the same number of electoral votes. Each had seventy-three votes, while Adams finished with sixty-five, Pinckney placed fourth with sixty-four votes, and John Jay received one vote. The Constitution stated that if there were no majority for the presidency, the issue was to be decided in the House of Representatives. Voting on an individual basis, Federalists controlled the House, because many were elected during the anti-French years of 1798-1799. The Constitution, however, required

that each state was to cast one vote for a presidential candidate. This placed Federalists at a disadvantage, because they were too heavily concentrated in New England, while Republican votes were better distributed throughout the nation. As a result Republicans controlled more states but did not have the majority of the states necessary for Jefferson's election.82

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CHAPTER V

CAJOLERY, CATCHWORDS, CRITICISM, AND CONCLUSION

Although Federalists had lost their bid for the presidential election, they were still in a position to decide which Republican candidate would be the next president. Since the new Congress did not convene until 4 March 1801, the responsibility for selecting the president rested with the Federalist controlled-lame duck Congress. In order to choose a president the Constitution specified that one candidate must receive a majority vote from the states represented within the House of Representatives. Republicans now needed Federalist cooperation to ensure the election of Jefferson rather than Burr. Republican desire for unified Federalist support was short lived as the already fragmentary Federalist party was once again torn assunder by internal disagreements.\(^1\)

A portion of the defeated party preferred Jefferson, but another group of Federalists promoted Burr. One of the most adamant advocates of Jefferson was Alexander Hamilton.

His distrust and dislike for Burr was long standing.

Earlier in the campaign he had referred to Burr as one of the most dishonorable and treacherous men in the world and "as true Catiline as ever met in midnight conclave."\(^2\)

Shortly after Hamilton learned of the tie vote between Jefferson and Burr, he feverishly wrote several letters to influential Federalists to sway their support to Jefferson. Hamilton considered Jefferson "by far not so dangerous a man" and believed Burr "bankrupt beyond redemption." He predicted that if Burr were selected he would "certainly disturb our institutions, to secure to himself permanent power, and with it wealth."\(^3\)

Hamilton and other Federalists hoped to obtain from Jefferson certain assurances concerning his administration. They wanted the preservation and development of the navy, protection of the fiscal system, the adherence of the neutrality policy, and the continuance of Federalists in the offices they filled--except in the more prestigious departments.\(^4\)


\(^3\) Hamilton to Oliver Wolcott, 16 December 1800, ibid., p. 392.

\(^4\) Hamilton to Oliver Wolcott, 17 December 1800, ibid., pp. 396-97.
Hamilton's aspirations for a united front against Burr quickly disappeared when several Federalists ignored his advice and determined to prevent a decision. Jefferson learned of this resolution in mid-December, when acquaintances told him that if a presidential choice had not been made by inauguration day, Federalists wanted to name one of their party members president pro tempore of the nation until another presidential election could be held. They proposed to accomplish this by not allowing either Burr or Jefferson to receive a majority of the vote until 4 March 1801, inauguration day.  

Still another group of Federalists preferred Burr as their presidential choice.

Nevertheless, Hamilton continued his support for Jefferson throughout December and January. In December he wrote Theodore Sedgwick, a Burr partisan and speaker of the House, in an attempt to persuade him to influence others against Burr. He emphasized, "The appointment of Burr as President would disgrace our country abroad . . . . For


heaven's sake, let not the federal party be responsible for the elevation of this man!" Other Federalists concurred with Hamilton's appraisal of Burr and encouraged support for Jefferson. Surprisingly, President Adams sided with Hamilton and preferred Jefferson as the lesser of two evils. He noted, "In the case of Mr. Jefferson, there is nothing wonderful; but Mr. Burr's good fortune surpasses all ordinary rules, and exceeds that of Bonaparte." 

The group that supported Burr approached him about their decision and attempted to gain his confidence in the matter. His conduct at this time was confusing, but he managed temporarily to convince Jefferson of his loyalty. Jefferson deduced that Burr's conduct was "honorable and decisive, and greatly embarrasses them." Burr's reaction did not stifle many Federalists in their attempt to elect him. Former secretary of state Timothy Pickering supported Burr, believing him to be more sympathetic to Federalist

7 Hamilton to Sedgwick, 22 December 1800, Lodge, Hamilton, 10:397.
8 Adams to Elbridge Gerry, 30 December 1800, Adams, Adams, 9:577-78.
interests and a president-elect who would require fewer changes within the government. Several areas of the United States were favorable to Burr, especially New England. One newspaper proclaimed that Burr was "a practical gentleman who will have judgment, taste and genius enough to appreciate the usefulness of our federal fabric, and nerve enough to preserve its integrity."  

