CHAPTER XV

DEMOCRATIC EFFICIENCY UNDER POLK
1845-1849


Who is James K. Polk? This question was asked all over the United States in May, 1844, suceedingly by the Whigs, but in honest inquiry by many Americans who did not keep up with the times. Their own nominee being the best-known American citizen, save the superannuated Jackson, it was Whig politics to belittle his opponent. Polk had friends who thought him a second Andrew Jackson, and higher praise they could not give. And many of Polk’s successors have not had at the time of their nominations half so long and distinguished a record as he had when he was nominated by the Democrats.

Fourteen active years in the lower house of Congress, a leader of the opposition during Adams’ administration, the administration leader during Jackson’s eight years when he defeated time and time again the cohorts of the United States Bank, thrice a candidate for the speakership and twice elected—this would seem to constitute a record, aside from his having been Governor of Tennessee when that state was dominant in Democratic politics. As a Congressional leader and gladiator he ranks with Thad Stevens and McKinley, John Sharp Williams and Oscar Underwood; but Calhoun, Clay and Webster kept the Senate in the public eye while Polk’s arena was the House.

Born in North Carolina, where his forefathers had prominently participated in the adoption of the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence, he had, when a boy, moved with his parents to middle Tennessee. He was a graduate of the University of North Carolina. In 1823, at the age of twenty-eight, he was elected to the Tennessee legislature; two years later he was sent to Congress, was conspicuous in opposition until Jackson was
inaugurated, when he led the administration forces in the fight against the bank and in other contests; defeated for Speaker in 1834 by Bell, who was supported by a coalition of Whigs and malcontent Democrats, he was elected in 1835 and reelected in 1837; he was elected Governor in 1839, but defeated for reelection.

In 1836 Polk refused to support his friend and fellow-Tennessean, Judge Hugh L. White, for President. He proclaimed the greatest respect and regard for White, and declared he would support him with the greatest pleasure were he running on the Democratic ticket; as it was, he said, Tyndall would stand by his party. This regularity was a great recommendation of Polk to the Democratic convention in 1844.

Since Harrison's death, if not even earlier, Clay and Van Buren had been regarded as destined to oppose each other in 1844. Each was recognized as the leader and the logical candidate of his party. No one, least of all, it seems, the two men most concerned, looked for another candidate, unless indeed the improbable happened and Tyler succeeded in forming a party. Twenty-four state conventions had pronounced for Van Buren, and before the Democratic convention met more than three-fourths of the states had instructed their delegations to support him. Webster's connection with the hated Tyler administration left the Whig field absolutely to Clay.

Van Buren on a tour of the South in 1842 had visited Clay at his home, Ashland; it was popularly believed that the two statesmen, old friends although political enemies, disagreed on many matters, and agreed that the Texas question, on which they held the same opinion, then only on the horizon, should not be an issue in the coming contest. This belief was confirmed when, on the morning of April 27, 1844, a week before the Whig convention, a month before the Democrats were to meet, there appeared in the morning National Intelligencer a letter from Clay, and in the afternoon Globe's letter from Van Buren, both opposing the annexation of Texas. Clay's letter was long and argumentative, giving many reasons for opposing annexation but hinting that if Congress acquired the territory he would not refuse executive sanction.

Van Buren's letter was a diplomatic document; he was frankly opposed to annexation, but would yield to the public will. This letter cost Van Buren the nomination. Immediately some delegates, instructed for him, resigned; others declared his position absolutely contrary to the known wishes of their states and stated that they would oppose his nomination; mass meetings were held in various states which resolved that instructions for Van Buren were cancelled by his act.

The Whig convention met in Baltimore May 1st and with wild enthusiasm nominated Clay by acclamation. On the third ballot Senator Frellingham of New Jersey was named for second place. A great ratification meeting was held next day when Webster, Clayton, Reverdy Johnson, Berrien and other Whig leaders spoke. The Whig campaign started off with a whoop; they seemed thoroughly united and were sanguine, their opponents in serious disorder.

