CHAPTER IV

DEMOCRATIC NATURE OF OUR GOVERNMENT FIXED UNDER JEFFERSON
1805-1809


"Draining the course of Administration"—said Jefferson in his second inaugural address—"and in order to disturb it, the artillery of the press has been leveled against us charged with whatsoever its licentiousness could devise or dare." The experiment had been fully and fairly made, he continued, whether freedom of discussion, unaided by power, was not sufficient for the propagation and protection of truth, and whether a government willing for the whole world to know its every act could be written down by falsehood and defamation. He pointed triumphantly to the result of the election as the answer of the people and as evidence of their capacity in government.

Recent years, however, had seen the establishment of a conservative press represented by the Washington Intelligencer and the New York Evening Post. These papers were partisan enough but dignified and responsible journals not given to Billinggate. Smaller papers were as effervescent as ever. As at the time of the Revolution the mind of the Western world was centered on religion, in the early years of our government American mental activity was centered on politics. Literature, science and art were cherished by the few, but for a hundred objects of interest the readers of to-day have their forebears had only politics. And every political writer, every book, paper or pamphlet, was partisan, exalting one man or party and damning their opponents.

Later writers dealing with these days have to a certain extent absorbed much of the coeval folly, prejudice and venom. Others in treating of politics have been extraordinarily careless or have used no powers of discrimination. For instance, one reputable historian describes the cruelties of the Indian raids on our people instigated by the British who held the Western posts, the burnings, hangings and other atrocities of Cornwallis' Southern campaigns, and the sufferings of our sailors impressed on English ships, and in the succeeding paragraph, turning to politics, he ignores all these whelming reasons for anti-British sentiment, and says: "The Republicans hated England as the source of the aristocratic ideas of the Federalists." Others are equally thoughtless, affording much basis for Henry Ford's dictum on history.

Even now at every Presidential election there are hundreds of thousands of fairly intelligent citizens who are genuinely fearful of disaster to the country if the party to which they do not belong wins. That is the inevitable concomitant of parties in government. Similar feelings were entertained in the early days of our republic. Correspondents, diarists, writers of all sorts recorded what they saw and felt, local conditions and opinions, and current events as they beheld or were told them. These are honest but biased, legitimate but not absolutely reliable sources of history. Failure to fairly weigh the current testimony of the times has resulted in much injustice to many patriots and public servants. While the Democrats were making history, the Federalists were writing it.

The fact is, and any American can and must find it true if he makes an honest investigation, that not only was there enough glory to go around, but that it was fairly well distributed between the parties and partisans of our country's early days. Washington alone deserves practically no censure; Burr alone general condemnation; Pickering is saved from being in the category with Burr solely because while Burr was loyal to nothing, Pickering was fanatically loyal to his faction, his idol and his faction, the Essex Junto. Every one of the other leaders merits some just criticism and much well-earned praise.

It was Jefferson's fate, as it would have been the fate of any prophet of Democracy when Democracy was a doubtful proposition, to have incurred the criticism of the major portion of the intellectually active of the country. He antagonized the clergy of Virginia by his disestablishment law, the wealthy and well-born by his anti-prime Geniture law. Championing the agricultural interest as the most important of all industries, he incurred, of course, the opposition of the traders and shippers, the urban
The story of the Democratic Party

interests generally. In these classes were the most vocal elements of our population. The verdict of the people, not the chimer of partisans, is the truer criterion by which to judge statesmen.

The second administration of Jefferson was confronted with difficulties from the start, a little relieved by an honorable and favorable peace with Tripoli accompanied by the release of Commodore Bainbridge and his sailors.

We had trouble with Spain over the Florida boundaries and incursions on our territory from the Spanish settlements. Jefferson got Congress to appropriate $2,000,000 to purchase the Floridas but was never able to use it. Far greater was our trouble with England and France. We might easily have been at war with the three European nations at once.

Jefferson sought to keep the United States on an even keel by balancing between the two main antagonists. Both countries needed our trade. But he underestimated the dogged determination of the English and over-estimated the friendliness of the French. He came later to the opinion most reluctantly that we could rely on the friendship neither of the French government nor the French people.