In mid-January Federalists met in a secret caucus to decide which policy to pursue. Many Federalists, especially from New England, wanted to prevent the election, but the majority rejected this plan as too perilous and hazardous. Finally the Burr partisans prevailed over the other two groups. The decision was a difficult and painful one for many Federalists, because, in reality, neither men were admired. Although Federalist Theodore Sedgwick, speaker of the House, stressed that Jefferson was "a feeble and false, enthusiastic theorist" and Burr was "a profligate without character and without property, bankrupt in both," he and most of his party accepted the New Yorker as their presidential selection. The decision, however, was not

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11 Boston Centinel, 7 January 1801.
unanimous. Four congressional representatives refused to abide by the vote as did three other Federalist leaders. The three that opposed the vote were John Jay, Gouveneur Morris, and William Bingham.\textsuperscript{12}

When a large number of Republicans learned that a splinter group of Federalists might attempt to prevent the election, there were rumors of violence and civil war. James Bayard, Federalist representative from Delaware, reported to the governor of Delaware, Richard Bassett, that "The Demo's are more uneasy at the prospect of Burr's election than they even were at that of Adams. They declare they will never concur in the vote for Burr, that they would rather see the union dissolved for want of a head than give up Jefferson."\textsuperscript{13} James Monroe, governor of Virginia, wrote to Jefferson and concluded, "If the union cod. [sic] be broken, that [Federalist prevention of the presidential election] wod. [sic] do it."\textsuperscript{14} The first newspaper in the


new capital at Washington, D.C., the National Intelligencer, modestly opined that "the failure of a selection of Mr. Jefferson or Mr. Burr will throw us into a situation, whose chances will be uncertain, and may be injurious to tranquility, order and property."  

Following the sudden and unexpected turn of events, there was a noticeable absence of invective pamphlets and newspaper editorials immediately following the tie vote between Jefferson and Burr. This can be attributed to the uncertainty of the situation and the lack of time which it normally took the pamphleteers to prepare and publish their slanderous material. Most newspapers exhibited restraint, even in New England. The Connecticut Courant avowed,

"In matters of such importance it is idle to suffer our passions to get the better of our reason; and in statesmanship it would be particularly culpable from such puerile motives to risk the welfare of the nation . . . . Bad as both these men [Burr and Jefferson] are, there is no comparison between them."  

In New England the opposition to Jefferson continued. The Boston Centinel declared that New Englanders opposed Jefferson because of his past performance as vice president and in other governmental positions. The paper furthermore

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15 National Intelligencer, 12 January 1801.

16 Connecticut Courant, 26 January 1801.
maintained that Burr would eventually become a responsible and capable president. 17

The balloting for the presidency by the House of Representatives began on 11 February 1801, in the crowded and excited capital at Washington, D.C. Every available lodging house was filled in order to accommodate hundreds of visitors. In one lodge alone fifty men spent the nights on the floor, while in another the guests slept on dining room tables. The weather was cold and unpleasant for visitors and representatives alike and caused a Maryland representative, Joseph Nicholson, to become severely ill during the voting. He remained on a cot during the session with a high fever and was attended by his wife. Another Maryland representative was under a different form of pressure. The wife of Representative William Craik threatened to divorce him unless he voted for Jefferson. 18

Two days before the voting began the House established a set of rules for procedure. The representatives agreed

17 Boston Centinell, 28 January 1801.

to lock all doors and to admit no one to the proceedings. Furthermore, they decided to continue without adjournment or consideration of other business until a final decision was reached. The House members determined that each state delegation would caucus among themselves and then cast one vote for one of the two candidates. If the state delegation was evenly divided, it was to write the word "Divided" on its ballot. The nominee to receive the votes of nine or more states would become president.19

On the first ballot eight states voted for Jefferson (New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Virginia, North Carolina, Georgia, Kentucky, and Tennessee), six states voted for Burr (New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, Delaware, and South Carolina), and two states turned in a divided ballot (Vermont and Maryland).20 Since neither candidate received a majority of nine votes, the voting continued into the early morning hours. The teller awakened the representatives at one, at two, at two-thirty, and at four in order to vote, and after each occasion the result


was the same. Jefferson continued to receive votes from eight states, Burr from six, and two remained divided. 21