The Fourth Democratic National Convention met in Baltimore, "the Convention City," May 27, with 266 delegates representing every state but South Carolina. Calhoun, flouting with the Tyler party while Secretary of State, had said the Whigs were the old Federalists turned demagogues, the Democratic old Republicans in truth, and withdrew himself and his state from both. Romulus Saunders of North Carolina, who had reported the two-thirds rule in the 1835 convention, now moved that the rules of 1832 and 1835 be adopted. Saunders was said to have been a Calhoun agent in evening up matters between Calhoun and Van Buren; if so, Calhoun obtained his revenge.

The two-thirds rule, opposed as violative of the great Democratic principle of majority rule, was advocated as a necessary protection against control by non-Democratic states. Precedent was invoked and the argument stressed that the two-thirds rule insured a Democratic majority, which a mere majorised minority did not.

Saunders, Robert J., that the Texas question, Hopkins of Virginia supported the rule; Clifford of Maine, Dickinson of New York and Morton of Massachusetts opposed it, South against North. There was no satisfactory answer to the argument that Van Buren be subjected to the tests his friends had imposed on candidates opposing him and the North gave way. The rule was adopted 118 to 118. Two-thirds of the Northern delegates voted against it, while six-sevenths of the Southerners supported it.

On the first ballot Van Buren received 146 votes, a majority of 13. A motion that Martin Van Buren, having received the votes of a majority of the convention, he declared the nominee was ruled out of order, and an appeal from the ruling was abandoned. Van Buren's majority was made up of 134 of the 151 Northern delegates and 12 of the 105 from the South. The other votes were for Cass, the Northwesterner, Buchanan, and R. M. John-
son. Calhoun had requested that his name not be presented to the convention, yet Van Buren's friends attributed his defeat largely to Calhoun's influence. Seven ballots were taken, Van Buren losing on each; on the fifth Cass received 107 to Van Buren's 103; on the eighth the vote was Cass 114, Van Buren 104, Polk 44, the first vote for the last named. The roll call of states was in geographical order, Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont—New Hampshire started the stampede for Polk on the ninth ballot; when New York was reached the chairman of the delegation, ex-Attorney General Butler, long Van Buren's close friend, asked permission to retire for consultation. There was a tense moment when they returned. Butler produced a letter from his candidate authorizing the withdrawal of his name if conducive to harmony; he withdrew Van Buren and cast New York's vote for Polk, and delegation after delegation, amid wild confusion, changed its vote and Polk was nominated unanimously, the first dark horse and the first beneficiary of a stampede to the band wagon in our political history. Polk's popularity and his loyalty to Van Buren eight years before were rewarded, but his fitness, his desert, his availabilities were potent influences in bringing about his selection. There seems no evidence that his nomination, as was alleged at the time, had been carefully prearranged, nor is there the least basis for likening his nomination to Harding's in 1920. It was good sense and fitness, not manipulation, that brought about Polk's nomination. There turned up, however, immediately several "original Polk men"—"the first man who", etc., among them George Bancroft, Gideon Pillow and Cave John.

Jackson had urged Van Buren's nomination, but an old letter from him advocating the annexation of Texas offset his present and personal endorsement. Jackson was the friend and disciple of, and much liked by, the Old Hero. Silas Wright, the New York veteran leader and Van Buren's friend, was offered the nomination for second place and on his declination George M. Dallas was named. This made a strong ticket, geographically and in other ways.

On the same day, in the same city a "Tyler and Texas" nominating convention was held. It was thought that overtures from the Democrats were expected and that place and time had been arranged so that acceptance could be prompt and easy. None were made and Tyler was nominated unanimously on a platform of immediate annexation of Texas. In accepting the nomination the nominee stated that had Van Buren and Clay cooperated for annexation he would have withdrawn from any attempt to succeed himself. Later he withdrew in favor of Polk.