Our large sea trade, obtained in a great measure at the expense of England's sea-carrying industry, was a temptation neither the British nor French could resist. The price demanded by each was war against its enemy, and England became rather indifferent to that. She still impressed our seamen until it was asserted that six thousand Americans were unwillingly in the English naval service or imprisoned. Monroe was sent to aid Pinckney in patching up a treaty to take the place of the expired Jay Treaty. The best they could do was to obtain a treaty, which contained no stipulation as to impressment, a sine qua non by Jefferson's orders, and which was otherwise unacceptable. Jefferson discussed it with some Democratic Senators but would not submit it to the Senate, his position being that it were better to rely on natural right and law than on a contract or treaty which ignored the vital matters in dispute. British merchants were angry at the American capture of their commerce and England drew tighter the rules governing neutral trade, and as no neutrals in Europe neutral trade meant American trade.

The Battle of Trafalgar gave England dominion over the seas, while the victory at Austerlitz made Napoleon the master of continental Europe. Between the Tiger and the Shark our vessels were safe neither on the ocean nor in European ports. England declared a wholesale blockade of Europe by Orders in Council and Napoleon decreed the whole British Isles in blockade. England then prohibited even coastal trade with ports under the control of France. But still harder to bear was the impressment of our sailors, an old and sore grievance against England. British vessels came close to our shores to seize our cargoes and impress our men. Napoleon seized our ships that reached Europe. Both charged that much of our shipping was "rogue" trade—American vessels sailing under other nations' flags, or carrying other nations' goods under America's flag.

The administration's first resort was a non-importation scheme whereby it was forbidden to import certain articles from England. This was not sufficient, so later a more drastic measure was adopted and an embargo laid on all our shipping. No clearance could be given foreign bound vessels except under the direction of the President. Our ships had better rot idle in American waters, it was argued, than to be seized abroad. We followed the policy of Washington in 1794. It was a preventive measure, for Jefferson's passion, as he said, was peace. John Quincy Adams asserts that war would have immediately ensued except for the embargo.

The shipping interest in New England was a dominant industry, and the profits of a successful voyage tremendous. Quincy and other Federalists argued that it would be sufficient for the government to disclaim responsibility and allow American shippers to assume all risk, but Jefferson thought that the nation could not stand the strain of submission to such results as that would lead to. England with her back to the wall on the continent was high-handed on the seas; she had lately seized the whole Danish navy in its home port.

The embargo set fire on the country. Merchants were bankrupted and artisans idle. Stay laws and other expedients were resorted to. The cotton, rice and tobacco as well as the lumber, fish and other products of the country were denied export, but the burden on New England was greatest because she had not only the common hardship on her but the stoppage of her greatest industry, the carrying trade. Her sailors and ships were idle, her main business ruined.

Then there arose a noise of protest and accusation which still reverberates through partisan histories. The Republican (Democratic) Party was and still is blamed for all the troubles and disasters befallen the country. That England's or France's
course of action was responsible, that our situation was one unavoidable by us and not avoided by any other nation—these considerations were and are only secondarily mentioned. The embargo imprisoned or impressed none of our seamen, it sank or confiscated no vessel or cargo, it sent no men to battle and death, yet it was cursed by the Federalists with curses louder and deeper than were uttered against our enemies.

It was charged that the embargo was a measure dictated by Napoleon, a mere prelude to war with England. It was evaded both in Eastern and Southern ports, and many American vessels were kept abroad under British registry, and American goods smuggled into Canada. High-flying Federalists kept up a correspondence with the British Minister here and the English cabinet, assuring them that the embargo would not last and that they regarded American interests as interwoven with English.

It was at this stage that John Quincy Adams left the Federalist Party. Massachusetts elected her Senator a year earlier than was the custom and her choice was not Adams. He resigned immediately and his successor was chosen for the short remainder of his term. Pickering boasted of having driven him from public office in Massachusetts, and for a time glutted the hatred he had cherished against his father ever since President Adams had forced Pickering from his cabinet; the Essex Junto was in control of the state. At “Professor Adams’ downfall” Ross, former British Minister to Washington, was amused, so he wrote Pickering from London.

Secession or separation was a popular sentiment among the Federalist leaders in New England and the only reason that such nullification as South Carolina attempted twenty-five years later was not tried seems to be that there were a great many more Democrats in New England in 1804-15 than there were Federalists in the Palmetto State in 1833.