After four days of balloting there was still no change in the outcome. During this period several Federalists tried to obtain certain promises from Jefferson. He proclaimed, "I have declared to them [Federalists] unequivocally, that I would not receive the government on capitulation, that I would not go into it with my hands tied." Jefferson also revealed that sundry groups of Republicans had declared that if the Federalists continued in prolonging the outcome of the vote, the Middle States would arm and march on Washington, D.C. He disclosed that this threat had frightened Federalists:

and they were completely alarmed at the resource for which we declared, to wit, a convention to reorganize the government, and to amend it. The very word convention gives them the horrors... they fear they should lose some of the favorite morsels of the Constitution. 22

At this time Governor James Monroe of Virginia declared that he would call a special session of the state legislature in order to mobilize the militia and march on the nation's capital if Federalists persisted in delaying the election. Governor Thomas McKean of Pennsylvania made the same avowal. 23

21Alberts, The Golden Voyage, pp. 405-06.
22Jefferson to James Monroe, 15 February 1801, Bergh, Jefferson, 10:201-02.
Discussions of this type led to a noticeable increase in the amount of demagoguery in the newspapers. Although the Federalists had been defeated in their attempt to re-elect Adams, they still continued to publish grim and gloomy predictions of what would happen once a Republican president were elected. In one such forecast, the Gazette of the United States asserted,

As to the violent dispositions of the Jacobins and anarchists there can be no doubt . . . . The executive departments will probably be suffered to droop in imbecility, and to struggle with embarrassments . . . they will feel neither affection nor reverence for the Senate nor the departments.24

The balloting continued until Sunday, 15 February 1801, with the same results. That Sunday Federalists held a caucus, and James A. Bayard, the lone representative from Delaware, informed his colleagues he would change his vote to Jefferson in the next vote. The next day, however, he still voted for Burr on the thirty-fifth consecutive ballot. Another caucus was held on Monday and by that night Bayard had reached a definite decision to change his vote to Jefferson. He divulged:

We have yet no President but tomorrow we shall give up the contest. Burr has acted a miserable paunchy part. The election was in his power, but he was

24 Gazette of the United States, 17 February 1801.
determined to come in as a Democrat, and in that event would have been the most dangerous man in the community . . . . Being perfectly resolved not to risk the constitution or a civil war, I found the moment arrived at which it was necessary to take a decided Step. 25

Bayard had eventually become disenchanted with Burr's conduct during the balloting, because the New Yorker had remained in Albany and had not attempted to secure votes for himself. 26

On Tuesday, 17 February 1801, crowds gathered around the capitol building before the balloting began. Once the voting began Representative Lewis Robert Morris of Vermont withdrew his vote, which permitted Matthew Lyon to swing that state's vote for Jefferson. Federalists in Maryland cast blank ballots, which enabled that state also to vote for Jefferson. South Carolina did not have Republican members in Congress and did not cast votes on this ballot. Bayard cast a blank ballot that kept Delaware out of the voting. After the voting terminated there were ten states


26Claude G. Bowers, Jefferson and Hamilton (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1925) pp. 505-06; Cunningham, Jeffersonian Republicans, pp. 245-46. In 1805 the charge arose against Jefferson that he had made a deal with Bayard concerning promises on certain points of policy if he were elected. During the campaign Jefferson vehemently denied making any bargains with anyone. Evidence concerning Jefferson's alleged deal with Bayard is inconclusive.
that cast their vote for Jefferson: Vermont, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, Georgia, Kentucky, and Tennessee. The four states that continued to vote for Burr were Rhode Island, New Hampshire, Connecticut, and Massachusetts. Two states, Delaware and South Carolina, turned in blank ballots. Immediately after the votes were counted, Theodore Sedgwick announced that Thomas Jefferson was the newly-elected president of the United States.27

The news of Jefferson's election travelled swiftly throughout the United States, and the reaction to it was one of jubilation for Republicans and disgust for Federalists. The Gazette of the United States facetiously announced, "When the news of the election arrived in town, four Democrats burst their sides with laughing; twenty-seven huzzaed until they were seized by the lock-jaw with their mouths wide open; and three hundred are now drunk beyond the hope of recovery."28 The Aurora trumpeted, "the bells of Christ Church were kept constantly tolling for the death of the British faction in this country." The paper also observed, "a number of federalists . . . resolved immediately to turn

27 Connecticut Courant, 3 March 1800.
28 Gazette of the United States, 19 February 1801.
Democrats--and a crowd of old Tories... determined to embark for the plentiful shores of Britain--Prosperous gales to them, and may all that remain soon follow their example."\(^{29}\)