**DEMOCRATIC EFFICIENCY UNDER POLK**

The Democratic Platform of 1844

The Whig Platform of 1844

Declared that the names of Clay and Prentiss were given assurance that the great Whig principles would be maintained, and summed up those principles: "A well regulated national currency; a tariff for revenue, discriminating for protection of the domestic labor of the country; the distribution of the proceeds from the sales of the public lands; a reorganization of the executive Departments; economy in government."

The Liberty Party, a year and a half before the election, had nominated Birney and Morris, and adopted a long platform against slavery and all its attributes, including the fugitive slave law, as unconstitutional, and void by the overwhelming moral law. Birney on the stump advocated the election of Polk, preferring between two slave-holders, he said, the less powerful one. Even John Quincy Adams was not sufficiently anti-slavery to suit these folk. Belonging to the Union was over Birney was advocating dissolution of the Union. Adams, Giddings and other anti-slavery leaders supported Clay. Although the annexation of Texas involved the extension of slave territory, yet it appealed to many voters of anti-slavery views. Clay sought to hedge on the proposition and wrote six "Texas Despatches" to Northern editors. Besides it was known that Polk was opposed to annexation. The result was that many anti-slavery-extension Democrats went to Polk, while Clay gained few Southern votes, and the Liberty ticket gained many disgusted voters. One of Clay's Northern friends exclaimed in disgust that he wished for a candidate who could neither read nor write. Many Whigs now regretted that Webster had not been chosen as their candidate. That, had he been, the result would have been different is very possible.

Polk stood squarely on his platform, especially the "reannexation" the "restoration" of Texas to the United States. He knew what he wanted and those who supported him knew what they
were voting for. Clay's platform was silent on, he was considered as straddling the main issue, Texas.

Polk had announced in his letter of acceptance that he would enter the office with "the settled purpose of not being a candidate for re-election." His long and prominent opposition in Congress to Clay's "American System" made the issue between the two candidates clear-cut and well defined on all economic questions. The Democratic slogans were "Fifty-four, forty or flight" and "Polk, Dallas and Texas," while "Texas and Southern Rights" was used in the South, and "Polk, Dallas and the Tariff of 1842" in Pennsylvania.

It was foreseen that the contest would be close and Pennsylvania's election of a Democratic Governor pointed out New York as the pivotal state. Such it was. The Van Buren men repaid Polk for his loyalty four years before, and the candidacy for Governor of Silas Wright aided the Democratic national ticket, yet Polk carried the state only by a plurality of 5,106, of which Tammany furnished one-fourth. The Liberty ticket polled 15,812 votes; had one-third of these gone to the Whigs, Clay would have been President. The third party, the bitterest against slavery, elected the strong pro-slavery ticket, a con
tentious result, as is usually accomplished by third parties.

The Democrats won Maine and New Hampshire, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, New York and Pennsylvania of the free states; the Whigs carried Tennessee, Polk's own state, and Delaware, Maryland, Kentucky and North Carolina of the slave states. Polk and Dallas received 170 of the 275 electoral votes. The popular vote was: Polk, 1,327,204; Clay, 1,299,062; Birney, 62,300; Polk lost Tennessee by 216 votes. Polk was a "minority" President by some 25,000 votes; but it must be remembered that the 9 electoral votes of South Carolina implied possibly 50,000 votes in his favor.

Clay's heart was broken. He knew this was his Waterloo; gone was the magnificent vision he had cherished for long years to lead a great party to victory and as President "to scatter plenty over a smiling land," his own country. Aside from his personal disappointment, he thought dire evil impending over the nation.

Polk's inaugural address was Jeffersonian in tone and spirit. It coupled the "support of state governments in all their rights" with the "preservation of the general government in its whole constitutional vigor." It condemned attempted exercise by states of powers not reserved to them equally with usurpation of federal power. "Not in the ruins of the Union," the President said, "would our people find happiness." On slavery, the tariff, and other issues, including Oregon and Texas, he showed he stood squarely on the Democratic platform.