The embargo act was repealed three days before Jefferson left office and its place taken by a non-intercourse act with England and France. Of course Jefferson and his party must bear the full responsibility for the embargo. The Senate had passed the embargo bill 22 to 6, the House 82 to 44, and most of the state legislatures, including that of Massachusetts, had endorsed it. Either it appealed to the judgment of the country or the people accepted it as wise coming from Jefferson. Many statesmen of that time and later believed it would have been successful had the law been strictly obeyed. Some English statesmen said afterward that a year of it would have ruined completely British

commerce. Certainly it seems to have kept us out of war, and war with England at that time held little prospect of honor or advantage to us.

Critics of Jefferson’s administration apparently take no account of the justifications of its course or its advantages. England had always impressed our seamen; she treated our ships no worse, if as badly, as those of all other nations. Amends and compensation for such infringements of our rights could await peaceable adjustment. One month, may one week of actual war easily might have cost us more in blood, money and ships than a year of intercourse or embargo, with no assurance of bettering our condition, and possibly worsening it. Hard as our case was, it was incomparably better than any other western nation. We were touched only in our pocketsbooks; European peoples were fighting desperately for their fortunes, their lives, liberties and happiness as well as national existence.

Jefferson had commented on the fact that France embarked in one war because a foreign diplomat had made a caustic remark concerning Madame Du Barry, one of the king’s mistresses, and had been influenced to enter another by the Austrian Empress calling Madame Montespan “Dear Cousin.” He thought war the most useless method of settling international difficulties. He argued, too, that every day the war was postponed the less unequal the contest would be when it did come, if come it must.

In avoiding war he had a varied support. Some of the bravest men in Congress were as stout in their resistance to the war as he. The Federalists did not want war with England; Pickering was sure, Quincy thought it probable that New England would refuse to join in such a war. On the other hand to fight France when England was our major aggressor commanded only the support of extreme Federalists, one of whom went so far as to say in Congress that England’s Orders in Council only supplied a sanction to what our sense of honor would lead us to do.

War with England, Rufus King said, meant alliance with France, and that meant a dissolution of the Union. Union of New England against the National Union became the avowed objects of the Massachusetts and Connecticut Legislatures, says Henry Adams. Pickering, ex-Secretary of State, now Senator, was corresponding with Rose in London, former British Minister in Washington, and keeping his nephew in London as a go-between.

While harassed with these external difficulties, Jefferson had also to deal with Burr’s conspiracy. Whatever Burr’s object, he led some to believe he had the cooperation of the government.
THE STORY OF THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY

DEMONSTRATION FIXED BY IMPERSONATION

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The story of the Democratic Party

To account for the growth of the Democratic Party and its position on the political spectrum, it is important to understand the history and development of the party. The Democratic Party was founded in the early 19th century and has played a significant role in American politics ever since.

The Democratic Party was established in 1828 by Andrew Jackson, who ran against John Quincy Adams in the presidential election of that year. Jackson won the election and served two terms as president. The party was founded on a number of principles, including the belief in states' rights, the protection of slavery, and the expansion of the American West.

During the Civil War, the Democratic Party split into two factions: the northern Democrats, who supported the Union, and the southern Democrats, who supported the Confederacy. The party's fortunes declined in the wake of the war, and it did not regain its strength until the early 20th century.

In the 1930s, the Democratic Party became associated with the New Deal, a series of initiatives taken by President Franklin D. Roosevelt to address the economic problems of the Great Depression. The party's role in shaping the New Deal helped to solidify its position as a major force in American politics.

Today, the Democratic Party is the leading party of the political left and is home to many of the nation's progressive thinkers. The party's platform includes a variety of issues, including healthcare, education, and civil rights.
Democracy Fixed by Impression

The story of the Democratic Party

In the country where freedom of speech is so prized, the President has decided to intervene in a matter that has been raging for years. The story begins in 1808 with the election of James Madison, who, as President, was able to use his influence to bring about a change. Madison understood the importance of the press and worked hard to protect it from government interference. His successor, James Madison, continued this tradition and worked to ensure that the press remained free and independent. The story of the Democratic Party is one of struggle and triumph, as it has fought to ensure that the people have a voice in the nation's affairs. Today, the Democratic Party stands as a testament to the power of democracy and the importance of a free press.