Thus ended one of the most flagitious, rancorous, and slanderous presidential campaigns in United States history. Republicans had overcome the Federalists at the polls after four years of intensive and vehement propaganda issued from various sources. Although the Federalists utilized their own political machines, they were not as well organized on the local level as were the Republicans. Jefferson's party gradually wielded a powerful newspaper corps to disseminate its malicious editorials. Although there were almost twice as many Federalist newspapers as Republican in 1800, a larger percentage of the Republican journals were strongly partisan. In contrast a much smaller percentage of Federalist newspapers were strongly partisan. This

\(^{29}\) Aurora, 20 February 1801; Fawn M. Brodie, Thomas Jefferson, An Intimate History (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1974) pp. 344-75. Soon after James T. Callender, Republican pamphleteer, was released from prison he turned against Jefferson and the Republican party. In April 1801 Callender published articles that Jefferson fathered several mulatto children. This attack against Jefferson intensified during his presidency, but this libelous accusation did not enter into the presidential campaign of 1800. Evidence of Jefferson fathering mulatto children is inconclusive.
resulted in Republicans being more vindictive than the Federalists through the press. Since newspapers were the major means of influencing the public, this was a decided advantage for the Republicans.

Federalists obtained their greatest popularity with the American public in the spring of 1798 during the X, Y, Z affair; however, they steadily declined in popularity in the ensuing months, and this decline culminated with their defeat in 1800. Shortly after the X, Y, Z affair when Congress passed the Alien and Sedition Acts, Republicans effectively organized to sway much of the public opinion to their side. Hereafter, Federalists often found themselves on the defensive against Republican assaults. In addition to combating Republican demagoguery, Federalists struggled and fought among themselves shortly after the summer of 1798. This internal conflict was due, in part, to the animosity that existed between President Adams and his cabinet. Several members of the cabinet supported Hamilton and the "war faction" against France. When Adams proceeded to send a peace envoy to France without consulting key Federalists, this antagonized many of them and caused the first serious split within the Federalist party. This further weakened its effectiveness against Republican attacks and enabled Jefferson's party to gain public confidence.
The cost of supporting a standing army and navy in the period 1798-1800 resulted in an increase of taxes. This added to Federalist troubles and inspired Republicans to write even more profoundly and invectively than in the previous months. Other crises such as Fries Rebellion, the Jonathan Robbins Affair, the firing of McHenry and Pickering, and the Sedition trials caused severe hardships within the Federalist party and greatly swayed public sentiment.

Because of these disadvantages, Federalists resorted to tactics of desperation in the closing months of the campaign. They endeavored to alter public opinion by assailing Jefferson's religious and governmental philosophies. This probably had little effect on the voters except, perhaps in New England, where a majority of the people opposed Jefferson anyway. Hamilton's vicious pamphlet signified the internal difficulties of his party; however, it was probably published too late in the campaign to have a bearing on the final outcome. As a result of these Federalist problems and superior Republican organization, Jefferson and his followers triumphed in the libelous campaign of 1800.
## SUMMARY OF AMERICAN NEWSPAPERS BY POLITICAL AFFILIATION, OCTOBER 1, 1800

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Strongly Republican</th>
<th>Moderately Republican</th>
<th>Nearly Impartial</th>
<th>Moderately Federalist</th>
<th>Strongly Federalist</th>
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<td><strong>20</strong></td>
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Federalist papers 103
Republican papers 64
Nearly impartial 14
Unknown 20
Total 201
APPENDIX II

STATES AND THEIR ELECTORAL VOTE

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<th>STATE</th>
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<th>METHOD OF SELECTION</th>
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<td>Connecticut</td>
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<td>Legislature</td>
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<tr>
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<td>District</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maryland</td>
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<td>Massachusetts</td>
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<td>Legislature</td>
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<tr>
<td>New Jersey</td>
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<td>Legislature</td>
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<td>Rhode Island</td>
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<td>8 votes</td>
<td>Legislature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tennessee</td>
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<td>Indirectly the Legislature chose the electors. The Legislature selected three men in each county of the state to chose electors.</td>
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<td>Vermont</td>
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<td>General Ticket</td>
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APPENDIX III

RESULTS FOR THE ELECTION OF 1800

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<th>Burr</th>
<th>Adams</th>
<th>Pinckney Jay</th>
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<td>TOTAL</td>
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<td>65</td>
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*Done to prevent a tie between Adams and Pinckney.
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**Articles**


Miscellaneous