His training and experience as well as great natural executive ability were all needed by the new President. He had no prenomination or pre-election pledges to redeem, was not a candidate to succeed himself and had no favorite to whom he wished to transfer the succession. He chose his cabinet solely for utilitarian reasons; Buchanan was given the State Department; Robert J. Walker, of Mississippi, the Treasury; Marcy, of New York, War; George Bancroft, the historian, Navy; John Y. Mason, an old college friend, was retained as Attorney General, where Tyler had placed him, and Cave Johnson, of Tennessee, was made Postmaster General.

To keep the peace with Calhoun and with the Tylerites, and to reconcile the Van Burenites to annexation were difficult tasks. The last named were pleased with the offer of the Treasury to Silas Wright and on his refusal, the bestowal of the War portfolio on Marcy. The Tylerites were soon merged back into the parties they came from. As to Calhoun he could hardly do otherwise than support an administration favoring the annexation of Texas. These settlements allowed Polk to do something for the Border states who held the balance of power in the Senate. Jackson helped his protege in all this, and in the delicate matter of establishing a new paper, the Daily Union in Washington, with Ritchie, the noted editor of the Richmond Enquirer, at its head, as the organ of the administration in place of Blair and Rives' old paper, the Globe. The Globe's head on a charger was the price agreed on for Tyler and Calhoun support during the Presidential campaign.

In June, 1845, at the Hermitage, died Andrew Jackson.

Bancroft says Polk told his cabinet that the four principal measures of his administration were to be the settlement of the Northwestern boundary, the acquisition of California, a constitutional treasury and a tariff for revenue.

The Oregon question was first settled. Polk suspected Great Britain of designs on California and a plan to shut us off entirely from the Pacific. The Monroe Doctrine was cited and the battle cry, "Fifty-four, forty or flight" was asserted in diplomatic negotiations. In 1814, 1824 and in 1826 we had offered to compromise on the 49th parallel, Great Britain each time refusing. Now that America assumed so aggressive an
attitude England made the offer and it was accepted, the Senate ratifying the treaty 41 to 14.

The lowering of the tariff advocated in Polk's first message was accomplished and the law still referred to as the "Walker Tariff of 1846" was passed, in the House 114 to 95, in the Senate by the casting vote of the Vice-President. It lowered protective duties and made all assessments ad valorem. Some Pennsylvanians bungled Dallas in effigy for bringing about a "British tariff," but the country prospered and while we bought more British goods we sold England vastly more agricultural products. The customs warehouse system was established by this tariff law, and the sub-treasury reestablished at the same first session.

The Twenty-ninth Congress showed a great majority, sixty or more, for the administration in the House, a close one in the Senate on many questions. Andrew Johnson of Tennessee and Jefferson Davis of Mississippi, both Democrats, were members of the House. The latter in debate praised the conduct in Mexico of the West Point graduates, and referring to some exceptional work performed by them, asked if an untrained man, a blacksmith or a tailor could have rendered such service. The former presented this as reflecting on himself and the mechanic class generally, and was assured that so far from anything personal being intended no slur on the mechanic class was meant, but only the value of trained officers in war stressed.

Texas was admitted to the Union. Sam Houston was one of her first Senators. The annexation, however, was not to be the "bloodless achievement" Polk thought it to be. Mexico protested and Slidell was sent as peace commissioner authorized to purchase California—and peace. George Bancroft, Acting-Secretary of War, ordered General Zachary Taylor to the Rio Grande, soon the American and Mexican troops clashed, blood was shed and war was on.

The political features of the Mexican War were that the two leading generals, Scott and Taylor, were both Whigs, that Franklin Pierce was a Brigadier General under Scott, and Ulysses S. Grant and Jefferson Davis were officers; further, that in the free states and to some extent with the Whigs of other sections the war was unpopular and greatly criticized. To a great many Americans it seemed wicked in a great powerful nation as was the United States to seize Mexican territory and then wage war upon her.

The Abolitionists saw no other, and the anti-slave men saw no greater result than the increase of slave states to be carved out of the territory to be acquired. They did not vision the real future of that territory. "Manifest destiny" was a high-sounding phrase to cover wrongful aggression, to many Americans in 1846 as it was to many in 1898. State elections of 1846 in the North showed the antagonism to the administration, especially in the defeat of Governor of Silas Wright in New York.

Congress was in a critical temper when it reassembled, but the war was liberally supported. The mere hint of British intervention operated strongly. Polk was accused of favoring Taylor at Scott's expense, but as both were Whigs the charge had no political force; besides, Scott was sent to Vera Cruz to march on the Mexican capital from that point.

The Wilmot Proviso, its author a Pennsylvania Democrat, was tacked on an appropriation bill for adjusting boundaries with Mexico. It provided that neither slavery nor involuntary servitude should exist in any territory purchased with the money appropriated in the bill. Texas already in the Union was not affected. The proviso was the first of a series of questions which made slavery becoming a burning party issue. The proviso never got through Congress, but it became a tenet of political faith and split parties, churches and the people, although the country was engaged in a foreign war. The Methodist Church separated into two bodies in 1845 and the Baptists followed suit, while the Presbyterians were deeply agitating a separation. Many people came to think that an antagonism of opinion stronger than church attachments rendered a continuance of the Union impossible. This feeling existed in both the North and in the South.

To the South the Wilmot Proviso seemed the acme of injustices. This section, it was argued, was furnishing three-fourths of the volunteer soldiers who were winning the war; should they and their belongings be barred from the land won by their valor and blood? Granted that slavery was an evil; was it not an evil inherited from the framers of the Constitution and guaranteed by that compact? The Missouri Compromise had almost the sanctity of the Constitution; should it not be continued on westward? Was not that a reasonable, a small demand when slavery was constitutionally legal in all territorial domains? It was folly, the South asserted, to call Mexican territory free soil; was it not perfectly well known that ninety-nine per cent of the negro slaves of the South were better cared for, better treated, really not less free than the pawns of Mexico held in cruel villainage and an economic bondage with no corresponding duty to care for and protect?
The North, on the other hand, was determined that that cursed thing, slavery, should not be extended, that not one drop of American blood should be shed to increase its spread. The fact that the evil was old and could not be gotten rid of in slave states was all the greater reason for excluding it from new territory. Louisiana was slave territory when acquired and the effect of the Missouri Compromise was to make part of it free; to apply the compromise to lands acquired from Mexico would be to make that slave territory which under Mexican law was free soil. A citizen could carry his "property" into a territory, but he could not carry his state law with him any more than a banker could take his incorporated bank along with his money into a territory.

Meanwhile Northern and Southern men spilled their blood and gave up their lives, among them a son of Webster and a son of Clay, on the fields of Palo Alto, Monterey, Buena Vista, Cerro Gordo, Cherubisco, Molino del Rey, Chupeutepe, and ended the war by the capture, September 14, 1847, of the Mexican capital.

Polk was a man of a certain self-contained tacturnity not dissimilar to that possessed by the present (1868) occupant of the White House. Neither to the public nor to his party, some may say not even to his cabinet, did he deny or explain or attempt to justify himself in his course of action. He toured the North and East in the summer of 1847, but he did not unburden himself to the people.

Just before the Thirtieth Congress met in December, 1847, Clay delivered his famous Lexington speech which was received by many as laying out the course the Whigs were to pursue. The Mexican War was described as wicked and unnatural, and brought on by deceit and unrighteousness; Congress should declare the objects of it and control the prosecution of it, and whole sale annexation should be opposed; the acquisition of any new territory for the purpose of propagating slavery or introducing slaves from the United States should be barred.

Webster, Winthrop, Corwin and other Whigs went even further and opposed any annexation of territory at all. This was farther on one side of the Whigs than the more moderate of their fellow partisans were on the other.

To the divided counsels of the Whigs the Democrats opposed a far from united front. Van Buren and the Barn-burners of New York and other Northern and Western anti-slavery Democrats were dead against any extension of slavery. State ele-

124 THE STORY OF THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY

Democratic Efficiency Under Polk

The Whigs showed the effect of Democratic dissension, the New York Whigs electing Fillmore and Hamilton Fish Governor and Lieutenant-Governor by 40,000 majority, carrying Tennessee and gaining in other states. The far South was solid for acquisition of territory and the extension of slavery into it, certainly below the 36° 40', the Missouri Compromise. Calhoun and Tyler criticized the war as unnecessarily brought on.

Congress met with Clay's Lexington speech ringing in its ears, but with the newer sound of the cheers greeting the news that the American army was quartered in the palace of the Montezumas. The President's message was a defensive review of the conduct of the war and an argument for the acquisition of territory, especially since Mexico would be able to pay no indemnity in money. Paying Mexico for part of the domain to be acquired was recommended. Prosecution of the war, by economic pressure as well as force of arms, to a just peace, was urged. To Mexico was extended the sword in one hand, peace and purchase money in the other.

The Whigs, having a majority of eight, organized the House by electing Winthrop, Massachusetts, Whig, Speaker by a bare majority, 110 votes, on the third ballot. More than 120 of the 228 men constituting the House were new members. The war, when the people had been voting, had been unpopular and the voters had taken revenge on the Democrats and on old members of Congress.

Abraham Lincoln was a new member, the sole Whig from Illinois. He made a reputation during this, one term in Congress, as a quaint character, a rough diamond, a wit, a powerful and logical debator of the homespun variety. He declined to run again and a Democrat succeeded him.

Jefferson Davis was a new Senator from Mississippi. He had resigned from the House to take command of Mississippi troops in Mexico, and was now in the Senate by appointment to a vacancy. How extreme his states rights views were is shown by the fact that he declined an appointment by the President as Brigadier-General of Volunteers on the ground that only a state had the right to make such an appointment.

The Whigs, Webster, Calhoun, Benton, Clay, Breckinridge, King, Mangum and Crittenden were the veterans in the Senate; newer men were Cameron, Case, Dix, Revery Johnson, Bell, Douglass, Hunter and Hale, the latter classed as an Independent.

The President vetoed the River and Harbor bill of the last session as unconstitutional. "To all the mouth of a creek a
harbor," he said, "does not confer authority to expend public money on its improvement; many of our ports of entry exist only on the statute books, and never saw a vessel enter from or clear for a foreign port." To thus waste money when the country was at war was an additional reason given for the veto. The House promptly adopted a resolution that river and harbor improvements were wise and constitutional.

Criticism, much of it opprobrious, marked the session. Santa Anna, by American aid, had been gotten back into Mexico from his Cuban banishment, with promises that American action would bring about peace; Polk refused to furnish the House with the correspondence between Santa Anna and the United States government, or the correspondence between Generals Scott and Taylor with the War Department. Politics dominated Congress and little legislation was accomplished. The Twenty-ninth Congress had resolved that Mexico had begun the war; the House of the Thirtieth Congress resolved that the war had been "unnecessarily and unconstitutionally begun by the President."

A loan bill, to supply much needed funds, was passed only after new came that Mexico was ready to sign a treaty of peace.

The air was full of the rumors of peace when John Quincy Adams was stricken at his desk in the House of Representatives.

The treaty of peace submitted by the President was debated for more than two weeks by the Senate. Slight changes were made but none in the boundaries agreed on or the amount to be paid Mexico, $15,000,000. Mexico ratified the treaty May 30, 1848. Polk proclaimed the treaty July 4th, and our national domain under Polk, took the Pacific as our western boundary from the northern line of Oregon to the southern line of California. The treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo added 334,445,520 acres to the United States, out of which have been carved all of California and Nevada and parts of Arizona, Colorado, Utah, Wyoming and New Mexico. Six weeks later the news of the discovery of gold in California reached the East. Polk and manifest destiny had brought immeasurable wealth to the United States.

Polk in a special message in July invoked the spirit of Washington in depressing partisan and sectional feeling in Congress in dealing with the new territory; geographical discretion, he said, should mar our glorious Union. The Missouri Compromise suited neither of the contending factions now. The anti-slavery element demanded the Wilmot Proviso, the pro-slavery element demanded the removal of the restrictions against slavery contained in the Missouri Compromise. Cotton, now a most profitable crop, and, the growing of it the greatest industry of the South, was king and it and slavery called insistently for wider fields.

Whether the Constitution followed our flag to the Philippines was a great question in 1900; in 1848 the great question was whether the Constitution covered the continental territories of the Union. Did slavery follow the Constitution? Was the newly acquired soil part of the United States or merely owned by the United States? Calhoun held, with the car's letter, that the latter view. Did American law apply or, according to international law, did Mexican law continue until Congress acted?

Oregon imperatively demanded admission as a state. The Whig House by a vote of 129 to 71 tacked the Wilmot Proviso to the bill in a clause extending the Ordinance of 1787 to the whole territory, the Senate amended the bill by adding Calhoun's amendment which emphasized the fact that Oregon lay above the Missouri Compromise line; the House refused to recede and the Senate accepted the House bill. Polk in approving the measure recorded as a reason that the territory lay north of 36° 30', and recommended the extension of the Missouri Compromise to all the territory acquired from Mexico.

Clayton's compromise that the disputed matters be referred to the Supreme Court passed the Senate, but the House would have none of it. Wisconsin was admitted as a free state, and Congress adjourned long after the nominations for President had been made and the quadrennial contest begun.

Polk was the head of a defeated party, and the national territory. The treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo added 334,445,520 acres to the United States, out of which have been carved all of California and Nevada and parts of Arizona, Colorado, Utah, Wyoming and New Mexico. Six weeks later the news of the discovery of gold in California reached the East. Polk and manifest destiny had brought immeasurable wealth to the United States.

Polk in a special message in July invoked the spirit of Washington in depressing partisan and sectional feeling in Congress in dealing with the new territory; geographical discretion, he said, should mar our glorious Union. The Missouri Compromise suited neither of the contending factions now. The anti-slavery element demanded the Wilmot Proviso, the pro-slavery element demanded the removal of the restrictions against slavery contained in the Missouri Compromise. Cotton, now a most profitable crop, and, the growing of it the greatest industry of the South, was king and it and slavery called insistently for wider fields.

Whether the Constitution followed our flag to the Philippines was a great question in 1900; in 1848 the great question was whether the Constitution covered the continental territories of the Union. Did slavery follow the Constitution? Was the newly acquired soil part of the United States or merely owned by the United States? Calhoun held, with the car's letter, that the latter view. Did American law apply or, according to international law, did Mexican law continue until Congress acted?

Oregon imperatively demanded admission as a state. The Whig House by a vote of 129 to 71 tacked the Wilmot Proviso to the bill in a clause extending the Ordinance of 1787 to the whole territory, the Senate amended the bill by adding Calhoun's amendment which emphasized the fact that Oregon lay above the Missouri Compromise line; the House refused to recede and the Senate accepted the House bill. Polk in approving the measure recorded as a reason that the territory lay north of 36° 30', and recommended the extension of the Missouri Compromise to all the territory acquired from Mexico.

Clayton's compromise that the disputed matters be referred to the Supreme Court passed the Senate, but the House would have none of it. Wisconsin was admitted as a free state, and Congress adjourned long after the nominations for President had been made and the quadrennial contest begun.

Polk was the head of a defeated party, the extreme pro-slavery men wishing to go far beyond it. If only Pierce in 1854 had been as wise as Polk in 1848--

The House organized California as a territory with the Wilmot Proviso attached; the Senate voted the proviso out and all that could be effected was to extend the revenue laws of the country to California. The only law of importance passed this session was that creating the Interior Department, the author of the bill...
THE LONG VICTORY ADMINISTRATION

CHAPTER XV1

THE STORY OF THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY