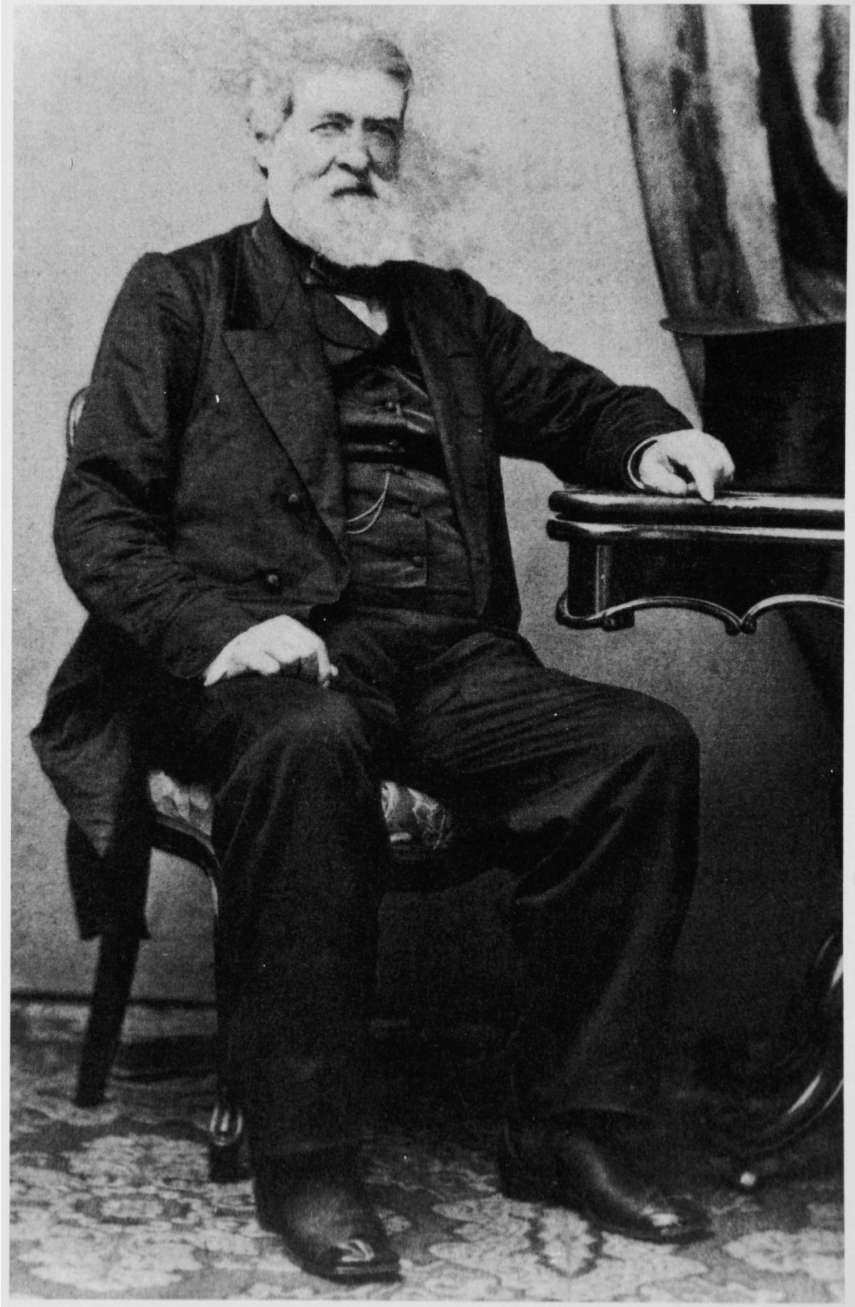


Samuel Medary &
the *Crisis*



Samuel Medary &
the *Crisis*

Testing the Limits of
Press Freedom

Reed W. Smith

Ohio State University Press
Columbus

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Frontispiece: Samuel Medary ca. 1859. Courtesy of the Ohio Historical Society.

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Preface

In the *Crisis*, Samuel Medary, an editor who published a controversial newspaper in Columbus, Ohio, during the American Civil War, opposed the conflict because he believed North and South could settle their differences peacefully. Government officials and the majority of the Northern population disagreed with him, and some called for, or took steps to achieve, the suppression of the *Crisis*. This account of Medary's effort to employ the First Amendment to defend his ability to publish an adversarial newspaper is not one of definitive achievement. Rather, it is a study of how Medary's failure coincidentally resulted in a degree of journalistic success. His story is an example of how a principle that is uniquely American—freedom of the press—has evolved over time through continual testing of its practical application.

Freedom of the press has not existed in its current form throughout U.S. history. It has taken the experiences of people like Medary to broaden the parameters of press freedom. The nature of the First Amendment demands that such delineation be an ongoing process. There have always been and continue to be Americans who persist in defining freedom of the press in their own terms, testing its power—and proving its integrity. And it is in times of national conflict that such individuals most need First Amendment protection, for during these periods opposing comments are most likely to be viewed as dubious, even treasonous. Providing a safeguard for the right to voice unpopular opinion is why the Founding Fathers created the First Amendment. Without minority opinion, Americans would not have adequate information to make decisions about the best course of action for themselves or their country. Majority opinion scarcely needs constitutional protection.

This project began during the winter of 1990 when, as a Ph.D. candidate at Ohio University, I began searching for a topic to research

in a journalism historiography course. My instructor, Patrick Washburn, told me about Medary, and that his personal papers and a complete collection of the *Crisis* were at the Ohio Historical Center in nearby Columbus. Washburn noted that Medary was an enigmatic character, and that an in-depth analysis of his case had not been attempted. Although I had spent most of my life in Ohio, and had an interest in Civil War history, I had never heard of Medary. But journalism historians Edwin and Michael Emery had. In their book, *The Press and America*, they write that charges of conspiracy were brought against Medary late in the war, and his case was "one of the most celebrated [newspaper] suspension cases outside of New York during the Civil War." They do not mention, however, why it was so celebrated or how it ended.

During my research I found that Medary was not a journalistic figure of the magnitude of, say, Horace Greeley. Nevertheless, many historians mention him, although usually in a negative vein. Because his sphere of influence was largely within a political movement that has been relegated to one of the dark corners of Civil War history, Medary's impact on the field of journalism has been dismissed. Medary's case, in which he allegedly committed conspiracy against the Union, was never tried. If Medary was the most visible editorialist for a peace movement that was constantly threatened, why had he been able to continue publishing throughout the war? And when he was eventually charged with conspiracy against the Union, why was he not tried and convicted?

No historical project is completed without the guidance, assistance, and encouragement of numerous individuals. I am particularly grateful to two men who served as mentors during this process. Without Patrick Washburn, this project would never have become a book. His advice that I pattern my narrative after that of historian Barbara Tuchman opened up a new world of scholarly inquiry to me. Without the support of Washburn and the inspiration of Tuchman, my research would not have uncovered the significance of Medary's *Crisis*. And I owe a special debt of gratitude to Michael Kline, history instructor and colleague at the Zanesville campus of Ohio University, whose encouragement and advice throughout the writing process were invaluable.

I thank the members of my dissertation committee at Ohio University, all of whom in significant ways aided the completion of this proj-

ect. David Mould gave freely of his time throughout the summer of 1992 to act, along with Washburn, as coeditor of each chapter. Mould's knowledge of Ohio history was of great value in spotting areas that needed strengthening. Phyllis Field and Robert Stewart also were very helpful. Field provided insight into various areas of the Civil War framework that required more depth; Stewart sharpened the prose.

In addition, I wish to thank the numerous librarians and archivists who played an important role in helping secure the information necessary to complete my research. In particular, Amy Underwood, at the Ohio University library in Zanesville, helped track down materials and processed many interlibrary loan requests. I received gracious and able assistance from individuals at the Ohio Historical Center Library, the Ohio State Law Library, the National Archives in Chicago, the Ohio State School of Journalism, the Historical Society of Montgomery County, Pennsylvania, the Columbus Public Library, and the Cincinnati Historical Society.

I also want to thank Charlotte Dihoff, Acquisitions Editor at Ohio State University Press, for seeing this project through. She, along with her reviewers and editorial board, made constructive comments that helped strengthen the manuscript. I am especially grateful to Nancy Woodington, whose precise editing improved my writing. Finally, I am indebted to my wife, Bev, who shouldered a heavy load of family responsibility and was always nearby with understanding and support. She also helped with research and proofreading and by posing important questions. Most important, she believed in my ability to complete the project.

1

'Our Constitution Is a Beacon Light'³

As the miles raced by on May 20, 1864, the newspaperman on the train wondered what the day held for him. It was spring in Ohio, but as the small towns and farm fields sped past the window Samuel Medary found little in the scenery to cheer him. The two federal marshals who accompanied him on the 110-mile ride from Columbus to Cincinnati were a reminder that this was no pleasure trip, but little in Medary's life of the previous three years had been pleasurable.

As publisher of the *Columbus Crisis*, a dissident newspaper, Medary opposed the Civil War and the concomitant restraints on civil liberties, especially threats to limit the editorial comment of nonconformists like himself. As a result, Medary waged a "war within the war," a battle for his First Amendment right to print dissenting opinion. Although this war was not so widely chronicled as such battles as Gettysburg, Antietam, or Vicksburg, Medary carried out his crusade in Columbus with an intense passion.

At the end of Medary's train ride he faced Circuit Court Judge Humphrey H. Leavitt. A year earlier the same judge had sentenced another activist, Clement Vallandigham of Dayton, to military prison. Would Medary suffer a similar fate? Would his greatest fears be realized with the silencing of the *Crisis* and abridgment of his First Amendment freedom? And had his critics finally been proved correct? As it happened, Medary would not secure vindication in a court of law. In the court of public opinion, his struggle had a mixed reception. Six months after his court appearance in Cincinnati, Medary died.

With him were buried the answers to his questions, and although a bullet did not end his life, he was nonetheless a casualty of war.

Unlike in the case of another press freedom zealot of nineteenth-century America, Elijah Lovejoy, historians have dismissed any contribution Medary might have made to the development of freedom of the press in America. Instead, they have branded him a partisan troublemaker who accomplished little of a positive, enduring nature. Typical of the many adjectives historians have used to describe Medary have been "caustic," "slashing," "misguided," and "contemptible."¹ Although subscribers to his newspaper revered him, Medary's politics present a quandary that has made it impossible for Civil War scholars to assess him without prejudice. Despite being respected during much of his lifetime, "To the present day [Medary's] name has remained under a cloud and his real contributions . . . [are] obscured by the smoke of sectional conflict."²

A closer examination of Medary's career reveals an overlooked legacy. Beginning early in his life, Medary formed a personal vision of the United States that emanated from his devotion to Jeffersonian-inspired republican values. He revered the individualism of Americans and saw the nineteenth-century United States as a place where men should be allowed to secure their own place in society free of government restraint. Medary became a staunch supporter of Andrew Jackson because the Tennessean espoused a similar vision. Jacksonian followers saw themselves as upholders of the sanctity of the Constitution and as champions of the ordinary working people of America, especially in the rural South and Middle West. Throughout his career, Medary looked to the ideologies of Thomas Jefferson and Andrew Jackson. Their thoughts about America's potential became his guidebook. He continually quoted both men and compared developments during his lifetime to their vision for the Republic. Although raised a Quaker, Medary parted from the sect during his teens and relied on religion only irregularly for guidance during the remainder of his life.

At the outbreak of the Civil War many Middle Westerners, including Medary, were convinced that the conflict would permit Eastern business interests and federal bureaucrats to dictate political and economic policy to the rest of the country. Therefore, Democrats, many of whom continued to cherish Jacksonian ideals, staunchly upheld the preeminence of states' rights in the face of what they viewed as a burgeoning, and hence more oppressive, federal government.³ Medary

feared that the Civil War would shatter his vision for the Republic. In an 1826 article, "Newspapers and Periodicals," he had stated his belief that the future of the country was secure because of the standards established by the Founding Fathers. Medary believed the Constitution was the greatest document mankind had devised. Under the pseudonym Rusticus he wrote, "Our Constitution is a beacon light which may ever direct us off the rocks and shoals of despotism."⁴

The Civil War of 1861-65 was by far the most divisive and transforming event the nation had undergone, threatening the very survival of the country. The war altered nearly every aspect of the nation Medary had come to know, and he feared the structural changes that the struggle was bringing about. In hindsight it is apparent that people like Medary had legitimate reasons for their concern. They were not merely alarmist, as they were depicted at the time.

The reason for the unflattering nineteenth-century interpretation of Medary's efforts is that he associated himself with views that were unpopular, if not downright subversive. Northerners called those who espoused opinions critical of the Union "Copperheads." The epithet referred to the poisonous snake of the same name that gives no warning before it strikes. Opposition Republican newspapermen first used the insult to disparage those who desired an accommodation with the South. Medary, no Republican, proudly carried the banner of the "Peace Democrat" division of the Democratic Party. Opponents were not, however, interested in differentiating between the Copperheads and Peace Democrats.

Peace Democrats did not believe that armed confrontation was necessary to settle North-South differences; therefore, those in charge of the war considered them, at the least, unpatriotic. "These critics of the Lincoln administration are still viewed as men whose hearts were black, whose blood was yellow, and whose minds were blank."⁵ Republicans perpetuated this assessment after the war when the abolitionist point of view was seemingly vindicated by the Union victory. Unionists wrote the history of the Civil War from their perspective, rejecting the Peace Democrats' contradictory views.

Historians have since added to the one-sided accounts by perpetuating the nationalism that became dominant during the war. In the words of one political researcher of the Civil War, David Donald, "The historian has been 'a camp follower of the successful army.'"⁶ As a result, the propaganda of the triumphant political party became

ingrained in American history, and the public discounted any dissenting contributions. Nearly fifty years after the conflict Republicans continued to remind the nation's electorate that during the Civil War Democrats had, in their eyes, been no less than traitors. By the time the Democratic Party rebuilt its reputation in the twentieth century, the contributions people like Medary might have made had been overlooked. The passage of time has increasingly exposed the shortsightedness of these views. According to Eric Cardinal, the Peace Democrats were "one of the most misunderstood political parties in American history."⁷

That they were misunderstood should have been no surprise. Although military battles took place in only a limited area of the country, the Union's having instituted martial law transformed the entire nation into a war zone. Through his strong and effective use of presidential power, Abraham Lincoln broadened executive authority in the interest of preserving the Union. With dissenters and border-state secessionists threatening havoc in the North, Lincoln took unprecedented steps to deal with the danger. The administration jailed many agitators deemed threats to the preservation of the Union. Lincoln became the only president in U.S. history to suspend the writ of habeas corpus, citing a provision put in the Constitution to protect public safety during rebellions. "During the Civil War, the Constitution was put into a deep freeze."⁸ It quickly became apparent that preserving the Union and upholding constitutional civil rights were incompatible.

From the earliest days of the war, members of the Lincoln administration accurately saw that the press presented a problem for the military. For the first time in the country's history, fresh battles could be current news. Reporters traveled with frontline troops, and their telegraphed dispatches quickly inflamed the Northern public into support for the cause. But in a war in which opposing sides prepared for battle in close proximity to each other, the telegraph that was a godsend for reporters became a curse for generals. The Confederacy intercepted telegraph messages or sometimes simply read Northern newspapers to learn of military plans before mapping strategy. At the same time, the vigorous peace movement, which was strongest in Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois, used politically aligned newspapers to reach followers with a strident antiwar message.

In the years preceding the Civil War, party politics had given rise to hotly contested elections. In the South and the Middle West, a vigor-

ous two-party system developed for the first time, and white males (who alone had the franchise) went to the polls in numbers previously unmatched. Loyal supporters examined candidates' political opinions in party newspapers. Because they were the most universally accessible form of national communication, newspapers played an essential role. As political organs, they kept party disciples informed about national and state political developments. Even voters living in a remote part of the country could keep up to date. Union leaders could not unilaterally suspend press freedom to facilitate their military campaign. Democratic publishers, in particular, would not tolerate such restriction of an established freedom.

Newspapers were forums for aggressive partisan commentary on public activities. They rarely changed beliefs, but editors reinforced readers' convictions with partisan interpretations of news stories. In most cases editors were both politicians and publishers. Many Democratic publishers did not agree that the government should be allowed to limit press freedom, even in wartime. To some, like Medary, the controversial nature of the war increased publishers' responsibility to conduct an open and critical debate.

The Civil War also represents a transition period in the way newspapers went about their business. Telegraph and wire services were replacing the traditional exchange system, in which each editor relied on the mail to extend the circulation of stories. In addition, the reporters' battle coverage helped revolutionize the focus of the nation's newspapers. From being subjective political forums, they became objective event coverage sheets. But periods of change are rarely easy. In a business that had come to enjoy its freedom, some publishers refused to comply with government calls for self-restraint. The result was widespread unofficial attempts at press censorship.

The disputes over the appropriate interpretation of the First Amendment that took place during the Civil War have not been repeated in U.S. history. The designers of the concept of freedom of the press had not made any provision for working with a diverse and influential press in a period of internal civil strife. The question, Should the press remain free when the safety of the nation is at stake? was answered in conflicting ways by factions within the Union. Lincoln proceeded cautiously on the issue, but many members of the military and the civilian population did not. As a consequence, the struggle between the opposition press and supporters of the Union's resolute course of action erupted into an ongoing confrontation.

No other war in U.S. history has seen more instances of prosecution of the press by military authorities or private citizens.⁹ Literary America, which mythologized the violence of the last half of the nineteenth century in the American West, devoted scant attention to the lawless activity that typified the civilian Middle West during the Civil War. During the war rabid Unionists damaged or destroyed nearly one hundred opposition newspapers.¹⁰ Unionists instigated many of these acts in retaliation for the dissenting opinions of the Democratic press.

One obstinate newspaperman who wrote persuasively about and practiced press dissent as fiercely as any was Samuel Medary. He had been a lifelong public activist and had regularly involved himself in political controversy. Early in 1861, when he began the *Crisis*, Medary was already sixty years old. From his modest office in Columbus he sought both to stop the fighting and to strengthen the rights of journalists in the North.

Samuel Medary was a man of average height but substantial girth. His full beard and ample head of hair were totally gray in his later years and accentuated his dark, piercing eyes. Prone to bouts of depression and intensely serious about his obligation to his readers, he was rarely seen to smile. Rather, a scowl dominated his full face. Pictures of him—always in a suit and tie—indicate that he welcomed the depiction of himself as an elder statesman. Although a devoted husband and the father of twelve children, he spent a great deal of time away from his family, opting instead to cast himself in the larger role of civic patriarch. His great esteem for those who made their living from the soil led him to identify his occupation as "farmer" on the 1860 Columbus census report even though he lived in downtown Columbus and had never been a farmer.¹¹

Before the war, during his many years at the forefront of Ohio and national politics, he gained the respect, if not the admiration, of both friends and enemies. Medary left no doubt where he stood on an issue, and people were scarcely apathetic toward him. In this regard he typified politicians of his era: often brash, sometimes imprudent, seldom willing to compromise. To him, principle was everything, and his enemies warned, "There was no more bitter partisan than Medary. He was said to be willing to back the pen with his fists."¹² He welcomed controversy—even sought it out—because he saw it as a means by which he could show others the error of their ways.

Medary's strengths were honesty, bravery, determined loyalty, steadfastness, and high ideals. But his faults included stubbornness, irascibility, arrogance, and intolerance for the opinions of others. Unlike President Lincoln, whom he came to despise, Medary, once decided, never budged from a principle. In his mind, flexibility or modification of one's creed represented weakness. He was a conservative politician who held that his positions were morally as well as politically accurate. Known as "Old Wheel Horse" in Ohio Democratic politics, he had become prominent not only as a journalist but as a party boss and public speaker. His nearly four decades of political involvement made him the unofficial doyen of the Ohio Democratic Party. Frank Mott acknowledged this status: "He was a vigorous and belligerent writer, who became the boss of Ohio Democracy" in the years preceding the Civil War.¹³ Fellow Democrats characterized him as "a vigorous partisan.... The bitterest of his political foes conceded his ability."¹⁴ That he had ample tenacity as well he proved during the years in which he published the *Crisis*.

The *Crisis*, a newspaper whose name referred to the conflict that was imminent in 1861, was the antithesis of Horace Greeley's popular *New York Tribune*. Many throughout the Union read Greeley's proabolition, pro-Civil War newspaper, which circulated more widely in Ohio than in any other state except New York and Pennsylvania.¹⁵ Unlike opposition publishers, Greeley did not view the war as a threat to press freedom. He condoned the unprecedented measures Lincoln took to ensure order and security in the North. For Peace Democrat publishers like Medary, however, Northern war fever represented a greater threat to constitutionally guaranteed civil rights than did the conflict itself.

The *Crisis* was a one-man operation. Medary used it as his pulpit to speak out on all the issues surrounding the conflict. He and other Democratic editors initially set out to halt America's involvement in civil war. But as the conflict progressed and Northerners stepped up attempts to restrict those who failed to support it, Medary became obsessed with infringements on journalists' rights. He viewed assaults on press freedom as symbolic of the imminent demise of his vision for America.

As a result Medary's name was anathema to staunch Unionists. In 1864 the Republican *Nevada Gazette* summed up the contempt in which he was held in the North. Shortly after Medary's death, its

editor wrote, "One of the devil's own children ... [has gone] home to his father's house."¹⁶ In three short years, Medary's notoriety had spread across the country.

But Medary's efforts were overshadowed by two even more infamous Peace Democrats: Wilbur Storey and Clement Vallandigham. Storey was the belligerent publisher of the *Chicago Times*, which the War Department shut down at one point because of blatant anti-Union sentiments. The most famous Peace Democrat, however, was Vallandigham, of Dayton. Unionists despised him because of his divisive peace-seeking tactics. Before the war and during his 1858-62 stint in the House of Representatives, he published the *Dayton Empire*. But in 1863 the War Department imprisoned and later exiled him to the Confederacy following a speech in which he challenged military restrictions on dissident public speech.

These two men garnered sensational headlines while Medary pursued his editorial campaign. In his 1951 book, *Lincoln and the Press*, Robert Harper acknowledged the impact of Medary's endeavor. Medary, wrote Harper, published "one of the most widely quoted Copperhead newspapers of the Civil War period," and "was the acknowledged voice of the Peace Democrats."¹⁷ Although Medary never published his circulation figures, several Civil War historians have called the *Crisis* the most influential of the 154 Peace Democrat newspapers published during the war.¹⁸

One reason for the impact of the *Crisis* was that it served as the clearinghouse for Peace Democrat ideas from across the nation. Through the exchange system, Medary extended the readership of stories from other Peace Democrat editors whose papers' smaller circulation limited their influence. In addition, he wrote his own editorials in language that could be appreciated by both the learned class and the poorly educated immigrant laborers of the Middle West. The latter most feared changes in the country from the war because such changes threatened their view of the simple, individualistic American life. Concern over the *Crisis's* pernicious influence led postmasters in West Virginia, Kansas, and Missouri to halt its circulation in those states.

Like the idealized agrarian common man Medary defended, Peace Democrat editors disputed the rationale Northern leaders used to justify war with the South. Medary favored continuation of a sectionally

diverse America and, like most Southerners, truly viewed the conflict as a war between the states. Today Peace Democrats would be considered racists because they believed blacks were intellectually inferior to whites. In the nineteenth century, however, their opinion was not uncommon, even among those who favored abolition. For Peace Democrats the continuation of slavery was a political issue, not a question of morality. They opposed abolition by the federal government because they believed slavery was a tried and true local institution, and only individual states had the right to eliminate it. They also were concerned that an influx of cheap black labor into the Middle West would put whites out of work.

Another Peace Democrat fear was that after the war New England businessmen would dictate the economic and social future of the Middle West. Peace Democrats like Vallandigham and Medary were western sectionalists who "saw the Civil War transforming the federal Union into *a new nation." They believed the war would end up "giving industry ascendancy over agriculture, extending rights to black people, ending the Upper Midwest's chance to play balance-of-power politics."¹⁹ Conservative Democrats constantly worried that blacks and profiteers would overrun Ohio. Medary's editorials in nearly every issue of the *Crisis* fueled these fears. He counseled readers about the excesses of a heavy-handed government, self-serving financiers, and a jingoistic Northern public.

Only in recent years have scholars begun to acknowledge that the Peace Democrats' activities served a worthwhile purpose. In *A Respectable Minority*, Joel Silbey writes that the Democrats believed it was their duty to criticize candidly the party in power. The foundation for argumentative press commentary had been laid during decades of practice that antedated the Revolutionary War. As the Civil War progressed, the Republican-controlled government validated Democratic opposition by turning a blind eye to corruption within the federal government, incompetence by Union military commanders, and reprisals wrought on the opposition. Silbey argues that because of their stand the Peace Democrats made abuses of civil liberties less dramatic in the North than they would have been otherwise. In this regard the Democrats served as a stabilizing agent in a democracy dominated by a too restrictive patriotism.²⁰

Peace Democrats acted during the conflict as a loyal opposition.

As adversaries they performed a function necessary to the survival of a democratic nation. In Mark Neely's words, "They helped prevent the U.S. Army from an increasing reliance on military justice for the sake of convenience."²¹

Medary found justification for his style of journalism in the eighteenth-century libertarian philosophy of the Founding Fathers. They perceived the press as "an agent of enlightenment and a gauge of liberty." But what Medary also found, through harsh experience, was what Alexander Hamilton had previously conceded. In *The Federalist Papers* Hamilton had observed that a constitutional press guarantee meant nothing, because "its security, whatever fine declarations may be inserted in any constitution respecting it, must altogether depend on public opinion."²²

The concept of a preeminent freedom of the press did not yet exist in the minds of most Americans, and the constitutional mandate believed by Medary to shield Peace Democrats had yet to be affirmed in the courts. The Civil War became a proving ground for the strength of the First Amendment. Overall, there existed among the U.S. population sympathy for free discussion of ideas. But many Americans felt that there were limits to how far an opposition editor—especially one whose dissenting opinions were powerfully persuasive—could go.

The reason for this curious state is that nineteenth-century federal courts maintained that press freedom cases fell under the jurisdiction of common law.²³ Not until 1931, in *Near v. Minnesota*, did the Supreme Court begin exercising federal authority over the dissident press. In his book about the nineteenth-century relationship between federal courts and the press, Timothy Gleason says that at that time journalists enjoyed only limited legal protection for freedom of expression. Federal judges based their conservative view of press freedom on English judge William Blackstone's eighteenth-century opinions. In *Blackstone's Commentaries*, composed in the late 1760s, the judge had written that free men had the right to say whatever they wanted. He felt the prohibition of varying viewpoints would "crush freedom of the press." At the same time, however, Blackstone noted, "If he [a journalist] publishes what is improper, mischievous, or illegal, he must take the consequences of his own temerity."²⁴

As dissident publishers quickly learned, the Civil War was not the safest time to be experimenting with the First Amendment. Inflammatory public pronouncements often provoked vicious retribution. But

many, like Medary, remained dedicated to their cause and were willing to face the consequences. The Constitution had addressed the issue of government press suppression, but it had not spoken to the menace of military leaders or community mob action against newspapers. Ultimately, such activities proved to be the main threat to the dissident press.

Civil War press suppression, according to the civil-rights historian Michael Linfield, constitutes one of the darkest chapters in America's past. He notes that U.S. history is littered with instances in which people who have spoken out against the majority course of action have suffered dire consequences. Linfield documents that it has been common for "newspapers that offended those in power [to be] banned, their presses seized, their articles censored." At no time in American history did this occur more regularly than during the Civil War.²⁵ Under these unpromising circumstances, Peace Democrats attempted to exercise a view of press freedom formulated over years of practice. In the context of the day, Medary's journalistic philosophy was not as far out of line as his opponents depicted it.

In the sixty years preceding the Civil War, the press in America had become not only a forum for party politics but a strong practitioner of independent, aggressive journalism. Most members of the press unilaterally opposed any attempts by government to control them. Peace Democrats simply practiced what other editors did as part of their calling to confront government decisions. After all, according to the Constitution, the press in America was free. But with the start of civil war, it quickly became apparent that it was not so free that it could disagree openly with the wartime government. The Northern majority condemned Medary's vision of press freedom as too Utopian for the times. With the future of the Republic in the balance, any opposition was construed as disloyalty. Unionists argued that Medary and other journalists needed to practice restraint and to support their government during this peculiar time—not question it. Peace Democrats feared, however, that such behavior would encourage permanent restraints on journalism.

How could Medary, in the *Crisis*, continue his highly visible dissent in a hostile environment for such an extended period? Given his newspaper's high visibility, it seems especially odd that while other, lesser opposition papers were censored, the *Crisis* was not. The reason appears to be that although Medary went to his grave believing the

Union had subverted press freedom, his crusade helped accomplish something important. By carefully walking the tightrope between outright treason and legitimate press dissent, he effectively helped Peace Democrat newspapers broaden the boundaries of acceptable press dissent in America.

By considering Medary an unrestrained member of the fourth estate—as opposed to a seditious antagonist—a consistent Democratic press philosophy can be found. By testing his ability to write dissenting opinion during wartime, and shrewdly justifying it, Medary helped extend the freedom of the press in the United States. From this perspective, his struggle constitutes an effort to define a freedom that journalists had yet to secure in fact.

The Civil War was an American tragedy. Yet history has shown repeatedly that in the aftermath of a destructive event positive developments can arise. Only with the perspective of time, however, is the veil lifted from some contributions. Medary was certainly a man of contradictions, but he was a journalist in contentious times. He was not simply a misguided figure, but a man who practiced a style of journalism that allowed him to help define the limits of press freedom.

One of the great goals of historians, according to David Donald, has been to find a "good villain" on whom to blame the Civil War. Different sources have held Radical Republicans, Copperhead Democrats, and slaveholding Southerners responsible for the war. Although all contributed, none can be indicted as single-handedly causing the conflict. We "must stop thinking," says Donald, "of the Civil War in terms of hero-versus-villains and apply realistic political analysis to the great struggle."²⁶ Medary was a political journalist who, although neglected and maligned, used the war to accomplish something of lasting value. In *Shaping the First Amendment*, John Stevens writes that without what he calls "True Believers," press freedom in America would not have achieved its current level. He points out that in any society most citizens are too busy getting along to concern themselves with ideologies. But there are always individuals who believe in their cause so passionately "that they seek out controversy . . . challenge community values. . . Courting martyrdom, daring society to try to crush them."²⁷

Medary was one of these.

2

"Unawed by the Influence of the Rich, the Great or Famous.. .the People Must Be Heard"

In 1825 a twenty-four-year-old schoolteacher, his wife, and his child moved to Clermont County, east of Cincinnati, Ohio, where "the friendly folk of the village helped him open a school."¹ The educator was Samuel Medary. That Medary first chose teaching as a profession is not surprising. Childhood friends recalled young Medary's passion for books. He had a great love of knowledge from an early age. As an outgrowth of his studies and childhood religious training, he formed a philosophy that rejected violence as a means for individuals to settle differences. He believed society's problems could be solved better if people relied on their intellects instead of resorting to savagery. In addition, he had a high regard for those who had set forth the concept of equal rights for all Americans regardless of their position in society. But most important, he admired the role the press played in ensuring that political leaders served the needs of those they represented. Medary gained this appreciation from his reading of Thomas Jefferson.

A few years after his arrival in Ohio, Medary's vision for America was realized by Andrew Jackson's election. Medary's lifelong pursuit became to instill in as many Americans as possible his faith in Jeffersonian and Jacksonian doctrine. Throughout his life, Medary's judgments were based on these two men's ideas of what America should become.

Each of Medary's mentors held some beliefs at odds with his. Jackson was no champion of press freedom, but he and Medary both shared a low regard for abolitionists. Jefferson condemned slavery

(yet kept slaves) and was an advocate of unrestrained journalism—except when the press criticized his own political actions. Medary died fighting for an independent press, but he never criticized Southern planters for perpetuating the institution of slavery, nor did he support the First Amendment rights of the abolitionist press in his editorials.

In the early nineteenth century, America was an immature democratic experiment. For all practical purposes, the "United States" existed only in principle. Many of the high-sounding concepts of the Founding Fathers that later became dogma were only words on paper, yet to be examined and proved.

Samuel Medary was the son of a tenant farmer in Montgomery County, Pennsylvania. This area north of Philadelphia was part of the largest Quaker community in the United States. His parents' ancestry was Welsh; their families came to the New World with William Penn in 1682. Medary's parents raised Samuel in the Society of Friends and began his education at the Quaker Free School in Montgomery Square. Later he attended an academy in Norristown, Pennsylvania, and shortly before his twentieth birthday he began teaching in a Quaker school in Montgomery County.

Although Medary later left the Friends, his Quaker upbringing had a major impact on the values he espoused throughout his life. Quaker practices during church meetings shaped his initial appreciation for the power of words. According to the communications researcher Peter Senge, Quakers have traditionally shared with others "only those thoughts that are compelling (and which cause the speaker to *Quake* from the need to speak them)." This practice led, according to Senge, to a deeper appreciation of profitable dialogue.² The editorials Medary later wrote exhibited this contemplative approach.

For the same reason, Quaker communities placed a high value on education as a part of their children's upbringing. Medary's teachers made certain that he learned to appreciate the pursuit of knowledge. According to Quaker philosophy, God "has given men intelligence to learn; [but] even the Children of Light [Quakers] must dig for wisdom as for silver."³ So at an early age Medary exhibited great interest in events that were shaping the new nation. William Chapin, a boyhood friend, recalled that Medary regularly and "eagerly went through the newspapers at Edward Jenkins' store." Chapin said Jenkins encouraged Medary in his love of writing and told him to submit some of his

pieces to the *Norristown Herald* for publication. At the age of sixteen Medary launched his newspaper career when David Sower, publisher of the *Herald* printed several of his articles and poems.⁴

Another event during Medary's boyhood significantly shaped his view of the world. Basic Quaker precepts urge advocacy of democratic government. This conviction is an outgrowth of the Friends' belief in universal grace. The doctrine states, "All persons are endowed with the ability freely granted by God to resist evil and do good if they are willing to exercise their ability." Quakers put this principle into practice by seeking to improve the world around them. They are perfectionists, people who believe they can and should always strive to make things better. When a Quaker disagrees with his neighbor, therefore, he determines to "protest, petition or exercise 'passive resistance.'"⁵ When he became a newspaper publisher in later years, Medary resolutely applied both of these principles. Through his editorials he continually sought to inspire readers to improve the world. In addition, he not only encouraged readers to practice nonviolent civil disobedience but also practiced it himself.

During the 1820s this application of passive resistance led to a divisive struggle among the Friends in Pennsylvania. Around 1800 many young Quakers became enthusiastic about the democratic revolution that was sweeping America, especially after Jefferson's election to the presidency. The conservative leadership of the Society of Friends had not supported the Revolutionary War because of its confrontational strategy. As a result, when young Quakers embraced Jeffersonian democracy, Quaker leaders in Philadelphia chided them for compromising their spiritual ideals and adopting secular thought. Most of the rebellious Quakers lived in rural Montgomery County, and they countered by charging that their urban leaders had become too authoritarian. Many Montgomery County Quakers gradually broke away from the Philadelphia assembly and, under the leadership of Friend Edward Hicks of New York, established a separate assembly. Years of conflict over the issue led to the Great Separation of 1827.⁶

Before 1827, however, many Quakers had already left Montgomery County because they had tired of the infighting. Samuel Medary and his family were convinced that putting Jefferson's vision into practice could make the United States a paragon of democracy, and the Medarys were among the families who moved during this period

of disagreement. In 1820 they relocated to Maryland and then, a year later, to Georgetown in the District of Columbia. During this time, Samuel continued to teach and to satisfy his interest in politics by spending time in nearby Washington. But in 1822, in response to his dissatisfaction with the increasingly urban, aristocratic East, he set out to become a member of agrarian America. In that year he moved near to present-day Roanoke, Virginia, to teach school.

Shortly thereafter he met English immigrant Eliza Scott, who was not a Quaker. His marriage to her a year later unequivocally completed his separation from the Society of Friends.⁷ This period also witnessed Medary's estrangement from other Quaker doctrines. During his two years in Virginia he witnessed plantation life and slavery at first hand. Unlike many Quakers who led the revolt against the "peculiar institution" in the years before the Civil War, Medary was not repulsed by black people's condition. Medary felt plantation owners were justified in keeping slaves because they had an economic need for such laborers, and blacks were intellectually incapable of managing themselves and their property. Landowners provided black families with a sheltered life—in Medary's eyes, a fair exchange for their labor. It was the first sign that this man, who held such high ideals for Americans, such as freedom to earn their own way through sweat and perseverance and the ownership of land, had space in his vision only for people of European descent. Although the nation changed a great deal during his life, Medary's views never altered.

Medary and his bride spent only two more years in Virginia. In 1825 he decided to pack up his family's belongings and with his wife and first child move west of the Allegheny Mountains. The primary motivation for their move was probably the cheap land the government was making available for settlement in the Middle West. How they arrived in the small village of Bethel, Ohio, just east of Cincinnati, seems more like chance, however. Apparently, while making their way along the Ohio River on a steamboat, a fellow passenger convinced them that southwestern Ohio was the best place for them to settle.⁸

The influx of settlers from the East and the South quickly made Ohio a dynamic state. Medary liked what he found there from the very beginning. In one of his early writings after arriving in Ohio, he referred to the state as the "Great West." A few years later he wrote, "It is plain that Nature has marked the country [Ohio] as the seat of a mighty empire."⁹ Ohio was unevenly developed at the time, but

Medary quickly began to play a role in helping the area grow politically and culturally. Education was his initial work, but it did not serve as his occupation for long. Though he called himself a farmer, and was a spokesman for farmers, Medary never actually became one. Lacking capital to buy land or open a business, Medary looked to public service as a way to supplement the meager income he made from teaching. Between 1825 and 1828 he began building a reputation as a civic leader by serving as a county surveyor, a school trustee, a school examiner, and eventually the county auditor. His involvement in these posts allowed him to demonstrate his ability to experienced politicians who could help him launch a career in state politics. In these positions he demonstrated speaking and writing abilities that proved his value to the Ohio Democratic Party.

In 1828 Medary realized the next step toward his goal to help determine the country's future when he switched to the career to which he devoted the rest of his life. He resigned his teaching post and with Thomas Morris began publishing the *Ohio Sun* in Bethel. The two men founded the newspaper solely to help elect Andrew Jackson president. For the first time Medary had a public forum for his ideological position. The motto on the banner of the *Sun* declared that the publishers were "unawed by the influence of the rich, the great or famous [and that] the people must be heard, and their rights protected."¹⁰ The novice newspapermen intended to serve Jackson, and what they viewed as the underrepresented public, by carrying out this motto through the pages of the new paper. As a result, Medary cast his lot with the most controversial man to occupy the White House between Thomas Jefferson and Abraham Lincoln. Many like Medary loved Jackson, but others hated him because of the controversy he precipitated. Throughout his career the same could have been said of Medary.

In his profession as a partisan journalist, Medary saw his future in terms of speaking for and defending the simple lifestyle of the inhabitants of the agricultural and mechanical Middle West. His experience in the East had led him to be cynical about affluent businessmen and politicians, so he felt an immediate kinship with his new friends in the Buckeye State. He thought it was his responsibility to help them become informed and, in the process, to guide them in making intelligent decisions as members of the electorate.

The two men made just enough money to keep the fledgling paper

going. In an effort to broaden their circulation, only a few months after its beginning they moved it to Batavia, also in Clermont County. In 1833 Medary and Morris changed the newspaper's name to the *Ohio Sun and Clermont Advertiser*. While Medary was no printer, he learned the craft from Morris, who was. Medary "edited the paper, helped the printer, and attended to the delivery and mailing."¹¹ From the very beginning, he also expressed strong opinions about the purpose of American journalism.

In an early *Sun* article Medary stated his perception of American journalists' obligation to readers. The United States, he said, had more newspapers and periodicals than any other nation in the world, and the number was increasing. Medary attributed this to the critical role newspapers played in the perpetuation of a dynamic society. "This speaks a strong language in favor of our free institutions," he wrote, and added, "A nation becomes happy and virtuous in the same degree that knowledge . . . [is] disseminated." Medary already embraced the view that newspaper editors were crucial to maintaining the vitality of a democratic government. He counseled readers that it was their responsibility to keep apprised of the affairs of government. Medary rhetorically posed the question, "The narrow-minded may ask, how are we to become informed of the circumstances of the yesterdays and today's?" In response he wrote, "An answer is at hand: read the newspapers."¹² These early editorials indicate that Medary gave serious thought to the influence of his occupation.

While Medary sought to become a source of information to the public, he also situated himself as a member of an early populist movement. He maintained his conviction that an enlightened citizenry was essential. By being informed, citizens could remind government leaders that it was their duty to serve all the people, social position notwithstanding. The editor's responsibility was to help the populace remain alert by keeping them informed. During the next four decades Medary involved himself more and more in the development of state and nation and the increasingly influential function of newspapers.

During the nineteenth century the word *intellectual* was used differently from the way it is today. In the 1800s society classified individuals as intellectuals because of their ability to analyze issues and speak or write about them in an extraordinary manner. Intellectuals achieved elite status through their publicly demonstrated eloquence

and educational skills, whether in print or on the podium.¹³ Medary qualified for intellectual status as his involvement in politics and journalism grew. He became a public speaker in demand around the state, and he took his leadership position seriously. Throughout his life Medary acknowledged that the distinction of being a highly visible public-spirited figure carried with it a heavy responsibility. He wrote, "I do not consider any man worthy of public position, or the name of statesman, who is not ready and willing . . . to express his views honestly, and without fear, on all that concerns the public welfare."¹⁴

But Medary also demonstrated in later years that he was not broad-minded enough in his thinking to grow intellectually or to change his opinions as new information became available. He did not, of course, attend college; his education was limited to his Quaker grammar schooling in Pennsylvania. Although more literate than the farmers and laborers he so esteemed, like them he was either unwilling or unable to entertain innovative political or social ideas. By the age of thirty Medary had formed a philosophical and political mind-set that altered little. His colleagues and readers always knew precisely where he stood because his position never changed.

The ability to alter and perfect one's thinking was an intellectual characteristic that served Abraham Lincoln well during the Civil War. Medary's mental rigidity was a liability during the same crisis, but his approach was not unusual among political thinkers in nineteenth-century America. According to the English clergyman Cornelius Cole, who traveled the country during the period, "Unflinching adherence to party is principle with them... and to forsake a party is regarded as an act of highest dishonor." For Medary, stubborn adherence to principle was the only conceivable position, though the people and the country around him were constantly changing. Vacillation was cowardice. The historian William Gienapp says, "New crises, different issues and fresh political faces normally had little impact on most voters' partisan loyalties" during this era.¹⁵

Medary's association with the dynamic Morris immediately provided an impetus for his career in both the publishing and the political arena. Although they later went separate ways politically, when they joined forces Morris and Medary were both ardent Democrats. As an established political practitioner, Morris served as Medary's early mentor. This was fortunate for Medary, because Morris was then probably the most influential public figure in southwestern Ohio.

From 1806 to 1833 Morris was a legislator in the Ohio General Assembly. He became nationally known as a lobbyist who wanted the seat of national government relocated from Washington to Cincinnati. From 1833 to 1839 he was a U.S. senator, and in that capacity he gained recognition for a senatorial confrontation with Henry Clay concerning slavery. The encounter endowed the Ohioan with the label "First Abolitionist Senator."¹⁶ Morris and Medary eventually parted company because of their differing views on slavery, but in these early years their Democratic fidelity encouraged Morris to help launch Medary's public career. In the late 1830s Morris forsook Ohio Democrats by joining the new Liberty Party, an early abolitionist group that attempted to end slavery as an American institution. In 1840 the party nominated Morris as a vice presidential candidate on the Liberty ticket with presidential hopeful James Birney, but they did not gain adequate support to challenge William Henry Harrison.

In initial issues of the *Sun*, Medary, as he did throughout his career, staked his dream for the nation's future on Jacksonian democracy. He promised that the *Sun* would "pursue a liberal and independent course, and . . . support General Jackson on 'principle alone.'"¹⁷ It was an exhilarating time for inexperienced political idealists like Medary. The Jackson presidential era brought to an apogee the democratic ideology of Thomas Jefferson that had so enthralled Medary.¹⁸ More pragmatically, Jackson's greatest contribution to American political life may have been that "he made people give a damn about party politics."¹⁹ Without a doubt, the new administration served as the turning point in Medary's life.

Though they were from different backgrounds, the alliance between Jackson and Medary was genuine. Jackson was the first president of the United States who was not a member of the well-to-do Eastern aristocracy. Both men were obsessed with seeing ordinary men's individual rights revered, and both were from the agricultural West. Over the next few years they came to know each other personally and formed a lasting relationship of support and mutual admiration. Medary viewed Old Hickory's election to the presidency as a victory for hard-working, simple-living people. Jackson had the full support of farmers and workingmen. For Medary, Jackson symbolized the romantic American success story of an ordinary man ascending from a log cabin to the White House.

Medary also admired Jackson because of their common

worldview. Both had grounded themselves in the doctrine of Jeffersonian republicanism, so Jackson's platform, which embraced similar conservative values, readily appealed to Medary. Jeffersonian standards followed the philosophy of the "Commonwealthman." Champions of this outlook "stressed civil liberties, individual autonomy and a white male democracy." They were perpetually on the lookout for signs of corruption by public officials, a too powerful centralized government, and deterioration of the privileges guaranteed to citizens in the Bill of Rights.²⁰

Philosophically, nineteenth-century Jeffersonians advocated an uncomplicated, agricultural society because they feared technology would erode their rural ideal, threatening civil liberties. They wanted to live unrestrained by government intervention on land that they owned and from which they earned a living. Before the Civil War, "the heart of American democracy was local autonomy."²¹ The trend toward an increasingly centralized, more influential federal government concerned them greatly. They were convinced the trend would generate corruption in public officials. So Jeffersonians insisted that the only way to maintain individual freedom was to sustain each American as an independent farmer or craftsman. They argued that such autonomy allowed each person to become more virtuous and permitted him to help realize the ideal republican community. To preserve this societal equilibrium, supporters felt they had to be continually wary of attempts by any level of government to upset the stability of the situation. They viewed government as a struggle between the rights of property owners and those of individuals. Jacksonian Democrats claimed that they were the last defenders of the balance between the haves and the have-nots in American society.²²

Jackson campaigned on the platform that the federal government represented concentrated power that he needed to restrict. In his mind, allowing the national government to grow unrestrained infringed on individuals' civil rights. The new president made a regular practice of appealing to public sentiment on national questions, over the heads of those in Congress. He chose to use his veto power more than all the preceding presidents combined.²³ As the nation's chief executive, Jackson believed it was his obligation to defend state sovereignty and restrict Congress's attempts to overstep its constitutional authority. He made a practice of reiterating his slogan, "Let the People Rule," as he quarreled with Congress and the Supreme Court

on issue after issue.²⁴ Medary believed Jackson's doctrine not only constituted the appropriate approach to national leadership but also represented a step toward the kind of society that America should be. This was a logical extension of Medary's interpretation of Jefferson.

For early nineteenth-century journalists Jefferson was the champion of an unrestrained press. During his lifetime he had repeatedly said the press was needed to make sure that government operated in the best interests of all men—not just a privileged few. Jefferson believed citizens needed to be aware of the events that affected their lives in order to safeguard themselves against the tendency of government to overstep its authority. He considered newspapers a necessary auxiliary to ensure the well-being of the political process.²⁵

Jefferson contended that if Americans were aware of what was going on, government need play only a small role in citizens' lives. He saw newspapers as the most expeditious means by which such knowledge could be delivered to the people. Shortly before his death in 1826, Jefferson wrote, "The press is the best instrument for enlightening the mind of man, and improving him as a rational, moral, and social being." Believing that the same tyranny that had characterized Europe could also arise in America, Jefferson said an informed citizenry provided the only means for ensuring that despotism did not also eventually ravage the United States. Jefferson had relied on the philosophy of John Milton in formulating his position on the role of newspapers. Jefferson wrote that even if errors appeared in newspapers or other forms of open public discussion, they served the purpose of keeping government representatives aware of the public's wishes. He added, "To punish these errors too severely would... suppress the only safeguard of public liberty." In 1787, in one of his most famous statements, he wrote, "Were it left to me to decide whether we should have a government without newspapers, or newspapers without government, I should not hesitate a moment to prefer the latter."²⁶

But Jefferson has also been described by Frank Mott as "the leading example in our political history of that uncomfortable phenomenon—the 'practical idealist.'"²⁷ This perspective could lead to a life of upheavals. Just as Jefferson fought in the eighteenth century to perpetuate free-speech ideals, so did Medary in the nineteenth century. In 1838, as political skirmishing became increasingly intense **between** the Whigs and the Democrats, a Washington-based Whig **newspaper**, the *National Intelligencer*, sought by attacking Jefferson's **political**

record to undermine the tenets on which the Democratic Party based its credibility. Coming to his defense, Medary responded that the former president's standing in history was "as safe as the 'fixed star from ... earth's noxious exaltations [*sic*]."⁹ ¹¹²⁸

Throughout his life, Medary cited Jackson as his guide in political matters, but it was Jefferson he consistently returned to for journalistic inspiration. Jefferson could have been dictating the words when Medary, early in his newspaper career, wrote of the importance of newspapers in a democracy: "Every individual should be acquainted ... with the affairs of our own nation." To keep Americans up to date, "Our NEWSPAPER EDITORS are ever ready to inform us of the passing events, as far as the nature of their works and the public patronage extend."¹¹²⁹

Nevertheless, Jackson played the more significant role in helping launch Medary's journalistic career as well as in making the press more vital in the American political process. His election signaled the beginning of the modern political system in this country. Old Hickory used newspapers to make the new approach to politics possible. By strategically planting political items in small country newspapers, Jackson was better able to influence prospective constituents. During his campaign his managers collected and circulated positive Democratic material in a way that made it appear to be nonpartisan reporting. This tactic obtained wider circulation of news items, giving the impression that Jackson's political strength was growing swiftly.³⁰ Medary willingly, if perhaps naively, aided Jackson's strategy—and benefited from it as well.

Although Medary continued to edit the *Sun* for eight years, he became increasingly involved in state and national politics. During his successful campaign for the presidency, Jackson recognized that the Ohioan was one of his most reliable and able supporters. The biggest issue during Jackson's first term concerned renewal of the charter for the Second National Bank of the United States. As a Jackson confidant, Medary dined with the president at the White House and supported Jackson's views on banking. For his part, Jackson acknowledged that he had based an important feature of his 1832 banking veto message on an editorial Medary had written.³¹ In the statement, the president adopted Medary's sentiments when he "paid respects to the farmers and mechanics, and laborers who were seeking protection against governmental injustices." He continued in the same vein when

he said, "Government should provide equal protection for both high and low, rich and poor."³²

Two years later, on the coattails of his association with Jackson and with the support of the local Democratic Party (headed by Morris), Medary began making a name for himself statewide. Clermont County supporters sent him to Columbus as their state representative in 1834, and in 1836 they elected him to the Ohio Senate. At the same time, Medary was strengthening his journalistic credentials. In 1834 he began publishing a bimonthly agricultural magazine, the *Ohio Farmer and Western Horticulturist*?³³ For the public and very Democratic Medary, the person who made his living from the soil deserved society's admiration. In the *Ohio Farmer* he wrote that his readers should esteem the "intelligent, independent, and happy farmer, who owned his land, [and] who was free from debt."³⁴

Medary's new venture was not an economic success, however. Its purpose was to enlighten Ohio's farmers about new agricultural methods and to provide them with information that would help them be financially successful. In hopes of making the magazine more viable, Medary relocated his office and family (which now included six children) from Batavia to Columbus in 1835. In March of that year he noted, "Issuing our paper hereafter from the centre of the state ... we hope to receive additional aid, not only in correspondents to our columns, but in patronage also."³⁵ Medary's wife was pleased with the move because her husband was spending more and more time in Columbus as a member of the General Assembly. But in 1836 Medary ceased publishing the *Ohio Farmer* because he could not make it pay.

Later that same year Medary's brother Jacob Medary Jr., who also had moved to Ohio from Pennsylvania, gave his brother an even greater opportunity to make a journalistic mark in the state. Jacob bought the Columbus-based *Ohio Monitor* and consolidated it with the *Columbus Hemisphere*. The *Monitor*, which had operated in Columbus as a Democratic organ since 1816, became the *Western Hemisphere* under the ownership of the Medary brothers. Samuel's legislative connections and the acquisition of the most influential Democratic journal in Columbus helped thrust him into a leadership role in the Ohio Democratic Party.

Columbus, which had been the state capital for only twenty years, was growing. Because of their proximity to water transport, Cincin-

nati, with 30,000 people, and Cleveland, with 15,000, were already more developed cities. In the capital, however, the population barely exceeded 5,000, and public buildings associated with the city's focus, such as the statehouse, the state office building, and the penitentiary, had only recently been built. Aiding Columbus's growth was its location on the National Pike, the only east-west route from Baltimore to the West. One traveler on the road observed that the capital city was "kept in a state of constant and lively animation by endless trains of wagons, horses and horsemen."³⁶

Within a year of his arrival in Columbus, Samuel exchanged his interest in the *Ohio Sun* for Jacob's share of the *Hemisphere*. The *Hemisphere's* new sole owner changed the name of the paper to the *Ohio Statesman*. Medary published the new four-page newspaper semiweekly, except when the legislature was in session; during those weeks the *Statesman* became a daily. Initially it was filled primarily with party announcements, advertising, and accounts of legislative proceedings, but as time passed Medary began to add personal commentaries. His aggressive style soon helped the paper become not only the most influential party publication in Ohio but the leading Democratic paper in the Middle West.³⁷ The front page carried the slogan "The People—That First and Last, and Best and Noblest, as well as Safest Security of a Virtuous Government."

Medary may have been a novice in his understanding of the political process, but he quickly adapted to the notoriety and rewards that came from his new occupation. Recent historians have observed that, in reality, "Jacksonian Democracy gave power not to Tom, Dick, and Harry but to the shrewd, ambitious, wealthy, and able politicians." Medary did not merit all these adjectives, but he quickly learned that he could influence others through his publications and make a respectable living courtesy of his political involvement. According to Edward Pessen, contrary to the Jacksonian party line, this was not the age of common but of uncommon men, who "controlled the major parties at every level."³⁸ Although not so democratic as Jacksonian politics wished to appear, the new political structure increased political participation to a level previously unknown in America. As a nonelite Westerner without established family or political ties, Medary made a great leap in influence during this period.

During the Jacksonian era the president utilized the so-called spoils, or patronage, system to the point that it became standard

government practice. Instead of employing experienced civil servants, Jackson rewarded those who had helped him secure the presidency with national or state appointments. Patronage had certainly existed previously, but Jackson for the first time publicly and unabashedly supported it. Because the rewards were great, competition for jobs was intense. Medary both prospered and suffered from his participation in the patronage system.

As a reward for his able party participation, Medary in 1837 began a ten-year term as Ohio's supervisor of public printing, while continuing as publisher of the *Statesman*. The Jacksonian friends Medary made while in the legislature facilitated his dual role. The combination of responsibilities put Medary in an enviable position, as he gained an intimate knowledge of politics in Ohio and in the nation. As state printer he had the authority to allocate high-paying state contracts to other printers. That Ohio's Democratic Party leaders, not to mention the president, had come to look on Medary favorably started paying off for him. His status guaranteed him a prominent position in the party. Over the next decade he became the best known antebellum Ohio Democrat.³⁹ Mott notes that Medary, as editor of the *Statesman*, became "almost a party dictator in Ohio."⁴⁰

Medary's privileged position was not uncommon for political publishers under Jackson. His state printing contracts meant that he was regularly paid for the publication of state legislative proceedings, laws, and post office documents. These jobs constituted a substantial source of income, and between his ownership of the *Statesman* and the printing contracts, Medary became both more influential and more prosperous. Because newspapers in this era were the only widespread form of mass communication, he earned himself membership in the Democratic Party elite. An editor in this era was "lord and master of a considerable group of loyal disciples."⁴¹

Outside Washington, parties depended on editors to keep the political machines running smoothly. As a result, the *Statesman* and other party papers were blatantly partisan. To be otherwise would have meant loss of party support in the legislature and of future printing contracts. The public was accustomed to the arrangement, and they looked to their party's organ for the preferred slant on party affairs and all matters of public concern. Newspapers kept the continually shifting factions within the party together. This was especially

true of the popular *Statesman*, which had a considerable readership and influenced patronage decisions around the state.⁴²

According to Gienapp, political leaders were learning quickly that control of public opinion through newspapers—the only major means of communication—allowed them to "articulate issues, structure partisan debate, and screen information." The publisher of the *Toledo Blade* wrote that the political press went beyond simply supplying the nation with information. Newspapers determined people's opinions as well. The *Blade* commentary concluded that a partisan newspaper "furnishes not only the materials upon which our conclusions are founded, but supplies the conclusions themselves, cut and dried, coined, stamped and polished. It... decides for us."⁴³

Between 1830 and 1860, an editor's dual position as party propagandist and party leader allowed him to coordinate not only information but party policy making as well. Because state lawmakers did not make much money, few served more than one or two terms. Medary was the one who provided continuity and party leadership for Ohio Democrats with his uninterrupted presence in Columbus. The journalism historian Gerald Baldasty says the state editor's intermediary position permitted him to function "as a reliable spokesman for the local, state and national divisions of the party. Indeed, the party faithful demanded that newspapers serve such a role." Medary's influence was crucial because "newspapers were really the sole practical medium for interstate and even intrastate exchange [of information] on a large scale."⁴⁴ It followed, therefore, that publishers were the vital link in making this period politically vibrant.

Ohio during the 1830s was the scene of bitter partisan infighting. Each party's organization played an important intermediary role in interpreting national policy. Otherwise isolated Ohioans looked to state party leaders to explain the national party stance and to reconcile local concerns with the national agenda. Beginning in 1832 the National Republican Party, soon to be known as the Whig Party, was formed as a coalition opposing Jackson's policies. The Whigs' hatred of Jackson served—in place of a positive program—to unite them. The Whig Party, to which Abraham Lincoln belonged for most of his life, decried Jackson's commandeering approach to executive authority. It branded Jackson "a detestable, ignorant, reckless, vain and malignant tyrant."⁴⁵ Alarmed by his leveling philosophy, wealthy

Southern plantation owners joined politicians like Henry Clay and Daniel Webster, who favored an expanded role for both state and federal government.

A large number of Northern industrial owners also aligned themselves with the Whigs because they favored a tariff on imports to protect their interests. South Carolina, on the contrary, disputed the federal government's authority to dictate such measures to the states. This sentiment led to the 1832 Nullification Crisis, in which South Carolina called into question the president's authority to impose national policy (in this case, a protective tariff) on the states. The white minority in that state saw the action as a distressing first sign of legislation to terminate slavery.

Many Ohioans favored a tariff because the federal government had earmarked the revenue for internal state improvements, such as roadworks. Although Jackson vacillated on the issue, Medary staunchly opposed the tariff because of his states'-rights philosophy. By the 1840s the Whigs had also proposed a federally controlled banking system. They believed it would guarantee a sound national currency and a supply of credit adequate to meet the needs of the expanding Middle West and of the East, which was progressing industrially. The party gained additional influential supporters during this period, including the editor of the *New York Tribune*, Horace Greeley.

During the Nullification Crisis Medary established a contradictory pattern that he followed throughout his newspaper career. When one of his acknowledged icons (Jackson in this case) drifted from a previously stated conviction, Medary did not openly criticize him. With his reliance on federal authority over states' rights during the Nullification Crisis, Jackson departed from his customary state's-rights position. But Medary refused to acknowledge that he was shocked by the change. He could not believe his state's-rights champion would propose such federal action. Medary exercised the same complaisance when Morris ran for the White House on the Liberty ticket; in later years, with party allegiances continually shifting, Medary repeatedly hewed to this inconsistent position. Although his political friends often found it expeditious to change their minds in the face of new realities, Medary suffered from a paralyzing inability either to change himself or to criticize his friends' inconsistencies.

With major urban centers, a large immigrant population, and

many residents "sympathetic to the slave South, Ohio was in many ways a microcosm of all free states."⁴⁶ As the state grew, its economy boomed. In several years between 1839 and 1849 Ohio ranked either first or second in the nation in corn and wheat production.⁴⁷ The combination of good farmland and the exploding population fed this growth. But while agricultural output flourished, surpluses drove down prices, and new markets were needed. The Ohio-Erie Canal provided the outlets that Ohio farmers needed. New York, Philadelphia, Boston, and Baltimore, as well as New Orleans, opened up new options for Ohio farmers and dairy producers. Henry Hubbard estimates that in 1845 at least half the inhabitants of the Middle West (more than two million) depended on Southern routes to market their produce. He refers to this time as "the Golden Age of Ohio-Mississippi River trade and steamboating."⁴⁸ The new trade avenues rapidly changed Ohio's economy. From being an isolated, self-sustaining economic region, it became a state that increasingly depended on market decisions made in distant places, such as New York or the South.⁴⁹

Growth also brought financial problems for Ohioans, however. Land speculation, inflation, increased state debt, and widespread distribution of shinplasters (counterfeit money circulated by illegitimate banks) occurred at the same time as an Eastern depression that began in 1837. Ohio's debt resulted from the state's financing of the canal system. But because of bank failures and counterfeiting, the public also lost faith in paper money. Businesses went bankrupt and banks foreclosed mortgages. Employers reduced workers' wages; some laborers lost their jobs. Farm families survived by eating only what they could raise themselves. Many in Ohio felt that the new financial and political order had betrayed them.

The Democrats and Whigs in the state apportioned blame for the collapse strictly along party lines. Whigs favored continuing state banks and blamed Jackson's veto of the national bank for the economic panic. Democrats hastened a decline in their influence by disagreeing among themselves about banking. Consistent with his support of Jackson on the national bank, Medary and many other Democrats opposed the establishment of state banks. As a "Hard Money" advocate, he distrusted banks and blamed them for the difficult times. Hard Money Democrats regarded the accumulation of great sums of money in banks as the greatest threat to America since George III. They argued that "banks have been the known enemies of

our republican government from the beginning."⁵⁰ In the *Statesman* Medary editorialized, "A farmer should shun the doors of a bank as he would the approach of the plague."⁵¹ The "Soft Money" Democrats, however, favored a state banking system. The party remained split over this issue throughout the 1840s.

Between 1830 and 1860 partisan politics occupied a much more important position in American society than it does today. By the 1840s, both parties were using banners, badges, and mass rallies to market their candidates to the public.⁵² For the average citizen, the political party he supported represented his deepest personal values and expectations. People clung tenaciously to party doctrine "for ideological, social and symbolic reasons." Voters generally construed reality in partisan terms. They followed their party's instructions in each election regardless of the merit of other courses of action and of other politicians. Voter turnout had never been higher.⁵³

During this era the Whig and Democratic organizations served as the transmitters and controllers of the struggle for political power in the United States. Although individual factions within these parties did not always agree on all issues, there were some consistent trends. Democrats called themselves the "let-alone party," and they labeled Whigs the "meddling party." True to their Jeffersonian roots, Democrats believed in a laissez-faire government that was "light and simple." They also depicted the difference between the two parties as one of class choice. Democrats stated that they were the defenders of the common, laboring Middle Westerners and Southerners, while the Whigs represented Eastern, aristocratic Americans. For their part, the Whigs acknowledged that they thought every man had the right to seek his fortune and defend his property. But contrary to Democratic judgment, they did not think it was government's job to "protect the working man from his employer or the farmer from the merchant."⁵⁴

Democrats called the Whigs "Federalists." Whigs controlled the Ohio General Assembly during much of this period, largely because the Democratic Party had diffused its power by squabbling over banking. As a result, the Democrats were able to charge Whigs with responsibility for the state's economic difficulties. The Democrats insisted that a few wealthy, powerful men controlled the Whig Party and that they cared little about the plight of the laboring classes. Medary was a leader in this campaign of name-calling and accusation. In the *Statesman* he labeled the late 1830s "a dark hour of the democ-

racy." He claimed that "the combined power of the banks and federalism was publicly and insolently bidding defiance to the laws of the country." According to him, the only way to overcome these developments was for "[Martin] Van Buren . . . and the *Pure Democratic Principles of a Jefferson and a Jackson*... [to] be our *War Cry*."⁵⁵

Jackson's presidency had been a watershed period for the populist views of the Democrats. For them, his 1832 reelection had represented a vindication of their vision for America. That election was the first in American history in which national conventions—instead of state legislatures or caucuses—chose presidential candidates. In line with this development, the Democrats favored a shift in the established selection procedure for state judges and governors from state legislatures to popular vote. The Whigs opposed this, however, and the change did not occur for several years. This point of view also represented the Whig stance on the question of suffrage. Although the Whigs favored extending voting privileges, they hedged on allowing everyone to vote on all political offices. They based this view on their distrust of "the city rabble, the backwoodsmen, and the illiterates in general."⁵⁶ On the other hand, the Democrats felt that all men, except those with black skin, should be allowed to decide who won political office. Because Jackson's followers ardently opposed the extension of suffrage to blacks, the Whigs, even if somewhat less than enthusiastically, supported it.

Slavery persisted as the United States expanded geographically and political parties matured during the first half of the nineteenth century. It was the great contradiction in a country that supposedly prided itself on adherence to the doctrine of life, liberty, and the pursuit of property for everyone. During the first three decades of the new century politicians attempted to eradicate slavery from party debate, but as the country expanded westward the issue only intensified. With the acquisition of each new territory, the question of whether the region would allow slavery threatened its admission into the United States. The problem worsened during the 1830s because of the states' sovereignty issue (nullification) and the beginning of a religiously inspired reform movement.

During the 1830s a perfectionist revival spread across the country. Reformers sought to eradicate several "sins" from America, including the sale of liquor, "frivolous" activities on Sundays (e.g., mail delivery), and inadequate treatment of the poor, the insane, and the blind.

Leaders of the movement opposed war as a means of settling disputes and deplored the continuation of slavery. Journalists took the lead in the heated debate. William Lloyd Garrison heightened the issue of slavery in the public's consciousness in 1831 when he began publishing the *Liberator* in Boston. The antislavery paper signaled the beginning of a passionate era of abolitionist sentiment.⁵⁷ Other newspapers followed suit, and the abolitionist press began to play a major role in arousing public indignation about slavery.

Because of their sentiments concerning individual and states' rights, and the abolitionists' alignment with the Whig Party (and later the Republican Party), Democrats opposed the antislavery movement. Once the parties had established their positions on slavery in the 1830s, they consistently upheld them for the next three decades. The argument over slavery not only dictated parties' political positions but determined each state's loyalties during the Civil War. Abolition progressively broadened the chasm that split the country, not only between North and South but within states and political parties.

Throughout this era, however, abolition was not merely a question of whether one supported or opposed slavery.⁵⁸ Medary, whose perspective was typical of the Democratic conviction, saw abolition as a constitutional question. He did not think the North, as represented by the federal government against the South, had the authority to impose abolition on slave states or territories. And though many disagreed with him and opposed slavery's continuation, most Ohioans shared his opinion that, free or slave, blacks were not the equal of whites. This view was typical of Northerners; in Ohio it was characteristic of sentiments expressed since the state's earliest days.

Although slavery had never been legal in Ohio, state legislators passed a series of Black Laws before 1810. Many of them remained in force until after the Civil War. They required that blacks provide documentation of their freedom plus \$500 to prove they could support themselves before they could settle in the state. The laws denied them other rights that whites held, including suffrage, militia service, and jury duty. In 1827 the *Ohio State Journal* (later a Whig/Republican paper) summed up the sentiments of most Ohioans when it observed, "Negroes ... [are] an idle, intemperate and dissolute race.... We will never consent to see the two races placed on an equal footing."⁵⁹

As the years progressed, however, blacks slowly gained more nearly equal rights. In 1842 an Ohio Supreme Court decision allowed

mulatto men to vote, and in 1849, when Free Soilers achieved the upper hand in the legislature, additional Black Laws were repealed. These moves represented aspects of the abolitionist struggle in Ohio during these years. Perhaps the most obvious, though supposedly hidden, manifestation of Ohio's involvement in the cause was the Underground Railroad. There is evidence that it was operating in Ohio as early as 1815.

Levi Coffin, perhaps the best known "conductor" on the railroad, was a Cincinnati Quaker who claimed to have moved hundreds of blacks along the rails. Eventually, more stations on the railroad existed in Ohio than in any other state, and the Buckeye State came to be known as the "trunk line" of the passage north to Canada. Many Presbyterians, Methodists, and Congregationalists were involved in these activities. A Presbyterian minister, the Reverend John Rankin, kept a lantern shining in the window of his house in Ripley, on the Ohio River, as a beacon for slaves escaping across the river. Rankin was called the "unofficial president of the underground railroad." Nearly every Ohio town boasted at least one house where fugitive slaves stayed before moving each night.

During these years the antislavery campaign gained many notable converts. Among them was a Cincinnati attorney, Salmon Chase, who would go on to become Ohio's governor, a member of Lincoln's cabinet, and a Supreme Court justice. Beginning in the late 1830s, he defended fugitive slaves against court-imposed attempts to return them to the South. Chase argued that despite the fact that slavery was legal in some states, "The federal government must divorce itself entirely from any responsibility to defend and protect the institution."⁶⁰

Nonetheless, in 1850 the federal Fugitive Slave Act aroused Ohio abolitionists to a new level of wrath when it made interference with the capture and return of fugitive slaves to the South a federal offense. In 1852 Harriet Beecher Stowe, whose father was the Reverend Lyman Beecher, head of the Lane Seminary in Cincinnati, published *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. The book was cited as converting more people to the antislavery crusade "than all the earnest preachers and lectures combined." After the passage of the Fugitive Slave Act, Oberlin and Western Reserve Colleges became hotbeds of abolitionist activity. Public fights between antislavery groups and their opponents became commonplace during public rallies.⁶¹

For the most part, Medary remained unwavering in his opposition

to abolition agitation. He continued to maintain that slavery was not a moral issue. Consistent with the opinions about blacks that he had formed years earlier, he did not devote a great deal of space in the *Statesman* to the controversy and became agitated when Whigs used it for propaganda purposes. Prominent by its absence from his writings was acknowledgment of the existence of the Underground Railroad, although all Ohioans were aware of it. There was little he could do to alter the movement that was overrunning Ohio, but he remained vociferous in his opposition to the violence it caused. He blamed abolitionists for inciting the public to lawbreaking and maintained that the Constitution allowed slavery in those states that chose to practice it. The involvement of clergy especially infuriated him because he believed they should not involve themselves in political matters. He said Ohioans had no business sticking their noses where they didn't belong because they were only encouraging sectional animosities. After 1850 continuing abolitionist activities in Ohio heightened slaveholding states' distrust of the North and drove a deeper wedge between the two sections of the country.

As the controversy grew more intense, Medary wrote that the "abstract question" of abolition should be a matter of discussion for "philanthropic societies," not political parties. In pragmatic, economic terms, he opposed the relaxation of Black Laws in Ohio. He wrote that "turning the whole slave population of the South loose upon us would bring total destruction to the free white laborers and reputable mechanics." In the same article, he prophetically noted that the slavery issue "is likely to swallow up everything else in the party squabble of the future."⁶²

The impassioned activities of both abolitionists and antiabolitionists appalled Medary. But contrary to his later Civil War pleas for his own press freedom, he remained silent on the First Amendment rights of abolitionist journalists. Always the politician first and foremost, his partisanship prevented him from challenging the abridgment of abolitionist editors' rights, despite the fact that between 1835 and 1845 antiabolitionists used force to silence many abolitionists and almost hanged Garrison when they led him through the streets of Boston with a rope around his neck. Two years later they did kill abolitionist editor Elijah Lovejoy in Alton, Illinois, after he ignored repeated warnings from foes. Despite their differing convictions, Lovejoy's murder horrified Medary. Medary vehemently **opposed**

senseless violence and killing. He maintained that discussion was the only way to bring opponents to solve problems. In the November 18, 1837, issue of the *Statesman*, he wrote, "We have delayed our paper for the purpose of inserting the following statement of the tragical occurrence that took place [in Illinois]." He reprinted a letter written by Alton mayor John Krum that detailed Love joy's murder. Medary did not as a rule print stories that dealt with antiabolitionist activities, but he did oppose retribution throughout his life. He did not comment further on the incident, other than to write, "This statement [Krum's] precludes all remarks from us, except as to the correctness of the statement."⁶³

Another reason for Medary's opposition to abolition was his faithful support for Jackson. During the 1830s Jackson's and Van Buren's postmasters allowed Southerners to rifle through the mail and burn abolitionist literature. Jackson, a longtime slave owner and trader himself, did not question the institution of slavery. As early as Jackson's first inaugural speech, he made it clear that his egalitarian sentiments were limited to white men. In his first message he failed to include blacks, women, and Indians as beneficiaries of the new democratic age.⁶⁴

Jackson said that abolitionist material was "wicked and unconstitutional," and he demanded that Congress pass a law to stop its circulation. When its members did not do so, the president's postmaster, Amos Kendall, authorized Southern postmasters to burn abolitionist materials they found in the mail, "so Southern eyes were spared the painful sight of printed antislavery material."⁶⁵ In 1836 Congress passed a gag rule, which continued in force until 1844, to stop the large number of petitions abolitionists were sending to the House of Representatives.⁶⁶ Medary did not editorialize against these infractions of the First Amendment. During his years of publishing the *Statesman*, he did not write a single column about freedom of the press. His opposition to abolition, his support of the official Democratic stance, and his own ability to publish freely made him feel no need to comment on the right of journalists to dissent. Only when such restrictions touched him personally during the Civil War did he refer to the First Amendment to defend his practice.

As Jackson left office, the president's departing remarks, in which he recalled democratic idealism, no doubt encouraged Medary to continue in his chosen profession. "Eternal vigilance by the people is the

price of liberty," Jackson warned, "for providence has ... chosen you as the guardians of freedom, to preserve it for the benefit of the human race." Medary increasingly featured himself as a public guardian with a platform from which he could help keep his readers attentive.⁶⁷

As the 1830s came to a close, Whigs began defending themselves against the Democrats' egalitarian posturing by declaring that, according to the Whig definition, "all men were laborers." Senator Daniel Webster, an ardent Whig spokesman, "accused the Democrats of seeking to 'inflame the poor against the rich.'" In opposition to Democratic statements that less government was better, the Whigs maintained that their plan for equality centered on improved education for all and on more—not less—"benign" state and federal legislation.⁶⁸ Ohio Whigs countered Democrats during the 1840 presidential campaign by embracing for their own purposes the traditional Democratic rhetoric of the common man.

The Whigs depicted their Ohio candidate, William "Old Tippecanoe" Henry Harrison, as a "log cabin and hard cider" president. They called him a man of the people. The Whigs branded the Democratic incumbent Martin "Van Ruin."⁶⁹ This modified Whig offensive infuriated Medary. In a hostile editorial he charged that "such a systematic scheme of falsehood, from the highest to the lowest Federal in the state was never before witnessed."⁷⁰ Like abolitionist publishers, however, Medary soon became aware of how seriously some opponents took his sentiments.

During the race Columbus Whigs asked John Bear of Zanesville, Ohio, to rebut publicly Medary's repeated and widely circulated attacks on Whig candidates. At a downtown Columbus rally supporting Harrison's candidacy, the "Buckeye Blacksmith," as the Whigs called Bear, spoke to the crowd in a downpour. Appearing in blacksmith's garb, with his face smudged as if he had just come from his forge, Bear carried a set of tongs to the platform. Laying a copy of the *Statesman* on the stage in front of him, Bear told the crowd he had dressed in such an outfit because he "had a very dirty job to do." He picked up the paper with the tongs and read a short section, which he labeled a "pack of lies." He then dropped the paper to the platform and wiped his boots on it. He concluded by calling for a basin of soap and water and washed the tongs in it. Bear's dramatic display brought thunderous applause from the crowd.⁷¹

But all criticism of Medary was not so harmless. His friends warned him that the campaign was becoming too caustic and he should be careful of the fervor of his sentiments. But the warning did not stop him, and one evening as he left the *Statesman's* office a group of militant Whigs attacked him. Medary was not badly injured, and the incident succeeded only in motivating him to work harder to discredit the Whigs. Taking up the fight again soon after the incident, he said such political shenanigans threatened not only him but all Ohioans. He rhetorically asked his readers, "Will you take warning from the dangers that surround you? ... BRIBERY, MONEY, and false ... doctrines are to deceive you and sack the citadel of your liberties."⁷² But his efforts on behalf of the Democratic party were unsuccessful. Harrison won the presidency; the Whigs carried the Ohio legislature as well. The Jacksonian-Democratic coalition declined in influence.

For Medary, 1840 was a difficult year. With the Whigs in control of the legislature, further retribution was forthcoming. The General Assembly appointed a special senate committee to investigate his state printing position. Labeling him "Sam the Seizer," the Whigs wanted to find out why he had made so much more money than the previous state printer. In addition, they charged that Medary had used too much paper from each ream he had bought for the state for personal use at the *Statesman*.

Despite their dislike for Medary, the Whig committee members found him not guilty. On the issue of paper usage, they found that Medary's appropriation of the outside quires of reams of paper had been a common practice of state printers for many years. They also discovered that state printers had habitually used a particular portion of each ream for incidental purposes around their shops. They had done this because the paper was not "suitable for public printing, nor for any other printing of an ordinary character." Concerning Medary's remuneration, the committee found that the state had paid him more because he had provided more services than the previous printer. In fact, instead of giving him too much money, Ohio had probably underpaid him for his work.⁷³

The preelection violence against Medary and the subsequent Whig investigation of his patronage benefits were only the first in a long series of public confrontations. His heightened visibility, his individualistic editorial style, and his political influence had made Medary

more influential and bolder.⁷⁴ But his prominence also made him a target. By his reaction to the two 1840 incidents, however, Medary demonstrated that political opponents would not easily dissuade him from his mission. He saw it as his responsibility not only to report on but to attempt to influence the issues of the day. He was certain his point of view on all the issues facing the nation was the right one. In the years to come, he continued to act on this belief.

3

*"When Freedom Is Permitted to ... Violate
Laws and Constitutions ... It Becomes a
Curse Rather Than a Blessing"*

During the 1840s and 1850s Samuel Medary increasingly found himself battling not only opposition party members but elements within the Democratic Party as well. One incident illustrates the sometimes ridiculous extremes party infighting could reach. It involved a controversy about who should receive credit for originating the popular slogan "Fifty-Four Forty or Fight." The saying became a rallying cry for Americans during the boundary dispute between the United States and England over the Oregon territory.

Some of Medary's colleagues claimed that "Fifty-Four Forty or Fight" were his words, which was believable because of his commentaries in the *Ohio Statesman*. But others, such as U.S. Senator William "Fog Horn" Allen of Chillicothe, also claimed to have originated the phrase. Allen, a bombastic orator and the publisher of the *Chillicothe Advertiser*, fervently advocated the United States' annexation of Oregon. Herman Melville once wrote of Allen that in the halls of Congress he was notable for "roaring like a wild beast." Allen was a "fanatic on the subject of fifty four," and, as a senator, occupied an even more influential forum than Medary. Medary, on the other hand, was more capable than Allen of grasping the essence of a controversy and summarizing it in print. There is no conclusive evidence, however, that either man, or any of the others who claimed credit, single-handedly originated the phrase. It is more likely that it became popular through common usage.¹

Allen and Medary did not confront each other about which should

receive credit for the slogan, although both men's supporters argued long and hard in an attempt to prove that one or the other was the originator of "Fifty-Four Forty or Fight." But the protracted debate, silly as it might seem, symbolized more than who should receive credit for a slogan; it signified the beginning of a new era in Ohio politics during the 1840s. Medary and Allen became associated with two estranged factions within the Democratic Party. Neither man betrayed his Jacksonian ideals, but their increasingly antagonistic stands on sensitive issues drove a wedge between them. Eventually the Democrats' inability to reach consensus served as an added impetus for the Civil War. If the two factions had worked together, they might have been better able to prevent the violence that erupted around the country.²

Because of his participation in both politics and journalism, between 1840 and 1860 Medary was involved in perhaps the most active political period in U.S. history. The two decades witnessed the testing of the values he had claimed from his early years. In some cases political infighting and an evolving society led him astray from his standards and made him lose faith in his vision. As the country headed toward civil war, he was by no means alone in his reaction to events. He filtered his choices through a Democratic sieve, so they were not always popular. At times, his opinion reflected personal aspirations or allegiances; this was typical of the era. The world of the 1840s and 1850s was a mix of the old and the new. It was changing quickly, but painfully. The events Medary participated in and the decisions he made foreshadowed the stance he took between 1861 and 1864. Although he found compromise repulsive, during this period he used it to attain personal goals and realize political aspirations.³

Consistent with his Jacksonian beliefs, Medary was a strong proponent of the American expansionist doctrine of Manifest Destiny. He had used the phrase in 1834 in the *Ohio Farmer and Western Horticulturist*. We do not know who coined the term, but Medary employed it in his writing before many other publishers. He promoted land acquisition wherever possible, regardless of the cost, and his stand on Oregon was consistent with his philosophy. In 1843 he called Canada a "pest" and helped convene an organization that advocated annexation of Oregon. In July of that year he was the prime mover behind a bipartisan (although Democratically controlled) convention. Representatives from six Mississippi Valley states met in Cin-

cinnati to draft a public statement on the Oregon question. The delegates chose Medary as their vice president. They then passed a resolution which said America should not again allow England to desecrate North American soil with the "foot of monarchy." During the meeting Medary wrote that there was no doubt that Oregon belonged to the United States: "Our title is clear and unquestionable."⁴

Although many Ohioans were moving west to find rich new farmland, Medary and others had another motivation for favoring annexation of Oregon. Many Eastern and Middle Western businessmen wanted to acquire the territory as much for commerce as for settlement. They believed that use of Oregon's harbors would stimulate U.S. trade with China. Medary probably came closer to agreeing with the Whigs on this issue than on any other, but only because his interest in it was economic, not political. Oregon's prospects attracted Medary because he had recently begun investing in the fledgling railroad industry. In 1845 wealthy New York importer Asa Whitney attempted to interest influential Americans in a plan to connect the Middle West with the West Coast by rail. Although the idea captured the public's imagination, Whitney was unable to gain support from Congress for the scheme.⁵

Medary carried his Oregon agenda with him to the Democratic National Convention in Baltimore in 1844. As chairman of the Ohio delegation, he wanted to see acquisition of the territory made a plank in the party platform. Medary also took along a letter from Andrew Jackson supporting James Polk for the presidency. Jackson had asked Medary to read the letter if the delegates became deadlocked, as Jackson expected, over the nomination. Medary and the Ohio delegation initially pledged themselves to Martin Van Buren, but it soon became apparent that Van Buren's supporters could not marshal the necessary two-thirds majority to nominate him. He hurt his candidacy by refusing to take a firm stand on the question of appropriating the Texas and Oregon territories. Both Whig candidate Henry Clay and Van Buren expected to win their parties' nominations, and they had agreed before their parties' conventions not to make annexation a campaign issue. In their opinion this seemed the shrewdest maneuver, as the acquisition of Texas and Oregon had become entangled with the slavery issue. The stance worked for Clay, and the Whigs did not take a definitive stand on annexation or slavery in 1844.⁶ But many Democrats could not tolerate the platform's cold caution on either

issue. Southern Democrats opposed expansionism because of the new free areas it would bring into the Union. Others, including Salmon Chase, represented a faction that wanted the party to add opposition to the continuation of slavery to its platform.

Medary was irate that his own state's party was not presenting a unified front, especially when some of the defectors were abolitionists. In an effort to save Van Buren's candidacy, he attempted to suspend the two-thirds vote "manacle," as he called it, that was necessary to secure the nomination. He insisted that if the convention would "give us a candidate by a bare majority—we will give you a splendid fight."⁷ Medary helped head off a move to put forward Michigan party leader Lewis Cass as the nominee. He then rose, and in what became known as the rowdiest political gathering of the period, read Jackson's letter. In it Jackson appealed to the delegates to support Polk and referred to him as "young hickory." The letter helped, but in fact Polk won the nomination because he supported expansionism. Afterward one delegate wrote Van Buren that, because of Medary's role at the convention, he "is the most firm, true, and energetic man in the whole world."⁸ Medary's early and highly visible support of Van Buren hurt his fortunes with the new administration, however, when Polk became the first dark horse to win the presidency.

After the nomination, Medary, always a loyal party man, campaigned for Polk in Ohio, but the majority of Buckeye State voters chose Clay. Medary's difficult relationship with Polk exemplified a tumultuous period in the Democratic Party. Twenty years after the divisive Democratic convention, political observers maintained that the infighting of 1844 was the beginning of the "ultimate downfall of the Democratic party." A former Democrat and member of Lincoln's wartime cabinet, Gideon Welles, said that after Van Buren's defeat, "Confidence and united zeal never again prevailed and parties subsequently took a sectional or personal character."⁹

Medary hoped campaigning for Polk would impress the new administration enough to earn him the U.S. postmaster generalship, but he was wrong. Although the Democrats were victorious nationally, the Whigs had won in Ohio, and state patronage positions, including Medary's job as state printer, went to Whig appointees. In his self-appointed role of Democratic Party leader in Ohio, Medary pointedly wrote Polk that "fraud, forgery and the cursed Abolitionists ruined us,"¹⁰ but Polk was unsympathetic.

During this time Medary attempted the impossible task of soothing the factions within the Ohio Democratic Party. He saw his influence and notoriety slipping away, and he sought to regain the good graces of the new administration. He had publicly denied any interest in the federal postmaster's job. He said he wished for nothing "except that [which] is for the good of the nation generally." Polk's rebuff, however, signaled a downturn in fortunes and a depressing personal period for Medary. Several Ohio political allies attempted to help him. Nearly every Democratic state senator signed a petition urging Polk to appoint Medary, and Allen led an Ohio delegation of antibankers in a personal appeal to the president. But Polk would not be moved. A few months afterward, in an attempt to pacify Medary's followers and rebuild his own support in the Ohio wing of the Democratic Party, Polk offered Medary the job of Columbus postmaster. Medary was too proud to be appeased so easily. Hurt and despondent, he charged, "Polk's administration will be worse than Tyler's." Because of the bickering over Medary and the postmaster's position, Polk refused to name any Ohioans to posts in his cabinet.¹¹

Medary became angrier and more melancholy after the incident. The whole sorry affair seemed to deflate his idealism. He would continue to be a public figure, but the belief that his Jeffersonian-style nation could be realized by the involvement of the common man in a benevolent political system had been badly bruised. For the time being he became vindictive and sought to improve only his personal position.

In this mood he became convinced that the Democratic Party and the country had suffered a decline in fortunes, and that certain elements of the party were determined to destroy both his vision and his career. In a January 1845 issue of the *Statesman*, he set out to avenge himself on the Ohio Democrats who, he perceived, had turned Polk against him during the campaign. Medary deliberately and inaccurately related that, before the election at the Columbus Jackson Day dinner, Democrats had offered toasts in support of Cass. He further wrote that the Democratic state convention had unanimously supported Cass. Fellow Ohio Democrat Edwin Stanton went to the *Statesman* to challenge these accounts, but Medary feigned ignorance, blaming one of his employees for the errors. Medary was lying, but he was able to mollify Stanton with his explanation. Stanton wrote a friend soon afterward, "Medary is true, though paralyzed."¹² Stanton

believed Medary was caught in the middle of a difficult party struggle and, in his position as publisher of the state organ, was only trying his best to placate both sides. In reality Medary was still trying to work his way into favor with Polk.

A few months later Medary impetuously sold the *Ohio Statesman* to a Soft Money Democrat, C. C. Hazewell of Massachusetts. By this time, Medary no longer cared whether his actions would ingratiate him with Polk or not. The sale added to the split in the Ohio Democratic Party, and within a few weeks Hard Money Democrats started a newspaper in Columbus called the *Ohio Press* to publicize their views. Medary's opinion of the national leadership declined further in 1846 when Polk abandoned the fight for the northernmost boundary line in the Oregon dispute. The president feared a fight with England in the Northwest, so he forsook the Democratic platform and set about to secure a compromise, shuffling the responsibility for his decision off on Congress. In June 1846 the Senate passed a bill accepting the forty-ninth parallel as the permanent boundary. Medary and other Middle Western Democrats reacted with indignation. A *Statesman* story, guest written by Medary, ran under a headline that proclaimed: "THE FOUL DEED CONSUMMATED—OREGON CEDED AWAY!"¹³

Although he had sold the *Statesman*, Medary had not totally distanced himself from influencing its tone. His short absence from his newspaper duties had made him realize that his fortunes were not going to improve in the existing political climate. And by giving up his journalistic position, he had lost the regular forum he had come to relish. Plagued by debt and hostile competition from the *Press*, Hazewell succeeded only in bringing financial difficulty and a loss of credibility to the *Statesman*. He was only too happy to sell the paper back to Medary on November 10, 1846.

By 1848 Medary had made progress in putting the *Statesman* back on a solid financial footing. He had done this, at least in part, by moderating his own editorial position. Four years of turmoil had taught him that although he was a politician, he was a Democratic journalist first. He seemed to recognize that he had made some errors in judgment by becoming too personally involved in political squabbling. As he returned to his editorship he took a more dispassionate stand. He more cautiously attempted to soften the extreme positions taken by factions within the Ohio Democratic Party. Because of his previous shifts on issues, some in the party felt he had betrayed his fundamental

allegiance, but many Democrats had made similar accommodations. Medary, who through his opinions had aligned himself with a group known as the Radical Miami Democrats, tempered his rhetoric on banking. In response, one Hard Money man charged that "all things are not right at the *Statesman*. . . . They are not as they used to was [*sic*]." ¹⁴

As an intermediary between the new Free Soil Party and old-line Democratic Party members in Ohio Medary was in a no-win situation. Antiexpansionist Whigs and Democrats who wanted to bar slavery from new territories and states had formed the Free Soil Party. Traditional Democrats opposed such nationalistic fervor on what they viewed as a purely sectional question. Old-line party members, led by William Allen, called themselves the Conservative Scioto Democrats. In an attempt to preserve his ties with both groups, Medary said each new territory and state should be allowed to make its own decision about slavery. He also maintained his position that existing states should not be forced by the federal government to abolish slavery. His attempts at arbitration were singularly unsuccessful, and he only alienated more party members, including his former confederate Allen.

Ohio's Democratic leader, Ben Tappan, was an ally of Allen's. Medary's vacillation disturbed Tappan especially, since Medary's position as editor of the *Statesman* allowed him to wield important influence. Tappan told Allen, "Medary and company rule and direct all the movements of the Cass party, the state printing and your succession—not your reelection."¹⁵ Democratic governor Wilson Shannon wrote Stanton, "Sam Medary has it in his power to make Cass president." But Stanton continued to support Medary. He replied that though he had doubts about Medary, he was confident of his support. He agreed that Medary would be "vastly influential . . . but a truer [Van Buren] man never breathed."¹⁶ Soon after, however, Medary openly switched his support to Cass because he was uncomfortable with Van Buren, who had become an antislavery presidential candidate on the Free Soil ticket. Also, Medary was comfortable with Cass's way of solving territorial slavery issues. Cass and Illinois senator Stephen Douglas took the stand that the inhabitants of each territory should be allowed to decide whether their state should enter the Union slave or free. They called their position "popular sovereignty"; critics called it "squatter sovereignty."

Medary's Quaker heritage had little influence on his positions during these years. He did not oppose the South's right to keep slaves, nor did he dispute the government's authority to engage in a conflict with Mexico. He called it a "glorious war" and urged his readers to support it with men, money, and supplies. In both cases he went against prevailing sentiment in Ohio. The Ohio congressional delegation and much of the state's press opposed involvement in a war with Mexico over Texas, but Medary continued in his passion for Manifest Destiny.

Medary's support of expansionism and his belief that black people were not equal to individuals of European heritage indicate that he had in yet another way departed from the teachings of the Society of Friends. Quaker opposition to slavery dated back to the late eighteenth century. Their antagonism to armed confrontation came from the founding doctrine of William Penn.¹⁷ Although Medary had in many ways rejected the teachings of his youth, he nevertheless made use of such religious expressions as "Christian Salvation," "leaders in sack-cloth," "manna from heaven," and "vision of a Prophet" throughout his writing.¹⁸ He did not attempt, however, to justify on religious grounds either his opposition to abolition or his support of aggressive political activities.

When Democrats gathered in Baltimore in 1848, slavery continued to divide the delegates. Medary wanted to remain above the bickering, and he wrote Van Buren that he wished to be excluded from party negotiations during the gathering. Medary had visited the president more than once at the White House, and they corresponded throughout the 1840s. He advised Van Buren that he saw no reason to make the Wilmot Proviso (the congressional bill to limit slavery in new territories) an issue. Medary insisted that there were "higher, better, safer, and less obnoxious grounds to take."¹⁹ Years of fighting had taught him that the proviso was inevitable—and an acceptable compromise. Pursuing the issue, Medary believed, would only detract from his journalistic ability and personal reputation.

The majority of Ohioans agreed with Medary about Wilmot, but Van Buren did not. The former president controlled a group of New York Democrats called Barnburners, who had bolted from the Democratic convention. They joined the Free Soil movement and nominated Van Buren for president during a separate convention in Buffalo. Medary feared the schisms that the party would suffer, but he could no longer support Van Buren and his antislavery position. To

appease Southerners the Democrats nominated Cass, but the Democratic split handed the 1848 presidential victory to the Southern Whig slave owner Zachary Taylor. The 1848 election was the final triumph of the Whig Party. Abolitionist radicals, upset over Taylor's election, joined with the Free Soil movement and "dealt the Whig organization in Ohio a blow from which it never recovered."²⁰ By 1856 the party had dissolved.

During this period of national and personal confrontation and confusion, Medary turned his attention to private matters. Between 1845 and 1851 he joined with other influential Ohio business and political leaders in promoting railroads. During this six-year period he helped incorporate and served as director of four new Ohio railroad companies. He managed the operations of the Franklin and Ohio River Company, the Columbus and Lake Erie Railroad, and the Central Ohio Railroad Company. He also helped found the Columbus and Xenia Railroad, which in 1850 introduced train travel to Columbus.²¹ With the growth of the rail industry, use of canals decreased. At the beginning of the Civil War more miles of track had been laid in Ohio than in any other state.²² Medary also was a charter investor in Columbus's first utility firm, the Columbus Gas Light and Coke Company. On the national level he helped Samuel Morse financially in development of the telegraph. But throughout the 1840s and 1850s Medary also turned his attention to the nonprofit sector. He helped form the state agricultural board and served as its first secretary, later becoming the first treasurer and president of the Ohio State Fair. In addition, the Ohio General Assembly named him to help design and direct the construction of a new state capitol building.²³ These activities helped take his mind off dissatisfying and disheartening political matters.

But Medary was unable to divorce himself completely from politics. In the late 1840s he became enthusiastic about the revolutionary movement sweeping across Europe. He would have liked to see similar developments in Ohio, refusing to give up his dream of a society that could rise above its problems. In May 1849 he wrote, "There is a progressing, reforming radical spirit spreading over the civilized world, and let Ohio not be the last to partake of the regenerating spirit."²⁴ In the pages of the *Statesman* he endorsed the leaders of the French Revolution of 1848, and in 1852 he supported the Cuban revolt. Consistent with his Jeffersonian ideals, he also lobbied the

legislature for a free public school system in the state. He built a large house on a sizable lot at 70 North Front Street in Columbus, and his family grew to include twelve children.²⁵

In 1850, during a cholera epidemic in the city, Medary worked with Columbus officials to improve sanitation standards. Until this time Columbus had had a reputation for being an unhealthy town. Livestock, especially pigs, roamed freely through downtown streets, and nearby swamp land served as a breeding ground for contagious diseases. Delegates had just begun meeting in the city to consider revising the state constitution when the epidemic struck, forcing them to move their deliberations to Cincinnati. Medary had wanted the constitution revised for several years, and in 1848 he publicly lobbied for a constitutional convention. He and some fellow Democrats who supported change were labeled members of the radical or "Locofoco" faction of the party. They wanted constitutional change to halt what they viewed as the Whig Party's encouragement of monopolies.²⁶ A lack of state regulation had allowed banks and turnpike, canal, railway, and bridge companies to speculate wildly on new construction. The legislature's authorization to disburse public funds for the projects fueled much of the speculation. Medary believed the General Assembly held too much unrestricted authority. Although he had invested in the expansion of railroads, he decried the use of public funds for the practice, as it resulted in a drain on the state treasury and increased taxes. To spread his views Medary again turned to the press. In May 1848 he began printing a weekly paper called the *New Constitution*. In it he indicated that he took his cue from the revolutionary spirit that had inspired reformation in other parts of the world. In the first issue he wrote that "the time for change is peculiarly a favorable one."²⁷ Although he continued to publish the *Statesman*, the new newspaper allowed him to make his crusade look more bipartisan.

In an early letter to the editor of the *New Constitution*, a reader urged Medary to keep partisanship out of the constitutional revision. Medary said he agreed but added, "If men write freely and speak open and honest sentiments, and no others are worthy of publication, they will of course bear the character of some leading party."²⁸ For nearly two years Medary almost single-handedly carried on a statewide propaganda campaign in which he argued for passage of a constitution. One observer remarked, "No other man did so much to arouse public interest and insure the triumph of the cause."²⁹

The original state constitution had been hurriedly and unceremoniously drafted in 1802, a year before Ohio had been admitted into the Union. Even more important, in Medary's view, the General Assembly had never asked the people of the state for their approval. He believed that the common man in Ohio was not being well served by the existing document. This consideration underscored the slogan that adorned the first issue of the *New Constitution*: "Power is always stealing from the Many to the Few."³⁰ Medary insisted that that "government is best which governs least" and added that he wanted to make certain that the new document better represented the wishes of the state's populace.³¹ Some traditionalists in Ohio opposed a revision. In the *New Constitution* Medary told readers, "The fear of breaking in upon established customs, which pervades a certain class of our citizens . . . subjects the principle, or rather those who use such arguments, to ridicule."³²

Medary contended that the constitution needed broad-ranging revision, especially limitations on the power of members of the General Assembly. He insisted that the public must approve all increases in the state debt and that they elect state officials by popular vote.³³ Medary argued that abuses in the legislature curtailed the rights of workingmen in Ohio, and his arguments fell on increasingly receptive ears. He editorialized that Ohio's political infrastructure had not kept pace with the state's economic growth and influence. He also maintained that there was a legitimate need for an updated constitution "suited to her [Ohio's] wants." Medary insisted that the Buckeye State could fulfill its potential only if its future were entrusted "to the intelligence of her people. The destiny of Ohio, is *onward*—UPWARD."³⁴ His campaign proved effective. In fall 1849 Ohio's voters affirmed by a three-to-one margin that they wanted a constitutional convention in 1851.

Others in the state besides Medary also had agendas for the revision, and Medary knew he would have to compromise. In the Ohio legislature of the late 1840s, the Free Soil Party, or, as they called themselves, Free Democrats, had gained control. This left conservative Democrats and Whigs struggling to win back influence. Although the legislature, with Democratic support, had repealed several of the state's Black Laws in 1849, blacks continued to be denied many rights until after the Civil War. Under the new constitution, however, blacks no longer had to post bond, register their freedom papers, or be sponsored by whites.

But Free Soilers wanted all of Ohio's Black Laws repealed, and they wanted their candidate, Salmon Chase, named to the U.S. Senate (legislatures still chose senators during this period). Chase had been instrumental in bringing the Free Soil and Democratic factions together, and the senate seat was to be his reward. Medary reluctantly supported Chase and the Free Soil Party agenda, in exchange for support of his program. To repay their Democratic backers, Free Soilers joined with them in agreeing to push for restrictions on corporate growth in the state and limits on the number of new banks.³⁵ Medary's support for the Free Soil agenda helped elect Free Soiler John Morse to the Ohio House speakership in 1850. In return Medary got back the state printing post. To achieve his dream of constitutional change, he had compromised with political rivals, and it had paid off for him.

The 1851 convention brought sweeping changes. The delegates adopted almost all of Medary's motions, including new restrictions on the General Assembly.³⁶ As the most powerful body in the state, the legislature had had the authority to appoint all state officials except the governor, while even the governor had no veto power over the General Assembly. That situation was unchanged under the new constitution, but the convention expanded the executive branch to include a lieutenant governor, a secretary, a treasurer, an auditor, and an attorney general. For the first time the public received the right to vote for the state's executive officers and for judges. Delegates also decided that the legislature could establish no new laws of incorporation or create new counties without approval by their inhabitants. They established a special fund to reduce state debt and agreed that all classes of property would be taxed equally in the future. They also banned all poll taxes.

The Democratic Party, with majority representation, including its chairman and Ohio's next governor, William Medill of Fairfield County, dominated the convention. The Whig Party split over its stance on the revisions and proved ineffectual during the proceedings. Several reform groups also lobbied for the inclusion of "social change" amendments in the new constitution, but they were defeated. Medary and the other delegates wanted political change in the state, but there remained certain societal issues that they were not prepared to address. Despite many resolutions during the convention, the extension of blacks' rights to include, for example, suffrage, continued

to be denied. A Ross County delegate to the convention charged, "The irresistible inference ... [is] that the longer the two races occupy the same soil, the greater will be their repulsion and the stronger the prejudice."³⁷ Supporters of women's suffrage and those who wanted to restrict the sale of liquor in the state came away from the convention disappointed.

The new constitution (approved by only a small majority of 16,000 votes, 235,000 ballots having been cast)³⁸ represented a successful effort by Medary and other Jacksonians to defend the state's agrarian social order against the onslaught of the industrial way of life. The corporate perspective was represented by railroad, canal, bridge, and turnpike companies. Many of its detractors charged that the new constitution did not address important issues and ignored developing economic patterns. But although the legislature has since amended the document many times, the 1851 constitution is still the law in the state of Ohio.³⁹ As the designated convention printer, Medary had the additional responsibility (and no doubt, satisfaction) of printing the record of the official proceedings (2,000 pages) and the new constitution.⁴⁰

Meanwhile, in Washington, Senators Henry Clay, Stephen A. Douglas, and Daniel Webster sought to defuse the slavery controversy with a plan to remove it from national debate. With their Compromise of 1850, they argued that each state should alone be allowed to decide whether it would allow slavery. Like Medary, the senators argued that slavery was strictly a sectional issue. After heated debate, the Northern bloc of Congress yielded to the Southern coalition and maintained the Union. As part of the plan, slave owners could reclaim fugitives without recourse to a jury trial. Territories captured from Mexico could decide if they would be free or slave. The federal government's only role was to ensure that the number of free and slave states remained equal. The compromise succeeded as a delaying mechanism, but it failed to defuse the issue. Few lawmakers were satisfied with the compromise. Many Northern blacks fled to Canada or violently resisted recapture, and the argument over slavery went on into the next presidential nominating convention.

In 1852 Medary returned as an Ohio delegate to the Democratic National Convention. Because the Northern and Southern factions of the party could not reach agreement about slavery, they were forced to compromise. Democrats accepted the 1850 bill as part of

their program, and another dark horse, Franklin Pierce, became their presidential nominee. They also decided to include Southern representation in the administration in the person of Jefferson Davis. Pierce named him secretary of war. The disintegration of the Whig Party, the realignment of the Barnburners with the Democrats, and the inability of Free Soilers to maintain their momentum ensured Pierce's victory. Medary had led a campaign to nominate Stephen Douglas in Ohio before the convention, but he recognized that there was inadequate support for the "Little Giant." Because Pierce was a Jacksonian Democrat, Medary was able grudgingly to accept his candidacy.

In return for his support during the convention, Pierce in 1852 offered Medary the position of minister to Chile. Medary declined. In the following year he abandoned publishing for a second time and again relinquished ownership of the *Statesman*. Apparently Medary turned down the Pierce appointment and sold his paper because he planned to run for a U.S. Senate seat. His interest in the newspaper went to Samuel Cox, who would later become a congressman. Cox earned the nickname "Sunset" from his ability to write flowing prose about twilight in the *Statesman*. Party leaders quickly recognized, however, that he was not equally adept at managing the Democratic organ.

Meanwhile, Douglas was ascending to the heights of the national Democratic Party. Medary became an even more ardent Douglas supporter after congressional passage of his Kansas-Nebraska Act. For the next few years he acted as Douglas's point man in Ohio.⁴¹ In 1854 the Radical Miami Democrats set out to put Medary in the U.S. Senate, but the Conservative Scioto Democrats backed Allen. The seat had become available when, Chase, as an antislavery advocate, was unable to win reelection in the Democratically controlled Ohio legislature. Publicly Medary denied interest in the seat: "I do not desire an election, and prefer to remain a private citizen and advocate them [issues] in the ranks of the Democratic Party, as heretofore."⁴² He actually coveted the seat but was tormented by the fact that his win would further splinter the Ohio Democratic Party. Most Democrats believed Medary wanted the position. In any case, the General Assembly named neither Medary nor Allen to the Senate, nominating instead George Pugh, who represented a compromise between the party factions.

By supporting Douglas's Kansas-Nebraska Act, Medary once

again demonstrated his obsession with states' rights. Despite widespread bipartisan anti-Nebraska protests across Ohio, Medary did not change his position. In 1854 he wrote, "I would sooner scatter the Constitution to the winds . . . then [*sic*] stab democracy in the back and give lie to the hopes of freedom... by denying the people the right of suffrage."⁴³ Douglas and Medary were alike in their infatuation with the West, encouraging its development through extension of railroads and settlements. Douglas hoped to reach the White House by advocating an America that was locally governed. That Jacksonian rhetoric was music to Medary's ears. The problem was that neither Douglas nor Medary understood that slavery was no longer merely a political issue; it had become a moral question for the majority of Americans. To get the Kansas-Nebraska Act passed, Douglas agreed to repeal of the 1820 Missouri Compromise. The new law allowed slavery to exist in Kansas and Nebraska—if its residents voted to allow it. The possibility of slavery in the new territories bitterly antagonized large segments of the Northern population. But it mattered little to Medary that in Ohio he opposed a growing coalition made up of Free Soilers, anti-Nebraska Democrats, Whigs, and the new Know-Nothing Party. Support for Douglas was worth the cost.

Whig Party members decided to oppose slavery on humanitarian grounds. The Know-Nothing Party was an organization of young, urban, anti-Catholic professionals. They gained their name from their attempts to keep their agenda secret. Know-Nothings opposed immigration policy because many of its beneficiaries were Irish Catholics. These poor unskilled laborers competed with blacks for low-paying jobs. To reduce the competition for such jobs, many Irish Catholics became proponents of continuing slavery. They joined with and composed an influential voting block within the Democratic Party. In an effort to limit the opposition, Know-Nothings tried to halt immigration and intimidated immigrants in an effort to stop them from voting.

This league of antislavery advocates became known as the "Fusion Party," and in July 1854 they joined in a state convention in Columbus. The following fall they established the coalition as a power for the first time by winning a landslide victory in the Ohio general elections. The Democrats lost because Fusionists stigmatized them as the party that had annulled the Missouri Compromise and wanted to increase taxes on business. A year later, following the lead of other states, the Fusionists named their new political organization the Republican

Party. In the Ohio governor's race the Democrats nominated the incumbent, William Medill, as their candidate, but sixty-nine delegates abandoned Medill and cast their lot with Medary as their candidate. The move to draft Medary eroded Medill's power base so that he had no chance for victory. Ohioans chose Salmon Chase as their next governor while the Republicans gained control of the General Assembly.⁴⁴

By 1855 Medary saw that sectionalism and slavery were irreparably splitting the Democratic Party—and the country—apart. In February, in yet another attempt to reunite Democrats, he reacquired the *Statesman* in order to give himself a leadership post. Shortly after resuming the editorship, Medary acknowledged that his party was in trouble but that he was going to do his best to help. He wrote, "There is indifference, dissatisfaction and disorganization . . . [but] our struggle now will be, to keep afloat, to rouse up . . . the Democratic element of this state."⁴⁵

The following year the Democratic National Convention met in Cincinnati, and Medary served as a compromise chairman during part of it. Medary expected to see Douglas nominated for the presidency, but the other delegates had a different idea. With Republicans depicting themselves as the antislavery party, and the Know-Nothing Party choosing a neutral ground, most Democrats believed they needed a candidate who was less controversial than Douglas, with his concept of popular sovereignty. Medary soon realized that Douglas's cause was hopeless and was forced to abandon his friend. The delegates finally chose James Buchanan on the seventeenth ballot. Douglas never forgave Medary for changing his allegiance, but Medary felt having harmony at the convention—as well as maintaining his own standing within the party—was worth the price.

As convention chairman, it was Medary's job to announce to the delegates that Ohio would cast its votes for Buchanan. He acknowledged that his heart was with Douglas but assured the delegates, "With this platform that you have given us . . . we are willing to fight under any leader that this Convention may select for us."⁴⁶ Buchanan personally opposed slavery, but he said Congress had no authority to legislate against it. He chose to avoid the issue of whether a territory could abolish slavery before achieving statehood. In the months that followed, Medary said little about either Buchanan or the race in the *Statesman*. He knew the ticket had a better chance for victory with the reticent Buchanan, but he also recognized that the Democratic candidate was not strong enough to resolve the issue of slavery.

Fortunately for the Democrats, Buchanan's opponents were Republican John Fremont, Ohio's "Pathfinder of the West," and Know-Nothing candidate Millard Fillmore. Each candidate took a different position on slavery, dividing the electorate. Fremont and Fillmore received the majority of the popular vote, but Buchanan held a majority in the Electoral College. The 1852 election effectively brought about the end of the Know-Nothing Party even as the surviving Democratic and Republican Parties drew the lines of confrontation that would lead to civil war.

Despite Democratic attempts to reverse the trend, during the 1850s the country became more divided sectionally. Medary called for one "Union, no North, no South, no East, no West,"⁴⁷ a goal hardly practical at this point. Many developments, including the opening of new land in the West, the introduction of homestead legislation, and the extension of railroads, fed a materialistic and exploitative mood. Commercial expansion in international trade and the rise of industry led to a demand for higher tariffs. With railroad lines running from New York to Chicago through Ohio, competition between Eastern and Southern interests for Ohio's products increased. The banking situation remained unsettled, and forgery, embezzlement, and counterfeiting were common.⁴⁸ Medary continued to plead that the people of each state and territory be allowed to govern themselves, but slavery had become a national issue, and during 1856 and 1857 controversy over it divided the nation even further.

During the presidential campaign the Democrats had charged that the Republicans' sole objective was to see slavery excluded from U.S. territories. Buchanan's new administration included several Southern Democrats, and the new president's cabinet had the strongest proslavery bias of any in the nineteenth century. Shortly after Buchanan took office, the Supreme Court ruled in *Dred Scott* that Congress did not have the authority to order territories to permit slavery. Buchanan hoped the decision would end the controversy, but it only worsened it. "Bleeding Kansas" became the flash point for pro- and antislavery factions who were attempting to decide the future of slaveholding in the territory. Former Ohioan and antislavery extremist John Brown began roaming the territory, taking justice into his own self-righteous hands.

Medary again tried to walk a tightrope in a major political squabble. *Dred Scott* irrevocably split the country and the Democratic Party into North and South. But the difficulty Medary faced politi-

cally, as a mediator in the controversy, soon became apparent. Southern Democrats applauded *Dred Scott*, but the scope of the ruling appalled most Northern Democrats and Republicans. The case marked a defeat for Douglas's popular sovereignty because it made it unclear whether state legislatures had the authority to prohibit slavery. Most Ohio Democrats, led by Medary's editorials in the *Statesman*, supported Douglas's conviction. Though he disagreed with the decision, Medary acknowledged his respect for the high court. He wrote, "Upon an intricate question, the best jurists in the world have . . . concurred with the plain, common sense and reason which guide the humblest citizen."⁴⁹

In the midst of the chaos, Medary secured the national political post for which he had long yearned. He also soon learned that it was easier to be a partisan publisher than a full-time politician. More than once party infighting had snatched appointments from him, but to appease Douglas, Buchanan appointed Medary the third territorial governor of Minnesota in 1857. Several prominent Ohioans, including George Pugh, Samuel Cox, and George Pendleton, had lobbied the president to appoint Medary to the post. In a letter to Buchanan they contended that Medary was right for the job because his "experience, courage, and devotion to Democratic principles are to [*sic*] well and widely known as to require no assurance from us."⁵⁰ Medary gave up his editorship of the *Statesman* for the final time. Depending upon their political affiliation, newspapers in Ohio cheered or jeered the journalist's appointment. It was an occasion for fellow partisan journalists to show their feelings about their old colleague. In Cincinnati, for example, the Republican *Daily Commercial* used the appointment to attack Democrats in general and the Democratic *Cincinnati Enquirer* and Medary specifically. The *Daily Commercial* wrote sarcastically that "Citizen Sammedary [*sic*] . . . has fallen a 'bear or two' and accepted the somewhat less brilliant position of Governor of Minnesota." It continued, "There are few individuals of the human race more flagrantly dishonest, habitually mendacious or notoriously illiterate, than the editor of the *Ohio Statesman*."⁵¹ In Columbus, however, Medary received bipartisan support. The Republican *Ohio State Journal* congratulated Medary on his new post, noting, "No man has warmer friends . . . [or] more bitter enemies.... We shall be sorry to lose him as an editorial opponent."⁵² Perhaps the *Journal's*

editor was relieved that the formidable Medary was leaving Columbus. Although state Democratic papers applauded his appointment, they regretted the loss to Ohio's party leadership of "Colonel" Sam Medary (a title emblematic of his party leadership). In Cleveland the *Daily Herald* summed up the typical Democratic sentiment: "The 'Old Wheel Horse of the Ohio Democracy' can illy be spared by his party in this state."⁵³

Although he relocated to St. Paul, Medary left his family in Columbus and returned to Ohio regularly. The new governor arrived in the territory without fanfare "by lumber wagon from Red Wing" on April 22.⁵⁴ His main task was to oversee the transition of Minnesota from territory to state. He held the post for only thirteen months. During that time Minnesotans approved the new state's constitution and elected legislators and their first state governor. During the initial gathering of the legislature in Minnesota, Medary reiterated his opposition to the federal government's attempt to restrict states' sovereignty. In his address he said, "Let us hope that the question may soon find a satisfactory answer. The future peace and harmony of State and Territories can be best secured by each acting upon its proper sphere."⁵⁵

Medary's biggest problem during his interim governorship in Minnesota occurred in Washington, not St. Paul. Southern congressmen tried to block the admission of Minnesota as another free state. The last state admitted had been California in 1850, and it was free. Southerners challenged the imbalance that California's admission had permitted, as its admission gave free-state representatives an advantage in Congress. The Southerners managed to delay admission of Minnesota into the Union until May 1858.

Otherwise, Medary's time in Minnesota was not particularly noteworthy, except that he found himself in the unusual position of being, at one point, one of three governors concurrently in office there. While Medary held the territorial de facto post, Minnesotans chose Henry Silbey as the state's first governor. And Charles Chase served as acting governor during Medary's trips back to Ohio. The one criticism of Medary by Minnesotans was that he was too often an absentee governor. With the conversion of the territory into a state, however, Medary's job was finished. Future U.S. attorney and longtime Ohio friend General Edwin Stanton congratulated Medary on his work in

Minnesota. Stanton wrote Medary that his administration "forms a striking contrast to the failure of other territorial governors_____High sounding pretensions have failed while you have succeeded."¹⁵⁶

In June 1858, his duties in Minnesota officially over, Medary began a short stint as Columbus postmaster. He held the post for only five months, but his appointment resulted in another controversy among Columbus Democrats. To appoint him to the position Buchanan removed Thomas Miller, who had bought the *Statesman* from Medary when he went to Minnesota. Because Miller was a friend of Congressman Samuel Cox, who, with most Ohio Democrats, vigorously opposed Buchanan's support for Kansas's proslavery Lecompton Constitution, the president took pleasure in replacing him. Upon learning of Medary's appointment, the *Columbus Gazette* observed: "Astonishment and indignation was pictured upon the countenances of all the leading Democrats."¹⁵⁷

Good intentions notwithstanding, Medary and controversy were seldom separated for long. Early in 1858, to appease Southerners in his cabinet, the president had asked Congress to admit Kansas under the Lecompton Constitution. The Northern Democratic Party divided further when Douglas split with Buchanan by opposing Lecompton. Solely to maintain his relationship with the Buchanan administration, Medary cast his lot with the widely unpopular—even among Democrats—Buchanan position. Medary, Buchanan, and the Kansas question became indissolubly linked.

In retaliation for Douglas's defection, Buchanan dismissed several of the senator's political friends from high posts in Washington. In the Senate elections that year—in which Douglas edged Abraham Lincoln to retain his seat—Republicans gained more positions in the House of Representatives than any other party. The results left Douglas in control of Northern Democrats and badly crippled Buchanan's influence. In an attempt at rapprochement with the Douglas camp, the president again named Medary to a territorial governorship, this time in Kansas. Considering his recent duty in Minnesota, the *Ohio State Journal* observed that with this appointment Medary had "fairly earned the office of Administration Midwife to all the foetal states."¹⁵⁸ By the end of the year Buchanan realized that he could not overcome the pro-Douglas, anti-Lecompton forces on Capitol Hill. Accordingly, he suggested that Medary draw up a new constitution that would allow Kansas to be admitted to the Union as a free state. He also charged

Medary with putting a stop to the violence that was raging across Kansas, although he failed to give him the means to do so. Medary, in a message to the Kansas legislature, called for a new constitutional convention.

In the four years since Kansas had become a territory in July 1854, nine governors had served there, and voters had ratified three constitutions in an attempt to bring peace to the territory. Medary knew he had a difficult task ahead of him. Upon accepting the appointment, he acknowledged that freedom to disagree with government had gotten out of hand in Kansas. He reflected that when freedom "is permitted to ... violate laws and constitutions ... it becomes a curse rather than a blessing to the people."⁵⁹

Under the first year of Douglas's rule of popular sovereignty in Kansas the slavery controversy had cost over two hundred people their lives and nearly two million dollars in damages.⁶⁰ While politicians argued over whether Kansas would enter the Union as slave or free, radical abolitionists took matters into their own hands. The gangs of John Brown and James Montgomery roamed the southeastern part of the territory liberating slaves and killing slaveholders. Within a month of his arrival, Governor Medary received a plea from a group of Kansas citizens. In their letter, they implored, "In the name of high heaven we ask, are there no means in the power of the government to effectually check the outrages of the banditti?"⁶¹ Medary promptly appealed to Buchanan for guns and ammunition to arm the poorly equipped Kansas militia. After several delays the president ordered the arms shipped, and Medary sent the militia to capture Brown and Montgomery. The bloodshed in Kansas shocked Medary, and he sought a peaceful solution. At one point, he attempted to appeal to Kansans' patriotism. He told them it was America's heritage that "we preach by example—we subdue by kindness and friendly relations—we convince by honest purposes and fair dealing."⁶² Shortly afterward, Medary offered the guerrillas amnesty if they would suspend activities, but they refused. Again and again militant abolitionists eluded arrest by fleeing into neighboring Nebraska. Violence provoked by abolitionists in Kansas and Missouri continued until after the Civil War.⁶³

Meanwhile, in July 1859 Medary set about attempting to bring statutory harmony to Kansas. His experience in Ohio was useful as he directed the writing of a new Kansas constitution. By the end of the

month the document was complete, and in October Kansas voters ratified it. Although he was successful in getting a permanent constitution approved, Medary's term in Kansas was far from pleasant. He continually complained that Buchanan was slow in granting him the authority and the means to carry out his tasks. The president kept hoping he could avoid alienating Southerners both in his cabinet and in Southern states. In a letter to Buchanan, Medary begged, "Can I not be furnished, this time, with men and means... ? I have exhausted all my own . . . and to cripple me still more Gen. Cass, Your Sec. of State, has withheld my salary for what I think wholly insufficient causes."⁶⁴

Despite his frustrations, Medary later ran for Kansas state governor in December 1860. But his veto in the preceding February of a bill to ban slavery in Kansas and his advocacy of Lecompton branded him as an advocate for slavery. Medary maintained that each state should be allowed to make its own decisions concerning slavery, but that a territory should not be granted sovereignty until it became a state. His explanation that he had based his decisions on states'-rights considerations and his otherwise successful record as governor failed, however, to convince voters, and he lost the election to a Republican, Charles Robinson.

The question of statehood for Kansas continued to be entangled in Washington politics. Medary stayed on for two years, finally resigning the governorship, with statehood assured, in December 1860. His antiabolitionist sentiments notwithstanding, the partial peace Medary helped bring to Kansas earned him respect from both sides. The editor of the *Lawrence Republican*, for example, wrote that he bade the Ohioan farewell with regret despite their differences. In a front-page commentary, the editor wrote of Medary: "He has been uniformly prudent and conciliatory; has sought rather to guide popular sentiment, than to despotically defy it; has been as much of a Free State man as he could be and hold office under Buchanan."⁶⁵ In January 1861 Kansas was admitted into the Union. In the aftermath of its admission, however, the Buchanan administration was a shambles, Democrats were even further divided, and the Union was beyond redemption.

The path from Manifest Destiny to revision of the Ohio Constitution to the brink of the Civil War had been a rough one for a man as politically active as Medary. Twenty years of involvement in the

chaos of the political arena had elevated him to national prominence but tarnished his reputation. His dream of the establishment of Jeffersonian democracy lay in ruins. He had compromised principles, alienated longtime friends, and achieved national political office, but he had paid a high price. He was tired, disillusioned, and fearful that the great democratic experiment was disintegrating. He returned to Columbus to try to ward off the looming catastrophe by showing readers the error of their ways and changing their minds.

4

*"Steady Hands, Sound Heads and Warm Hearts, and We Shall All Be Right Again"**

At the beginning of 1861 Columbus had a population of 18,554. Legislators debated in the impressive new capitol building at the corner of Broad and High Streets. Besides traffic on the National Road, twenty-four passenger trains served Columbus daily. Until November 9, 1860—coincidentally the same night Americans chose Abraham Lincoln sixteenth president of the United States—there was a splendid hotel across High Street from the capitol, the Neil House. On that night it burned to the ground. Firefighters might have saved the hotel if there had been a dependable water supply, but no municipal waterworks had yet been built, and nearby wells and cisterns could not supply enough water.¹

Columbus had come a long way since Samuel Medary had begun living there twenty-five years earlier. Nevertheless, many problems that he and other civic leaders had worked to correct, such as the lack of a dependable water supply, remained. Crushed stone covered some city streets, and construction had just begun on a horse-drawn trolley system, but rainstorms continued to turn the roads into quagmires. The city had recently completed a sewer system, but it often clogged or backed up, and filth collected in the gutters. The city employed inmates from the state penitentiary in a moderately successful attempt to combat the stench, but walking or riding on the streets was often an unpleasant, and sometimes an unhealthy, experience.

The population of Columbus was an uneasy mixture of abolitionists and Southern sympathizers. The city contained both people who had come from Northern states, particularly Pennsylvania and New

York, and those who had emigrated from pre-war Virginia.² With its long-established trade link with the South, Columbus abutted a part of Ohio that maintained solid Southern ties. Many beautiful homes in the city, with their enclosed gardens and large verandas, reflected Southern influence.³ During the Civil War, seven Ohioans became Confederate generals; hundreds more fought for the South.

Across Broad Street from the capitol, at the corner of Pearl Alley and near the old National Hotel, stood a tavern called the Buckeye House. Its cooks and dishwashers were almost all black. Years after the war one Columbus resident recalled noticing that the kitchen personnel changed regularly. The Buckeye House had been a way station on the Underground Railroad.⁴

At the corner of Gay and High Streets was an office building from which, on January 31, 1861, the former governor of the Kansas territory and past publisher of the *Ohio Statesman* began distributing his fifth newspaper. There is no evidence that Medary was aware of the activities in the kitchen of the nearby Buckeye House. If he had known of the clandestine activity, he would most certainly have protested against it. At the time, however, he occupied himself with the approaching national crisis. Medary called his new weekly the *Crisis* to signal the nation's difficulties. Although the Civil War did not begin for another two months, for Medary it was already in progress.

In October and November 1859 Medary was observing the election campaigns in Columbus. They were of particular interest to him because he feared that Ohio was about to be overrun by Republicans. But he was also curious because the two candidates for the following year's presidential election, Stephen Douglas and Abraham Lincoln, were stumping for their respective parties' state candidates. Even more important, the two men from Illinois were debating whether slavery should be a purely political issue.

The Republican candidate was busy demonstrating his ability as a canny politician who personally abhorred slavery. According to Charles Sellers, Lincoln alternately "inspired Yankee moralists by opposing its [slavery's] further advance, [and] reassured conservatives by acknowledging its constitutional right to exist where it was." On other occasions he "appealed to old-timer racism by endorsing white supremacy . . . and reservation of the territories for the homes of free white people."⁵ Earlier in the year Lincoln had said, "The underlying

principle of the Republican party was 'hatred to the institution of slavery; hatred to it in all its aspects, moral, social and political.'" Douglas, on the other hand, maintained that slavery "was not important enough to risk the disruption of the Union." Republican newspaper editors responded, "Douglas does not recognize the moral element in politics."⁶ The same was true of Medary.

Although Douglas and Medary had not resolved their differences, Medary believed Douglas's election might reunite the Democratic Party and hold the Union together. He also continued to hope that, with his stand on slavery and local government autonomy, Douglas was the man to rescue Medary's Jacksonian ideal for the nation. Neither presidential candidate could afford to ignore Ohio, as only New York and Pennsylvania exceeded it in number of electoral votes and representatives in Congress. Ohio's influence became even more pivotal after the withdrawal of the Confederate states' congressional representation.⁷

In September 1860 Medary received leave from his post in Kansas to attend the national fair at Cincinnati and the Ohio State Fair in Dayton.⁸ The Democratic Party was in such a fragmented state that Medary did not even bother to ask for time off to attend the state Democratic convention of 1859 or, for the first time in twenty-five years, to make his appearance at either of the Democratic presidential nominating conventions of 1860 (Democrats held two that year because of the North-South party division). Kansas, of course, needed his attention, but, more to the point, he had convinced himself that the divided national parties and the men who were seeking national office could not solve the nation's problems. He was certain that the solution rested in appealing to the common sense of the public.

The 1860 Democratic convention in Charleston had dissolved following the inability of the Northern and Southern contingents to decide between Douglas and John Breckinridge. Northern Democrats then held a second convention in Baltimore and nominated Douglas; Southerners countered with Breckinridge. There were several possibilities for the Republican nominee, including Salmon Chase. But Lincoln's position that slavery must be contained within the states currently allowing it pleased the delegates and won him the nomination.

A third party, the Constitutional Union Party, hoping to avert secession, selected John Bell of Tennessee as its nominee. With so many candidates and divided allegiances, Lincoln won with only forty per-

cent of the popular vote. Medary made note of the new president's "default" victory when he wrote, "Mr. Lincoln . . . became president merely by the forms of the Constitution, and not by public opinion."⁹ Southern politicians considered Lincoln the "abolition President" and vowed to fight his attempts to overthrow their way of life.

On December 20, 1860, Medary wrote a farewell to the new state's citizens in the *Kansas National Democrat*. In it he said that for the past three years he had experienced a "gloomy foreboding... that a crisis was approaching" in the country. He said he had spent most of his life as a newspaperman and felt he could best serve the public by continuing in that line of work. He returned to Ohio hoping to defuse the volatile situation. Just before his departure from Kansas he wrote, "Editors, politicians, and divines, should write, speak, and pray for the one great, and necessary purpose—perfect peace."¹⁰ In Charleston, on the same day, the South Carolina legislature passed a bill stating, "The Union now subsisting between South Carolina and other states under the name of the United States of America is hereby dissolved."¹¹

Medary refused to believe that taking up arms was the answer to settling sectional differences. He felt that an open and thorough public discussion of the issues—and adherence to his states'- and individual-rights philosophy—could head off a confrontation. He saw the Union as a loosely assembled collection of states held together by compromise and conciliation. As emotions reached the boiling point, Medary's 1860 call for moderation in Kansas summed up his plea to the nation: "Steady hands, sound heads and warm hearts, and we shall all be right again."¹²

On his return to Columbus he focused again on using the strength of the press to influence political decisions. Medary believed a newspaper represented his best chance for heading off war. In his first issue he wrote, "I feel it a duty I owe my country and myself, that I should not be a silent spectator of the most dangerous controversy that ever impended over the American people." His political officeholding finished, Medary recognized that he faced a formidable task. He said, "It will take the combined efforts of the wise, the good and the patriotic to wrest the Constitution and the Union . . . from the dangers which threaten it on every side."¹³ He had entered the most inflammatory phase of his career.

From the very beginning of his return to publishing, Medary

assumed an air of superiority toward fellow journalists. He implied that with his long experience he was privy to information and a point of view that allowed him a unique perspective. He pronounced, "My connection of thirty years with politics and the press gives me some claims upon the people for at least a candid hearing." He sought to use the role of elder statesman, to which he felt entitled, to fight for peace. Medary said the *Crisis* would be more than just an ordinary newspaper. He saw it as an enterprise that would serve as a historical record: "We do not intend to be a mere news publication, but one that will be of sufficient worth for preservation." He was confident that he was beginning a noteworthy venture. He encouraged readers to save all copies of the *Crisis* as evidence to future generations of the "scenes their fathers passed through. We present *The Crisis* as a true exponent of the times, which will be a ready reference hereafter."¹⁴

As the new year began, fear that war was imminent permeated Columbus, but there also was hope that it could be avoided. Three days before Medary circulated the first issue of the *Crisis*, state Democrats met in the city in an effort to work out a political solution. During the meeting the delegates agreed to support Kentucky senator John J. Crittenden's compromise plan. It set forth a series of amendments to the Constitution that would forbid the federal government to impede slavery in Southern states or territories. Congress could not override the amendments, and the plan extended the Missouri Compromise line west to the Pacific. Medary supported Crittenden's plan because he saw the differences between North and South as unworthy of national strife.

Secessionist state leaders felt the plan was too little and too late. Lame-duck president James Buchanan was unwilling to deal with the issue. The president found himself under fire from all sides because he had neither the courage nor the ability to mediate the situation. Buchanan claimed that the Southern states had no right to secede, but he admitted that the federal government could not legally prevent them from doing so.

The president-elect vehemently opposed Crittenden's or any other compromise that condoned and extended slavery. Lincoln argued that acceptance "would lose us everything we gained by the election," and said he was not interested in surrendering to those he had just beaten at the polls. Saying compromise would lead to continuation of a slave empire, Lincoln urged fellow Republicans to "hold firm, as

with a chain of steel. If we surrender it is the end of us____A year will not pass, till we shall have to take Cuba as a condition upon which they will stay in the Union."¹⁵ With this hyperbole Lincoln was saying that if he gave one inch on slavery, there would be no end to the compromises. Medary, who favored peace at any price, remained unconvinced that Lincoln's opposition was honorable. He charged that the new president disapproved of Crittenden's Compromise solely for partisan reasons. Medary claimed the plan "could save the Union but not the Republican Party." In addition, because "both could not be saved at the same time, they preferred their party and its platform to the Country and its Constitution."¹⁶ In part because of Lincoln's opposition, Crittenden's Compromise died. Six more Southern states seceded, and the Confederacy set up its own government on February 7, 1861.

By current standards the *Crisis* was no tabloid. Five columns wide, eight pages long, with small print and single-column headlines, it had no pictures and lacked display heads. Unlike the other Columbus papers, it initially carried no advertising, although Medary began running advertising during the fourth month of publication. Even then it was not at all eye-catching, and Medary relegated it to the last two pages. A year's subscription cost two dollars, which Medary felt was a fair price. He wrote that a reader could "better pay two dollars for useful information in the *Crisis* than a hundred dollars taxes to support a wicked sectional war."¹⁷ He made no attempt to make a large profit from his new undertaking, choosing instead to devote himself passionately to the themes of peace and Jacksonian democracy. Medary contracted with the Richard Nevins Company, a half-block north on High Street, to print the paper. The *Ohio Statesman*, the state Democratic organ, continued to be published by Matthias Martin from offices in the same block.

Medary promised that every effort would be made to make the *Crisis* one of the best weeklies in the country. He guaranteed subscribers he would keep it "clear of floating trash and full of the most useful matter to suit the fearful times that surround us."¹⁸ In his prospectus he outlined what readers could expect from the *Crisis*. He said it would include news of the week, public documents, speeches from both sides of issues, market reports, correspondence, and a summary of the proceedings of Congress and the state legislature. In addition, he planned to print agricultural articles, literary miscellany (poems

and short stories), and the "Boldest and Best political essays from the ablest men of the West." He confidently guaranteed that his new publication would include "everything to make a perfect newspaper and a complete record of the times." If his readers enjoyed the *Crisis*, he urged them to tell their friends, because he did not intend to employ agents to extend its circulation.¹⁹

Initially Medary wrote almost all the material in the *Crisis* or reprinted columns obtained from other Democratic papers. His office consisted of little more than a desk, chairs, files, scissors, pencils and paper, and in-and-out mail bins. He did not buy a printing press, hired no reporters or other assistants, and did not sell shares to stockholders; Medary *was* the *Crisis*. A prodigious worker, he noted in the first issue, "There is a great work before us, and we must not shrink from its performance." During the first year of publication he told his growing number of readers that he read as many as a hundred letters each day.²⁰ The primary goal of the *Crisis*, according to Medary, was to address "what are to be the conditions of our dissolution and disgrace."²¹ He emphasized that he based his editorials on the highest tradition of American democracy. To accentuate the point, he reprinted speeches made by George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and Andrew Jackson.

Medary feared that once war between North and South began, it would never end. About the prospect of civil war, he lamented, "Of all disorders we despise those among neighbors the most.... We have ever shrunk with loathing from the man who dares so far forget God and humanity, as to advocate either local disorders or national blood-letting."²² He felt that if he revealed all aspects of the dispute to Northerners (most of whom, he believed, opposed war), they would come to their senses before taking up arms. Medary stated repeatedly that if the North attempted to force obedience upon the South, it would destroy the essential characteristic of the Republic. That indispensable trait, according to him, was voluntary compliance with a national consensus.

As early as February 1861 Medary pleaded that following a great war only a military despotism would remain, and "our liberties would be sacrificed in the wreck."²³ Throughout the conflict he maintained that the answer to settling the disagreement between North and South lay with the ballot instead of the bullet. His view of the United States was of a nation connected by free association, and he called for a con-

vention of states to settle the differences. In the land of the free, he said, it was unlawful and immoral for the federal government to force compliance on the Southern states.

When the new president took office in early March, Medary wrote that he was not certain where Lincoln stood on the issues. On the way to his inauguration, the president-elect had spoken in Columbus, but he had been circumspect. Medary noted that Lincoln's inaugural address gave the president "too much elbow room . . . to steer for any port. I will judge the new president by what he does rather than what he says."²⁴ In general Medary blamed radical abolitionists and partisan Republicans for the threatening situation. He wrote an open letter to Republican newspapers in the *Crisis* in which he asked them to convince him that the possibility of this "awful war, disgraceful to the nation and age . . . [is] not wholly founded in *party*—merely *party*, and *nothing else*."²⁵ He decried the influence of such politicians as Senator Charles Sumner of Massachusetts. Medary claimed that Sumner "never intended to receive the South back into the Union, 'peaceably, amicably, honorably, as states, part and parcel of this union as they once were.'"²⁶ Many Northern Democrats thought abolitionists were even worse than Southerners. At least the Confederacy conducted its rebellion in the open and with justification, unlike abolitionists. Democrats said abolitionists operated "like miners . . . trenching around the temple of liberty, surreptitiously working for war and not saying so. . . a dark enclave of conspirators, freedom-shriekers, and Bible spewkers [*sic*]."²⁷

Medary worried as well about the influence of Eastern newspaper publishers. Of Horace Greeley he wrote, "The people have already been sufficiently humbugged by such men as Greeley. . . . As he appears to be the conscience keeper of the Northern party . . . it will be our business to look after him."²⁸ Medary questioned Greeley's philosophy of promoting industrialism at the expense of an agrarian society, of opposing popular elections, and of supporting a protective tariff. In Medary's mind Greeley spoke for the untrustworthy abolitionists. Beginning in 1860, when Greeley editorialized in favor of Lincoln and against slavery, Medary became convinced that Greeley had made himself the spokesman for all who sought to involve the North in war. In April, with the bombardment of Fort Sumter, Medary's worst fears were realized.

Three days after the Confederacy fired the initial volleys in

Charleston harbor, Lincoln called for 75,000 volunteer troops for three months' duty. Ohio's quota for what most Northerners believed would be a short war was 13,000 men. On April 16 the Ohio General Assembly appropriated \$1 million to arm and equip the state's soldiers. The minority Democratic members of the legislature delayed the appropriation for two days with debate, but eventually patriotism overwhelmed partisanship. Within a few weeks the General Assembly raised taxes and allotted an additional \$1.5 million for use if the state were invaded and for relief to families of volunteers, the beginning of a huge financial burden.²⁹

The men of Ohio could have supplied 75,000 troops by themselves.³⁰ At the center of Ohio, with its abundant highway and railroad access, Columbus served as a marshaling point for the first Ohio troops. Thirty thousand volunteers, in everything from silk top hats to homespun breeches, descended upon the capital from all parts of the state. Militia leaders set up a makeshift camp north of the railroad depot in Goodale Park. But the tents could not handle the overflow, and many crowded into hotels and boarding houses. In the words of one resident, "Sleeping bodies were scattered everywhere throughout the city, on verandas, porches, sidewalks and steps."³¹ The president ordered Governor William Dennison to send the first organized troops to Washington to help defend the capital. At 3 A.M. on April 19, two thousand members of the First and Second Ohio Volunteer Infantry regiments, although barely trained and underequipped, boarded trains and headed east.

One of Medary's sons, Charles, and a son-in-law volunteered and served as officers for the Union during the war. They both supported the editor's peace efforts, but their enlistment showed that Peace Democrats were as willing to die for their country as Republicans. Medary wrote of Peace Democrat soldiers, "They are true-hearted boys who will do their duty and ask no questions."³² Although many of them opposed the war, Peace Democrats readily volunteered for duty for several reasons. Many of their party leaders encouraged them as a way of restoring the country to the Jacksonian vision. The volunteers viewed themselves as going on a crusade and continuing the electoral campaigns they had participated in before the war. Like many other Americans, a large number became infatuated with patriotic war fever. Others joined for less romantic reasons. Because the esca-

lating sectional differences had affected trade between various parts of the country, leading to overspeculation in railroads and factories, Ohio's economy had suffered. Most men who made their livelihood from the soil faced dubious prospects. Others had become bored with the uncertainty of farming.³³ The bounties that states later offered to encourage enlistment also gave many in the mostly Democratic working classes a way to pay off debts.

Once the war began, Medary honored all soldiers in the field while opposing the politicians who had put them there. In a *Crisis* commentary he pointedly wrote, "Politicians, you have crimes to answer for which Heaven will ask judgement."³⁴ In May he began a weekly feature written by Ohio soldiers, called "Rough Notes from a Knapsack." Most of them wrote of the difficult conditions and boredom of camp life. Alongside this feature Medary ran articles that delineated the "very disgraceful treatment of the volunteers."³⁵ He wrote that the military treated Ohio troops poorly, that they were without shoes, lacked tents, and often were ill as a result. Medary editorialized that these revelations might be viewed as unpatriotic, but that it was his duty as a journalist to expose the abuses. He argued, "While the young men are in the field ready to do any service to aid in saving the nation," he must do his homework to "arouse the public mind to seek some means of settling our enormous troubles."³⁶ In October he coordinated a blanket drive in the *Crisis* for the troops.

Hostilities had barely begun when it became apparent that winning the war and allowing unrestricted continuation of a free press were conflicting goals. This was the first war that most newspapers could cover extensively at first hand. In addition, for the first time in the young country's history, a majority of the population could read.³⁷ With husbands and sons, neighbors and friends going off to fight, the dilemma became how to keep those at home informed without aiding and abetting the enemy.

Following the end of the Alien and Sedition Acts in 1801, except for limited restrictions in 1846 and 1847 during the Mexican War, there had been little press censorship in America. But during the Civil War the fact that many on both sides opposed the war complicated matters.³⁸ Even before the first major battles took place, civil-rights confrontations occurred behind the lines. While Middle Westerners like Medary considered what they should do now that war was under

way, more radical elements caused Union leaders a great deal of concern. Border-state secessionists precipitated problems in Missouri, Kentucky, and Maryland by openly urging inhabitants to agitate for secession.

In Maryland and Missouri the uneasiness exploded. During April a secessionist mob attacked a Massachusetts regiment as it passed through Baltimore on its way to Washington. The Lincoln administration took aggressive action to restore order. The president sent troops to Baltimore, instituted martial law, and suspended the writ of habeas corpus in Maryland. In Missouri Governor Claiborne Jackson sought to steer his state into the Confederacy, but Unionists opposed him and an intrastate civil war resulted. General John Fremont of Ohio secured peace late in the summer when, without authority from Washington, he declared martial law and emancipated slaves in the state. Fremont established a precedent. Throughout the Union during the coming war years, military officials jailed those suspected of secessionist activities and held them without trial. Later the same fate awaited dissidents who opposed the war effort and conscription. This led to the imprisonment of more than 15,000 civilians without due process.³⁹ Democrats became especially disturbed when Secretary of State William Seward bragged that he "could arrest anyone in the U.S."⁴⁰

Peace Democrats decried the abuses, but in the early days of the war, with jingoism rampant, Union leaders ignored them. Lincoln rebuffed Supreme Court Justice Roger Taney when he attempted to veto the president's suspension of habeas corpus. Taney was the senior federal circuit court judge in Baltimore. He ruled in *Ex parte Merryman* that only Congress had the authority to set aside the writ of habeas corpus. Lincoln refused to obey Taney's order, however, and the Republican press defended his action. They said it was necessary for the president to move quickly to deal with the threat against the Union.⁴¹

By 1861 the telegraph allowed reporters to wire their editors details about troop movement and military strategy almost instantaneously. From the earliest days of the war, Northern newspaper reporters traveled with Union troops. The military became concerned about a public that soon knew more about war developments than some of its own generals. As the two armies jockeyed for position in close quarters, Northern generals discovered that Southern agents

were readily securing information about their plans and troop strength. Confederate informants did this either by intercepting telegraph messages or simply by reading Northern newspapers. General William Sherman complained, "To every army and almost every general a newspaper reporter goes along . . . reporting our progress, guessing at places . . . inciting jealousies and discontent, and doing infinite mischief."⁴² Sherman was the most antipress general in the war, either prohibiting reporters from traveling with his troops or attempting to censor their stories.

Following the First Battle of Bull Run, on July 21, 1861, correspondents protested that the army censored reports of the Union loss when they attempted to telegraph stories to their editors. During the late summer and early fall of 1861, the Army of the Potomac sought to accommodate the press by agreeing to a voluntary plan of censorship. Union officials told newsmen they were to report no military information without consent of the officer in charge of the area. After a short trial the agreement failed because some journalists, attempting to scoop their competition, repeatedly violated the arrangement. Secretary of War Edwin Stanton ordered that provost marshals review all reporters' messages before transmission via telegraph.⁴³ In 1862 the president further clarified the matter. At Sherman's insistence, he ordered that the commander in charge of a combat area had to authorize all journalists in the field.⁴⁴ Northern officials also pressed for censorship in nonmilitary sections of the country.

Rampant paranoia quickly infected the North. Those in authority branded dissidents' activities treasonous. Conversely, when civil authorities attempted to maintain security, dissenters brought charges of oppression. In Columbus Governor Dennison began reviewing telegraph messages, including those that the city's newspapers transmitted, before allowing them to be sent out of the city. Medary protested a civilian authority's repression of the rights of the press, seeing it as a foreshadowing of what he feared most from a wartime government. He called Dennison's step "an act of usurpation wholly without authority and inconsistent with the rights of citizens and the liberty of the press."⁴⁵ Medary believed strongly that the right to dissent was constitutionally guaranteed, and he was certain that journalists could alter the course of the war by influencing public opinion. He began to understand that freedom to oppose was an issue that required examination and defense. In an early issue of the *Crisis*, he reprinted the

resolutions the Virginia legislature had issued in 1798 in response to passage of the restrictive Alien and Sedition laws.⁴⁶ In April 1861 he wrote, "If men and presses are not to have the freedom of expressing an opinion ... we must arrive at repression gradually."⁴⁷

A group of New York City editors, including Greeley, had formed the Telegraphic and General News Association in 1849. During the war years this and several other loosely organized press associations became known as the Associated Press (AP). The arrangement saved money by pooling resources and sharing the cost of telegraphing stories.⁴⁸ But because Medary felt the reporting was both shoddy and reflected an abolitionist or Unionist bias, he refused to subscribe to press associations. After the AP prematurely reported a Union victory at the first major battle of the war (Bull Run), Medary said he had proved his point. He wrote, "We are not surprised that characterless fellows [AP reporters] get desperate when an Editor interferes with their licensed falsehood and nonsense." He charged that they should confine themselves to "known facts" instead of transmitting "street rumors."⁴⁹

Medary stuck by the exchange system that journalists throughout the nation had depended upon since the 1700s. He used the privilege provided by the U.S. mail to swap the *Crisis* with other newspapers. From the earliest days of newspaper publication in America, the exchange system flourished because it permitted cost-free news gathering.⁵⁰ Critics of the exchange system called it "scissors and paste-pot journalism," but it was not necessarily the shady form of reporting some have labeled it. For decades press exchanges had given politicians a ready-made way to distribute information to their followers. Exchanges were the most efficient means of reaching the electorate. The system also had inherent checks and balances, since editors could compare differing versions of the same story for accuracy.⁵¹

Medary had cultivated the procedure during his earlier newspaper career, and he reinstated his exchanges shortly after beginning publication of the *Crisis*. One of the most important duties of a publisher who participated in exchanges was to service his system. The editor who did not mail the latest copy of his newspaper each week to those on his exchange list soon found himself left out. Within a few months of its beginning, other editors began showering the *Crisis* with articles because they knew that when Medary reprinted them they would receive national exposure. Medary had to explain to fellow editors that

he could not reprint all the articles from the exchanges he received because of lack of space. His acknowledgments of the exchange articles he ran show that, because of its prominence, the *Crisis* became a national clearinghouse for Peace Democrat articles. Later in the war he appealed to editors of other newspapers who did not practice fair play when reprinting *Crisis* articles. Not giving the originating editor credit for writing a reprinted story was an abuse that few participants in the exchange system tolerated.

Journalistically, Medary disagreed with the sensational approach that many Eastern newspapers practiced. Throughout the conflict, he continued to believe that a newspaper's purpose was to discuss and debate political issues from a partisan perspective. For the most part, he spurned the practice of devoting large amounts of type to recounting breaking events. Medary perceived the *Crisis* as a weekly news commentary. There were four other newspapers in Columbus, two of them dailies. Readers had already heard or read about the most recent battle news. Medary attempted to gauge an event's impact, giving readers a Democratic twist and encouraging them to react appropriately. The *Crisis* was unique in this regard. His refusal to carry battle news also indicated his revulsion at the war.

Medary wrote lengthy editorials about the effects of the battles on the country's political health. He viewed the war as a protracted continuation of the political battles he had witnessed over the past twenty-five years, even calling the *Crisis* a "national political newspaper." According to him his editorial approach sought to speak to his readers' intellect, their reason. Rarely did he attempt to appeal to readers' patriotism. He said the public should not expect to be comforted by what they read in his publication. Although he often wrote eloquently, he made no apologies for his use of invective because it was time to "take off the gloves." The prospect of a bloody war made him furious. He wrote, "When a great country, and the fate of a mighty people are at stake, it is no time to retreat to our closets to pick words of delicate meaning, or to hunt phrases to sit on the ear of love."⁵² Medary did not attempt to be impartial. He selected material for the *Crisis* that authenticated his point of view; he interpreted events from his perspective. But according to the Columbus historian Osman Hooper, "There is no indication that he ever falsified a report or garbled a public document.... It was always possible for a reader to tell where the document ended and the interpretation began."⁵³

The origin of the stories Medary used helped show in how many different areas of the country people read the *Crisis*. It also proved that the *Crisis* could count among its subscribers many who lived in Southern states. Letters of support from fellow editors soon came pouring in. In March one from the *Kentucky Register* noted that its readers should pay careful attention to what Medary had to say. It advised that because of his long career as a journalist he had endeared himself to all who sought to uphold the Constitution. The article added, "Candor forces us to admit when we remember the locality in which *The Crisis* is issued, that it is a wonder of self-denial, boldness and courage."⁵⁴ During the same month Medary ran stories from newspapers in Charleston, Mobile, Memphis, and New Orleans. He also printed opinion pieces from political leaders and subscribers in both North and South. A letter from the Democratic *Saint Louis Christian Advocate* observed of Medary: "It is pleasant, refreshing to meet with a real *live* editor—one who 'speaks right on,' turning neither to the right nor the left."⁵⁵

On May 5, 1861, the Republican *Detroit Free Press* first used the term "Copperhead" in reference to Northern newspapers that did not support the war. The reason the newspaper gave for choosing the snake's name as an epithet was that it was a serpent that people throughout the Middle West feared. According to authorities it struck its poisonous blows without warning. In the following months more Republican papers began using the term. Throughout the North, Unionists used it in reference to all ultraconservative people who sought an end to hostilities or a compromise with the South.⁵⁶ Usually the targets of slander were Peace Democrats. Republicans made handy use of the Copperhead label to ensure that voters associated the term with traitorous activity.⁵⁷

After the beginning of the war, Democrats in Ohio divided themselves into two camps, Peace and War. Although maintaining their support of a convention of states to settle sectional strife, War Democrats supported the Lincoln administration's waging of the war. Republicans agreed with the War Democrats, and members of the two groups joined together to form the Union Party. Prominent members of this faction included the next two governors of Ohio, Mahoning County railroad executive David Tod and the former publisher of the *Cincinnati Enquirer*, John Brough. Joel Silbey refers to them as "Legitimists," because they justified the war by saying it would save the

Union. Peace Democrats (Silbey calls them "Purists") believed that, short of a military victory over the Confederacy, there should be a negotiated peace.⁵⁸ They referred to themselves as the "noninterventionist party," and Medary was one of the most visible members of the group. Besides Medary, the group included many other Douglas supporters. Purist leaders were Dr. Edson Olds, an ex-congressman and publisher of the *Ohio Lancaster Eagle*; Hugh Jewett, a state party leader from Zanesville; George Pendleton, a congressman from Cincinnati; and Senator George Pugh. Other members included state supreme court justice Allen Thurman, ex-senator William Allen, Dayton's congressman Clement Vallandigham, and Senator Samuel S. Cox.⁵⁹ The Peace Democrat movement sprang up throughout the North from New York to Wisconsin, but it was most widespread and influential in Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois. According to George Knepper, "In no state was Copperhead activity more visible or led by abler men than in Ohio."⁶⁰

Even after fighting began, Medary refused to accept that war was the only way to settle sectional differences. From his perspective, abolitionists and Eastern businesses were influencing decisions in Washington and therefore should be held accountable, with the Republican administration, for precipitating the fighting. In the *Crisis* he reflected, "For sixty years our Government was administered on the basis of National and State Independence, as defined by Jefferson. We prospered in peace and industry until we became the wonder of the world." The South was wrong in seceding from the Union, Medary asserted. On the other hand, because of the doctrine of states' rights, he sympathized with Southerners because, in his mind, the North had perpetuated wrongs against the South. He charged that the rebellion should not have surprised Washington politicians because "the equilibrium of the National and State Governments has been broken."⁶¹

The issues, of course, ran much deeper and the causes of the conflict were much more complicated and bipartisan than Medary depicted them. Abolition played a role, but causes for the war were legion and had been intensifying for years. Instead of pointing to moral, social, or economic issues, however, the historian Michael Holt maintains that political distrust was the primary cause of the conflict. "The Civil War represented an utter and unique breakdown of the normal democratic political process," says Holt. In the two decades preceding the war, all white Americans, he argues, became

obsessed with protecting their latitude to govern themselves and their freedom from threats to that right. For them, aristocratic advantage and consolidated power were the principal menace. Holt adds that the breakdown of the two-party system into sectional, fragmented coalitions representing special interests further fueled the fire. Each section of the country believed its own ideology was best for the whole. When their particular needs were not met, many Americans came to believe that the political process no longer worked. Avery Craven contends that the differences were beyond being geographically sectional. He says, "Emotions developed about differences, which by 1861 made it impossible longer to reason, to trust, or to compromise."⁶² These were the real cause. Groups within each section decided that other areas of the country were seeking to undermine Thomas Jefferson's ideal republic. Holt says, "Where they differed was in the way they defined the anti-republican plot and in the steps they took to combat it."⁶³

Party politics did not take a back seat even though the war threatened the very existence of the country. Men of all political persuasions supported the conflict, but they did not lay party differences aside. In the words of the editor of the *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, we "would have preferred that the fight be carried on between the extremes in the North and South, but since it is *our* country that solution is not possible."⁶⁴

Consistently defending Democrats who opposed the war, Medary noted that their cause was honorable, but they are "suspected of disloyalty because they are unwilling to give up their portion of [these] rights."⁶⁵ Medary believed Republicans had made major mistakes in judgment, but because they controlled the nation they could impose their questionable logic upon the entire country. In retaliation he put forth a radical plan to head off what he viewed as an attempt to annihilate the Jeffersonian ideal. He predicted that the Middle Western states would "most assuredly either set up for themselves [as a separate nation], or form a friendly alliance with the South."⁶⁶ It was a wild claim, but one he saw as no more preposterous than the existing division between North and South. If the country could not function as a nation, perhaps it would be best to subdivide it fully. He believed the men making decisions in Washington were wrong because they had violated the Founding Fathers' basic principle of popular decision making. He also charged that the Republican Party was "inadequate to restore order, retain its own strength or act in harmony on any

great measure of national health." He felt the fight for states' and individual rights aligned Ohio with the South against tyranny in Washington. Medary also believed the Confederacy should be allowed back into the Union on its own terms. Ultimately, he saw the Buckeye State as being capable of deciding the future course of the nation: "Ohio may yet by her position hold the destinies of this nation and people in her hands."⁶⁷

Publishers had conditioned the public during the prewar years to read newspapers to make sense out of the charges, countercharges, and wild rumors that swirled around them. Continuing in partisan alignments that they had adhered to in previous decades, readers believed the only place they could get the truth was from the paper that represented their interests. As such, a British observer called American newspapers during the war the "People's Press." He commented that "everyone above the level of a casual laborer read [newspapers, which]... expressed views and prejudices that people often shared." Because the public was eager for news about friends and neighbors who had volunteered, increased circulation made publishers more prosperous. Even soldiers in the field, who were often out of touch with the overall progress of the war, were ravenous consumers of the latest news. One officer wrote that his men were so hungry for news that they "would shoot their generals if newspapers did not arrive soon."⁶⁸

Although it quickly established itself as the leader of the Peace Democrat press, the *Crisis* was far from alone in its antiwar rhetoric. In Ohio, Unionists branded the *Cincinnati Enquirer*, the *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, and the *Dayton Empire*, along with many other smaller papers around the state, Copperhead because of their peace-seeking editorial stance. Of the 154 peace papers that operated during the war, some of the most prominent were the *Chicago Times*, the *New York World*, the *New York Journal of Commerce*, the *Indianapolis Sentinel*, and the *La Crosse (Wisconsin) Democrat*. Other peace papers were published in Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Pennsylvania. Ohio was a leader in the effort, however. The reason for this was that, in Medary's words, "If there is a state between the Atlantic and Pacific where the freedom of speech has fuller play than another, it is Ohio."⁶⁹

On July 21, 1861, the first major battle of the war took place thirty miles southwest of Washington at Bull Run (Manassas Junction).

Although both armies fought poorly because of inexperience, the Confederates drove the Union troops back toward the capital in disarray. Peace Democrats charged mismanagement and bungling on the part of Union generals. The Union loss and Lincoln's subsequent request for 500,000 more volunteers (to serve three-year commitments) lent weight to Peace Democrats' antiwar pronouncements. Contrary to what many Northerners had predicted, this would not be a short war. Meanwhile, the Democrats fought to stop the conflict from escalating into what they labeled "total war." They opposed a conflict whose goal was not only to restore the Union but to destroy the South's way of life.⁷⁰ Medary contested Lincoln's call for more men and extended service. He charged that the president did not have the authority to call for additional volunteers without prior authorization from Congress, which he had not secured.⁷¹

The aggressiveness of the Peace Democrats' campaign aroused many Northerners' uneasiness. In the eyes of Republicans, opposition to the administration's war goals represented resistance to the war and the Union, and a backlash against Peace Democrats began to manifest itself during the summer of 1861. In June Medary reported that a mob had seized a Democratic farmer in Stark County because his "freedom of speech was not at all agreeable to the abolitionists thereabouts."⁷² On August 22, in Canton, the *Stark County Democrat* became the first peace paper in Ohio to pay for its dissent. Ohioans who could not countenance the antiwar, antiadministration movement decided to put a stop to a Peace Democrat newspaper. A mob led by Union Army lieutenant Edward Meyer attacked the newspaper's offices at night and left it in shambles. Meyer's father was the mayor of Canton, and, embarrassed by his son's actions, he convinced the city council to pay three thousand dollars in damages to Archibald McGregor, editor of the *Democrat*.

Within a month most Ohio Peace Democrat newspapers began to feel the heat. Threats from Republicans to tar and feather Peace Democrats, ride them out of town on a rail, or hang them became common. In Marion irate Unionists threateningly hanged a copy of the *Mirror*. Shortly after that, adversaries attacked the offices of the *Express* in Jackson and the *Forum* in Bucyrus. A Democrat who witnessed one such frightening incident wrote: "The Abolish had an illumination here last night. . . . [They] visited the houses of prominent Democrats—hissed, groaned, and threw stones through the windows. Their conduct would have shamed devils out of hell."⁷³

Medary deplored the attacks and charged that the abuse against Democratic editors was a sign of Republicans' guilt about the war. He wrote that if the leaders of the country made decisions for all people based on pure and honest motives, they had nothing to fear from newspapers. On the other hand, he argued that readers should be free to decide if an editor was leading them astray. "If [newspapers] speak the truth . . . the people should be enlightened," he said. Medary added, "If they pursue a contrary course . . . the great mass of the people will laugh at them, and, if they advocate treason, . . . the law provides an ample remedy." Medary agreed that he was no more above the law than any other publisher, but he insisted upon equal rights for both Republican and Democratic editors. In an August editorial he wrote, "While the law guarantees freedom of the press, it wisely holds every person answerable for the abuse of the privilege."⁷⁴

Medary did not escape 1861 wholly unscathed. By early summer several Republican papers had labeled him a traitor. In September the *Cincinnati Gazette* wrote that Medary was a secessionist and charged that the existence of the *Crisis* "threatens a Civil War in the North."⁷⁵ Medary, of course, did not back down. Reprinting the accusations, he told readers that he had expected such charges. He refuted the attack by saying that papers like the *Gazette*, "which print false and sensationalized stories," became confused when men like Medary confronted them with real facts. He told readers the *Crisis* scared such papers because "the language we use is so different from theirs that they take it for granted that we must be somehow dangerous to the well-being of society." He advised readers that they should expect opposition papers to attempt to discredit the *Crisis*. Part of his purpose, he wrote, was to make Republican publishers uncomfortable. He expected retribution because "we have struggled fruitfully to supply our readers with a different kind of food for the mind."⁷⁶

The four other newspapers in Columbus during the Civil War included two dailies: the *Ohio State Journal*, the state Republican organ, and the *Ohio Statesman*, the state Democratic organ. Weeklies were the *Crisis*, the *Capital City Fact*, and the *Columbus Westbote*, a German-language paper. The *Crisis*, the *Statesman*, and the *Journal* had the largest readerships. But the weekly circulation of the *Crisis* exceeded the daily circulation of the *Statesman* and *Journal* combined.⁷⁷

For Medary, his chief local newspaper opponent was the editor of the *Journal*, Issac Jackson Allen. Throughout the war they traded barbs not only on political issues but also on business practices,

patriotism, and journalistic integrity. Medary editorialized that freedom of the press was definitely alive in Columbus because the people of the city were tolerant of this "vile abolition sheet [the *Journal*]." He added that the *Journal's* editorials had "stunk in the nostrils of the great mass of the people."⁷⁸ In few of the early issues of the *Crisis* did Medary miss an opportunity to attack the *Journal's* opinions. In April he insisted, "We have pretty well proved by articles . . . in our columns that the editor of the *Journal* is a 'traitor' of the very worst kind."⁷⁹ Not to be outdone, the *Fact*, in an article the *Journal* reprinted, accused Medary in the fall of being a member of the Knights of the Golden Circle. This was supposedly a secret society of pro-Southern Ohio men who, according to Unionists, intended to set up a Middle West Confederacy by force and replace Lincoln with Jefferson Davis.

Given the rhetoric of the Peace Democrats, it is not surprising that Republicans continually speculated about the existence of the underground group. Although the Democrats repeatedly stated that they would not stoop to using Unionist tactics (i.e., armed intimidation), staunch Northerners doubted them. With Medary's reiterated statement that the Middle West should declare itself a separate nation, it followed that Unionists would link him with this nefarious group. But Unionists never proved a connection between Medary and any subversive Democratic group.

Lack of evidence never stood in the way of accusation during the war, however. In October the *Fact* claimed that during testimony a Marion Democrat whom Union officials were trying for treason had made a startling revelation. Reportedly he had revealed that Medary was secretly the head of the Knights of the Golden Circle. The same man accused Martin, publisher of the *Statesman*, of being a member of the organization and using the *Statesman's* office for Golden Circle meetings. Replying to the charges, Medary said he was not a member and he did not believe the clandestine organization even existed. "It is our honest conviction," he added, "that the whole affair was concocted by a few dishonest politicians to influence well-meaning men to vote against Democratic party nominees."⁸⁰ Feeling that the accusation had damaged their reputations, however, Martin and Medary brought libel and slander charges against the editors of the *Fact* and the *Journal*. In December the *Fact's* editor sheepishly admitted to a grand jury that he lacked evidence to support the charges. Both the *Fact* and the *Journal* ran retractions.⁸¹

As Medary recuperated from this attempt to discredit him, he became aware that his task was even more difficult than originally imagined. His initial attempt to convince the people through the *Crisis* that taking up arms was not the answer to the nation's problems had failed, and he now faced the alarmingly real challenges of legal and armed intimidation. He recognized that Unionists intended to use whatever means possible to prevent Peace Democrats from questioning the wisdom of enforcing the Union's will on the rebellious South. The events of the previous few months went contrary to every tenet of the democratic belief system he had spent a lifetime promoting.

As Medary saw it, the war had initially been about states' rights. But he became convinced that Northern politicians had changed its focus. He began to think that the original rallying cry had been merely a smoke screen. The shooting war was Mr. Lincoln's fight, not his. His dispute was with the Union politicians who intended to impose their vision of America on Middle Westerners by redefining individual freedoms. His answer was to escalate his campaign of words, to get Democrats to the polls to throw the self-serving politicians out of office. In the fall his editorials urged Ohio Democrats to marshal their forces in an attempt to turn the tide of war by winning the November elections. The rallying cry of his campaign in print became "The Constitution as it is, and the Union as it was." Medary was discouraged, but he also believed that his *Crisis* represented the best chance for the public to learn the truth about the war that corrupt politicians had involved them in.

5

"Our Troubles Thicken upon Us at a Whirlwind?ace"

In June 1861 a regular reader of the *Crisis* wrote Samuel Medary asking if he might pay the two-dollar subscription cost by serving as a reporter. Medary answered that anyone was welcome to write articles and to send them to the *Crisis*, but he had no obligation to pay for submissions. But he assured readers that if he decided to publish an item, he would not charge the writer for publishing it.

Medary also used the occasion to note that he did not agree with hiring correspondents and had no respect for newspapers that employed reporters and other "non-professional writers." He argued that the practice, which began in the 1830s, had proven to be a curse. He called it that because, in his words, "Correspondents, who write for a living ... are compelled to hunt for something, true or false, generally the latter, to earn their bread." He contended that hiring writers and paying them for articles had "nearly destroyed all the character newspapers ever had, both for sincerity and veracity." Journalism was changing, but Medary persisted in his belief that a newspaper's content should represent solely the values of the publisher. He wrote that as publisher of the *Crisis* he stood behind everything printed in its pages. He said, "If a man does not write what he feels and feel responsible for what he writes, he abuses his own intellect, and does a gross wrong to the public." He reiterated that the purpose of his newspaper was to scrutinize issues and to preserve his observations as a record from which future generations could discover the truth. Medary firmly believed that he wrote for "the public good and with unselfish

ambition." He concluded that use of money to secure news corrupted the journalistic process and subverted freedom of the press.¹

He acknowledged that many sentiments expressed in the *Crisis* were unpopular while standing by his conviction that "coercion of the mind is worse than coercion of the body—as there is a writ of habeas corpus to release the latter, but no such writ to rescue the former."² With these comments he represented himself as more than a partisan journalist. He had strong opinions about the practice of journalism. His one-man *Crisis* operation indicates that he trusted no one to help him interpret events. By hiring others he might have expanded his operation and influence, but throughout the war the *Crisis* remained a passionately personal undertaking.

While Medary cited Thomas Jefferson as inspiring his faith in the preeminence of press freedom, he also drew encouragement and inspiration from a Civil War contemporary, the Massachusetts lawyer Wendell Phillips, a constitutional theorist. By reprinting Phillips's statements Medary highlighted his peculiar ability to agree publicly with another man on certain ideas while differing with him on others. Phillips expressed an ardent free-press philosophy but at the same time favored abolition—a fact Medary failed to mention in the *Crisis*. The two men initially found common ground beyond their view of the press because Phillips was a harsh critic of Abraham Lincoln's administration. In addition, he opposed all attempts to suppress newspapers. As a popular orator and writer, he admonished Americans that the mob execution of Elijah Lovejoy was a symbolic attack on the Constitution. Reiterating Jeffersonian ideology, Phillips wrote, "The community that will not protect its most ignorant and unpopular member in the free utterance of his opinions, no matter how false or hateful, is only a gang of slaves."³

During the early months of the war Medary regularly cited Phillips's comments on press freedom to support his peace agenda. But as the war progressed he gradually distanced himself from Phillips because the New Englander moderated his stand so he could support the Union effort. If the Union is a ship of state, Phillips reasoned, "It is necessary to throw everything overboard that we may float. It is a mere question of whether you prefer the despotism of Washington or that of Richmond."⁴ Despite the apparent betrayal of men like Phillips, Medary refused to be swayed from his First Amendment stand simply because it was a time of national strife. To the contrary,

for him the war was only one means the abolitionist-influenced administration used to stifle freedom. Others might fall for the strategy, but he refused. In a *Crisis* editorial he sought to defend his efforts, writing, "Our personal liberties mainly depend upon the preservation of our Constitution; from it we derive our right... to speak and publish and investigate the acts of public officers." He added that there was an immense amount of work to be done because guarding against politicians would keep all newspapers busy for a long time.⁵

In fact, politicians' activities in Washington never ceased to give Medary cause for alarm. As the administration sought to deal with the Confederate threat, it set in motion principles that would affect the country long after the war. With the war effort initially going badly for the North, both on the battlefield and behind the lines, President Lincoln sought to centralize federal authority in the Executive Branch. On the battlefield he personally made recommendations for strategy, and he replaced generals when he believed they were not aggressively carrying out these recommendations. Behind the lines he and other administration officials used the conflict as justification for increasing restrictions of civilians' rights. There was real concern in Washington that secessionist and peace movement activities could cripple the Union effort to win the war and maintain civil obedience.

Medary saw Lincoln's assertive moves as a clear signal that the federal government intended to strip Americans of their personal freedom and way of life. The country was out of control; the war had gained a momentum all its own. At the end of 1861 he wrote, "Our troubles thicken upon us at a whirlwind pace." His efforts to head off fighting had failed, and he wrote of his dejected state: "The gleam of light of yesterday is turned to thick, impenetrable darkness today by some new turn in the wheel of events."⁶

On August 7, 1861, Medary and other Peace Democrats gathered in Columbus for their first state convention and argued about how they might oppose continuation of the war. Many of the delegates denounced Lincoln's actions in dealing with dissension. Others could not bring themselves to support Medary's plan to seek an accommodation with the South, nor could they fully support a resolution to appeal to the administration to stop short of total war. The group that proposed this radical program was substantial, however, and it succeeded in nominating Medary for governor. **But** his candidacy was stillborn. Fellow Democratic leaders agreed with him in principle, but

they knew that at this point in the war most Ohioans saw his strategy as too extreme and would vote against him. Even Medary conceded that he could have a greater impact by continuing to devote himself to the *Crisis*. Declining the nomination, he stated, "We would prefer a couple of thousand new subscribers to any public station in the country."⁷ The convention settled on Hugh Jewett as a compromise candidate. He supported both the administration's efforts and the Medary faction's idea of holding a convention of states to settle the war. Although the platform divided Peace Democrats, delegates left the convention confident that because of rising public distaste for the war they could win in November.

A month later, War Democrats and Republicans met in Columbus and held a coalition convention that resulted in the formation of the Ohio Union Party. Because of the bipartisan makeup of the convention, it had no choice but to nominate a compromise candidate. The delegates chose former Stephen Douglas supporter and War Democrat David Tod for governor and Republicans for other important posts on the state ticket. The party's platform included pledges to support the war and the Union at all costs but made no mention of its position on slavery.

Between the conventions and the election radical Unionists ransacked more peace newspapers in Ohio. One of those was the *Clermont County Sun*, the paper Medary had founded with Thomas Morris. Following the attack on the *Sun*, Medary commented, "It is something new in this land of freedom to carry elections by suppressing newspapers, but such seems to be the tenor of the land."⁸ It is impossible to gauge the impact of such incidents on the election, but the Union ticket won overwhelmingly, capturing both houses of the legislature and the governor's seat. Tod, who owned coal, iron, and railroad companies in Mahoning County, was an experienced politician and businessman. During his twenty-four months in office he dealt aggressively with Democratic dissent in Ohio, turning Medary against him.

Despite the Peace Democrats' loss at the polls, 1862 was an important year for them. During most of the year the results of the war effort were mixed. Southern victories on the battlefield and growing Northern casualty lists substantiated Peace Democrat claims that the war was an enormous blunder. At the battle of Shiloh in early April, more than two thousand Ohio soldiers were either killed or wounded.

Increasingly the cost of the war in lives struck Ohioans personally. In battle after battle that year, mismanagement or bungled opportunities by Union commanders led to losses or incomplete victories. Staggering numbers of casualties accompanied each military encounter. The Confederate Army pushed Northern forces back from Richmond in the Seven Days battles. Union troops lost a second engagement at Bull Run and suffered through the bloodiest single day of the war in September at Antietam.

Lincoln stripped Ohio general George McClellan of his command because he failed to pursue Robert E. Lee's forces following Antietam. At the same time the president used the partial victory to announce the Emancipation Proclamation. This document effectively altered the nature of the war from a sectional conflict to a moral struggle to free the slaves. Lincoln's action outraged Peace Democrats. Medary charged that radical abolitionists, led by men like "General" Horace Greeley, had forced "Massa" Lincoln to issue the proclamation. The allegation was untrue, but for Medary the impact of Greeley's "Prayer of Twenty Millions" editorial affirmed Greeley's influence.⁹ In his column Greeley asked Lincoln to abolish slavery, and the president responded that he intended to do exactly that. Medary countered that Greeley's dream for the Union was quite different from his own. He said it "is a very different vision from that which our fathers gave us, and which our Democratic soldiers entered the army to fight for."¹⁰

In the *Crisis* Medary charged that the only way emancipation would ever be carried out would be "under the iron rule of despotism."¹¹ It was bad enough that Americans were killing each other over an issue in which Peace Democrats believed the federal government should not be meddling, but with the president's announced intention of freeing the slaves on January 1, 1863, Peace Democrats refused to support the war in any way. They refused to sanction a campaign in which white men's blood was being shed to liberate what Medary called "wooly heads." Peace Democrats amended Medary's slogan to read: "The Constitution As It Is, The Union As It Was, and the Negro Where He Is."¹² Hearing of Lincoln's decree, Medary said, "We have at last hit upon the lower round of our national existence." He declared the emancipation announcement a "Mexican Pronunciamento; the moment is frightful."¹³

Lincoln's concern for the slaves had been evident since the 1850s,

but his position on slavery evolved as the war progressed. The 1858 Republican platform was the first in U.S. history to elevate slavery to a question of morality. It accentuated the fundamental philosophical difference between Republicans and Peace Democrats.¹⁴ Because Peace Democrats supported the Jeffersonian ideal that to be independent an individual needed to hold property, they considered blacks, few of whom owned land, inferior. During his 1858 debates with Douglas, Lincoln voiced his conviction that the Declaration of Independence never sought to guarantee freedom for white men only. Contrary to Medary's convictions, Lincoln cited the Declaration of Independence instead of the Constitution as the guiding philosophy behind his political thought. He said he agreed with Douglas that black people were not his equal in many respects. But, "In the right to eat the bread, without the leave of anybody else, which his own hand earns, he is... the equal of every living man."¹⁵

Early in the war, however, Lincoln had held a position on slavery not unlike Medary's. Lincoln believed that the Constitution forced him to uphold the right of Americans to possess slaves. In August 1862 he wrote Greeley, "If I could save the Union without freeing any slave I would do it."¹⁶ Eric Foner and Olivia Mahoney maintain that this is the hallmark of Lincoln's political technique. He was successful because of his ability to be flexible and to show a capacity for growth on issues. He acknowledged that the war dictated events to him; he did not dictate to the war.¹⁷ Lincoln always made certain there was public support for a cause before throwing the weight of the federal government behind it. He exhibited this strategy on the issue of emancipation when he changed his mind about making it an issue worth fighting for after initially declining to do so. In the words of Foner and Mahoney, "Lincoln understood that the war had created a fluid situation that placed a premium on flexibility and made far-reaching change inevitable."¹⁸ The president decided to issue his proclamation because he came to believe that the prospect of ending slavery would motivate the Northern public to win the war.

Peace Democrats meanwhile refused to alter their view of emancipation. They saw it as a political scheme to erode the working-class white man's freedom. Before Lincoln's pronouncement Medary feared the end of slavery because of the impact it would have on traditional American society. In a *Crisis* column he wrote, "The great mass

of our people regret the existence of slavery and would rejoice to abolish it." But "those who endeavor to abolish slavery . . . however conscientious they may be, are endangering the liberties of their country and promoting rebellion," he added.¹⁹

Medary could not see white control of blacks—"creatures apart"—as morally wrong. In March 1862 he theorized, "The negro is a negro and *not* a white man . . . negro slavery is no slavery at all, but the normal condition of the African."²⁰ As a traditional Jacksonian Democrat, he refused to consider the issue from a humanitarian perspective. He was unwilling to change *his* opinion on the issue even though the majority of Ohioans had. Medary looked at emancipation as another parof of an abolitionist political conspiracy to strip white Americans of their constitutional right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of property (happiness). In the July 4 issue of the *Crisis* he warned readers about the perils of emancipation. He wrote that "a man of more discernment than notoriety, told us fifteen years ago that the people of the Northern states would someday lose their own liberties in a vain endeavor to give liberty to the negroes."²¹ Even more important, Medary was certain that emancipation would permit cheap black labor to overrun Ohio, robbing farmers and laborers of their jobs. This had been a concern of the working classes in the Middle West for several decades. It manifested itself as violent opposition both before and during the Civil War.

Beginning in the 1850s, labor leaders in the North had used blacks as strikebreakers in an attempt to reduce white laborers' wage demands. At one point during the war, one Republican displayed an unusual understanding of the Democratic revulsion toward abolition. He wrote that, contrary to Republican claims, Democratic concern over abolition had nothing to do with principles or patriotism but was purely economic: "It is not a question of loyalty, but . . . one of bread and butter."²² In the summer of 1862, fear of emancipation precipitated renewed violence among the laboring classes in the North, with anti-Negro demonstrations and riots in many cities. In July a disturbance broke out on the Toledo docks after mostly Irish stevedores refused to work alongside contraband blacks. Some of the most serious violence occurred in Cincinnati. One white observer there remarked, "The levees yesterday were so dark with negroes that pedestrians found it difficult to peregrinate without lanterns."²³ Shipyard owners had hired blacks to replace striking Irish dockworkers. Soon after-

ward, black neighborhoods became targets of white rioting. The violence continued for several days, and many houses in Shantytown, the Negro section of town, burned. Struck with "negrophobia"—fear that blacks were overrunning the North—out-of-work laborers also took out their frustration on blacks in Chicago, Detroit, and New York City. And without anticipating the inflammatory ramifications of its action, the War Department transported several railroad cars of black laborers to southern Illinois to help harvest crops. (Because so many farmers had become soldiers, crops were rotting in the fields.) Upon the blacks' arrival, however, violent opposition forced military commanders to return them to camps south of the Ohio River.²⁴

During 1862 Medary dealt with emancipation and freedom of the press in nearly every issue of the *Crisis*. He despised abolitionists, maintaining that they were at the root of the country's racial and therefore sectional problems. He missed few opportunities to depict them as the most evil individuals in America. According to Medary, they were "infidels in black coats and white neck ties, with Bibles in one hand and bowie knives in the other."²⁵ Early in 1862 he campaigned for Ohio to be excluded from being "a harbor for free 'niggers'" (a pejorative he regularly employed). More than 30,000 people signed a petition that was sent to the Ohio legislature opposing emancipation, but with the General Assembly under Republican control, no action was forthcoming.²⁶ For Medary the issues of emancipation, of Northerners dying for a questionable cause, and of the indebtedness politicians were imposing on Middle Westerners to sustain the war were inextricably linked. In a *Crisis* commentary he lamented, "Tens of thousands of white men must bite the dust to allay the Negro mania of the president." He added that "a half million more are called for and millions of debts are yet to be saddled upon the people to carry out this single Negro idea."²⁷

The moralistic editorials of abolitionist editors made emancipation a rallying issue. "Seldom if ever in American politics has an issue so polarized the major parties."²⁸ In Congress during 1862, ninety-six percent of all Democrats voted against measures that would have affirmed emancipation, while ninety-nine percent of Republicans favored them. With a majority on Capitol Hill, Republicans could easily pass bills to free the slaves, but they moved cautiously, fearing Middle Western repercussions at the polls in the fall.²⁹ The Republicans might as well have proceeded, because Peace Democrats brought up the

issue at every opportunity. They referred to Republicans as the "party of fanaticism," which "intended to free 'two or three million semi-savages' to 'overrun the North' . . . and 'mix with their sons and daughters.'" ³⁰ It was negrophobia at its worst.

Another federal mandate in 1862 further heightened the tension between Middle Western Peace Democrats and the Lincoln administration. By summer, when it became apparent the war would not end quickly, Lincoln again called for extended three-year enlistments for Union soldiers. Unlike the year before, however, the combined effect of the peace movement and discouraging war news made it difficult for Ohio to meet its new minimum. Recognizing the obstacle, the president quickly issued a draft order to county militias in the early fall to fill the quotas. Peace Democrats vehemently objected to what Medary called the "dread command." They opposed a military draft for three reasons: (1) it represented another governmental infringement on individual liberties; (2) the president's presumed authority to take the action, without Congress's authority, was another violation of the Constitution; and (3) it established a network of provost marshals to whom the War Department had granted authority to enforce the draft. After violent confrontations greeted recruitment efforts, the president granted the provost marshals additional control. In so doing, he proclaimed, "All persons discouraging volunteer enlistments, resisting militia drafts, or guilty of any disloyal practice affording aid and comfort to the rebels" subjected themselves to martial law. ³¹

In July Congress backed the president's steps to deal more forcefully with civilian interference with the war effort by passing the Treason Act. It declared that any person who aided a rebellion against the United States or its law would be tried for sedition. Those convicted of the charges would be imprisoned "for a period not exceeding ten years . . . [or by] a fine not exceeding \$10,000." Medary labeled the act another poorly veiled attempt to restrict freedom of the press. He added, however, "We shall, like a good and loyal citizen, do our best to not violate one single section. If we do, we shall take it back whenever the *Ohio State Journal* [the state Republican organ in Columbus] will point it out." ³² One historian says the act "resembled in every way but name the Alien and Sedition Acts of 1798," but it was never used by the Union government to prosecute newspaper publishers during the war. ³³

County officials, who were in charge of recruiting, began offering

bounty money to induce local men to enlist, but this enticement led to widespread corruption. Some men collected bounties in several counties, and wealthy draftees who did not want to fight paid poorer men to substitute for them. Others accepted the bounty money, only to desert. The substitution policy further convinced Peace Democrats that the rich and influential occupied favored positions in America. It proved to them that the blood on the battlefields was being shed primarily by the have-nots in American society, and that this was a rich man's war but a poor man's fight—a view shared by poor Southerners.

Yet even bounty money was an insufficient lure in many areas. The militia draft met with fierce resistance throughout the Middle West. Opposition mobs wounded a draft commissioner in Wisconsin and murdered two enrollment officers in Indiana. Democratic leaders, led by such men as Lancaster's Dr. Edson Olds, made many public speeches urging obstruction of recruiting efforts or exhorting already enlisted men to desert. They counseled men that by changing the focus of the war from saving the Union to freeing the slaves, the administration had absolved them of dying for the North. In July Governor Tod retaliated. Using power granted him by the War Department, he had Olds arrested and sent to Fort Lafayette in New York harbor. State officials arrested eleven other Ohioans for similar activities during 1862, including William Allen, who spent several weeks incarcerated at Camp Chase in Columbus. Medary printed letters from the imprisoned men and decried the fact that military authorities were holding them in deplorable conditions without filing formal charges.³⁴ Before the end of the year, it was necessary to deploy troops in all the Middle Western states to enforce recruitment.

Medary was able in the *Crisis* to influence subscribers' opinions; Republican newspapers did the same for their readers. The partisan reading habits that publishers had ingrained in the minds of the populace persisted throughout the war. Parties' devotees looked to their respective newspapers for an "accurate" interpretation of reality. Because their versions varied, partisan newspapers spent much time attacking each other.

Medary vigorously tried to prove his views and undermine opposition newspapers. He consistently blamed Republican papers for inflaming a jingoistic spirit among Americans. He reprinted stories from Republican papers to show that they practiced poor journalism and therefore could be depended upon only to mislead their readers. In a

December 1861 editorial he informed readers that his writing was unlike that seen in Republican papers. He wrote, "Our purpose has not been to indiscriminately publish the 'news,' as it came to hand, nine-tenths of which is either pure fiction or so distorted by the writers for some ignoble purpose, that it is little better than falsehood." He advised them that they could rely on the honesty of the *Crisis*, since its purpose was "to cull from this mass of contradictions what comports with the facts, and may be thus relied upon with some certainty by the reader."³⁵

Under the headline "Why the Public Mind Is Bewildered," Medary told readers why he believed the "cheap, sensation press had become disgraceful to American journalism." He argued, "It was the 'yellow-covered' cheap literature that first sapped the morals of the rising generation, and prepared the public mind for a worse species of moral ethics in cheap newspapers."³⁶ He regularly chided Republican newspapers for speculating on the progress of the war and for printing unsubstantiated rumors about Peace Democrats. Medary was not imagining that these things happened. Many newspaper editors across the political spectrum relied on nonprofessional sources to fulfill readers' appetites for news about the war, and there were extensive abuses. Besides publishing Associated Press dispatches and exchange stories, editors routinely published stories from freelance correspondents and civilian letter writers. The reporters often wrote more opinion than news. "There was much speculation, hero-worship, gossip, exaggeration, bias and misinformation."³⁷ In addition to ongoing editorial commentary, it was common for Confederate sympathizers to plant rumors in Republican papers concerning Peace Democrat activities. Northern secessionist conspirators, who were considerably more pro-Southern than Peace Democrats, were often behind such subversive activities.³⁸ They hoped that by encouraging distrust in the North they could perpetuate divisiveness that would aid the Southern cause.

Regardless of the source of their information, Republican and abolitionist papers competed fiercely with their Peace Democrat counterparts. Both sides seemed bent on determining how low they could descend in assailing each other's rhetoric and activities.³⁹ Because Peace Democrats were not in power, they paid a higher price for dissent than their Republican adversaries. A few Republican newspapers even encouraged readers to use force to close Peace Democrat papers.⁴⁰ The campaign against the dissident press grew in ferocity

during 1862 as civilian attacks were aided and abetted by official government action. A new phase of censorship began in February 1862 when the president placed the U.S. Postal Service under the jurisdiction of the War Department. This made it possible for military officers to restrict the use of the mail by dissident papers in their districts. In addition, the War Department granted officers the authority to enter and close the offices of newspapers that they deemed guilty of obstructing the war effort. Military leaders even gave battlefield commanders the right to stop peace papers from being received by men under their command.⁴¹

In June federal troops arrested the Democratic editor of the *arcleville (Ohio) Watchman*, John Kees, for antiadministration sentiments. Troops shut down his newspaper and sent him to prison in Washington, where he remained until 1864. In the same month the postmaster in Wheeling, West Virginia, A. W. Campbell, banned the *Crisis* from the mail in his state. Campbell, who was also publisher of the Republican *Wheeling Intelligencer*, accused Medary of "disloyalty to the government of the United States."⁴² By this action Campbell took revenge on Medary for repeated editorial comments that West Virginia was not legally a state. When Virginia seceded from the Union in 1861, many individuals in the western counties near the Ohio River remained loyal to the North and formed a separate state. Union strategists were happy to keep the Baltimore & Ohio railroad line, which ran through this part of Virginia, in Northern control for military reasons. Medary considered creation of the state unconstitutional and erroneously but repeatedly called the new state "Western" Virginia.

The War Department took additional action against an Ohio newspaper in October when provost marshals arrested Archibald McGregor, editor of the *Stark County Democrat*. They confined him for a month at Camp Mansfield but filed no charges. After the incident Medary commented, "The whole Republican press is jubilant—what a crew of modern devils these abolitionist editors are."⁴³ Despite McGregor's arrest, the *Democrat* continued to go to press under the direction of McGregor's wife, who refused to back down from her husband's antiadministration rhetoric. Two weeks after taking over his publishing duties, she remarked in an editorial, "The administration is drunk with power, addicted to tyranny, [and] characterized by imbecility."⁴⁴ Medary pointed to Mrs. McGregor's work as a sign of

the unwavering courage of Peace Democrats in Ohio. He wrote, "Let tyrants blush—a noble wife, a true woman is filling her husband's post admirably."⁴⁵

During the war, opponents of Peace Democrat editors suppressed or destroyed the property of nearly one hundred newspapers.⁴⁶ Peace newspaper editors throughout the country suffered from the actions of either civilian groups or military authorities. Unionists attacked papers in New Hampshire, Wisconsin, Pennsylvania, New York, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Ohio, Illinois, and Indiana.⁴⁷ Civilian mobs usually destroyed presses and type and burned paper and furniture from the newspaper offices. Peace editors were forced to rebuild their shops at a time when most were barely getting by anyway because the content of their newspapers limited advertising and circulation. Many went out of business because they could not find financing. Others did not rebuild because their constituency was so poor that it was not worth their while.

Despite constant threats, dissident editors refused to moderate their opposition. In December 1862 Medary assailed Governor Tod as a "political scalawag." He was outraged at the governor's order to halt distribution of the Peace Democrat *Cleveland Herald* along Northern railroad lines in Ohio. Medary noted that Tod's directive was most notably being enforced along the tracks served by the Cleveland & Mahoning Railroad, of which Tod was president.⁴⁸ In nearly every issue of the *Crisis*, Medary repeated his conviction that the events of the previous few months were part of a general conspiracy. He charged, "The cursed abolitionists,' Greeley and his crowd, are slowly destroying the nation in order to change the status of the Negro."⁴⁹

Month after month, Peace Democrats and Republicans charged and countercharged that each was to blame for continuation of the war. As part of the campaign they accused one another of political intrigue. Republicans made particularly effective use of this tactic as the party in control at the federal and state level. They hoped to convince the public that Peace Democrats were engaging in subversive activities in order to wrest political control from them.

Peace Democrats, on the other hand, condemned Republicans for using emancipation as an excuse to prosecute the war and subvert individual liberty. Both parties exaggerated their effectiveness in affecting the course of the war and suspected the other of plotting or

carrying out insurgent activities. Their suspicions were the logical consequence of the years of political combat preceding the war. Each party believed its own vision of the future of the Republic and feared that political opponents were undermining it.

Jean Baker notes that American political culture had bred mistrust from the eighteenth century on. "After the revolution, Americans retained an apprehensiveness that became the distinguishing characteristic of their republicanism," she writes. Following the Revolutionary War, many Americans wanted only a civilian militia. The warnings of conservative writers had convinced them that in times of peace, a standing army would become mercenary and victimize the public. In the years before the Civil War both parties printed pamphlets cautioning Americans to be on guard against the tyranny of a standing army.⁵⁰

Peace Democrats wholeheartedly supported the existence of an army to fight frontline battles, but the presence of such military personnel as provost marshals in noncombat areas indicated to them that the federal government was attempting to extend its control over the Middle West. Before the war the only representatives of the federal government that most Ohioans had contact with were postmasters. The provost marshals, however, outsiders who were assigned areas throughout the Northern states, became a visible token of the perceived oppressiveness of the Lincoln government. The War Department had originally assigned them to enforce the militia draft. But with the widespread dissent, the administration broadened their authority to include many other duties, most of which were left to their own interpretation. Many marshals were vindictive. Some "interfered with elections, arrested local Democrats, sent troops to destroy opposition presses, monitored church services, released slaves, and conducted military trials."⁵¹

Medary became convinced that with each new measure to deal with dissent in the Middle West, the president was laying the groundwork to make himself dictator of the United States. Lincoln had heightened Peace Democrats' fear when, during the first eighty days of his administration and before Congress convened on July 4, 1861, he had taken unprecedented steps. Without congressional approval, he blockaded Southern ports, increased the size of the regular army, ordered the disbursement of government money, and suspended the writ of habeas corpus in Maryland. Medary pointed out that the civil

wars in Europe that had preceded the American conflict had all resulted in authoritarian regimes. He said, "Power in the hands of one so utterly incompetent as Mr. Lincoln will cause the people to stand aghast at the premonitions of disaster . . . that threaten on every hand." This was only to be expected, because "the crazy and reckless brains of the country [the abolition press] control him."⁵²

At the same time that the administration declared martial law in the Middle West, restraints on commerce brought another economic depression to Ohio. The War Department hoped to choke supply lines to the Confederacy and shorten the war. Trade between the Ohio and Mississippi Valleys had begun in the 1790s and had grown markedly during the years preceding the Civil War. With the Mississippi River blockaded, however, Southern markets for Ohio produce were no longer available. Medary blamed New England business interests for these difficulties. He claimed the trade barrier was bringing absolute bankruptcy to the Middle West: "The blockade is killing us, instead of injuring the South."⁵³ Medary always underscored the negative effect of political action on working people. He wrote in nearly every issue of the *Crisis* about the "terrible suffering" the administration's policies were bringing to the laboring class. He sadly observed, "Thousands are out of employ and many [are] starving to death."⁵⁴

His emphasis on the workingman's plight was another indication that Medary continued to see the war as a sectional conflict. Unlike Republicans, he viewed sectional strife as existing between not only North and South but between New England and the Middle West as well. New England interests, he felt, were dictating the country's economic policies. It did not help their image in the eyes of Middle West-erners that sixty percent of abolitionists were from New England.⁵⁵ Medary called New England businessmen "Lords of the Looms." In a typical anti-Northeast editorial, he declared: "The West will not bleed at every pore because well-preserved and fanatical New England declares that such is her patriotic duty."⁵⁶ Medary told readers that New England's greed had originally driven the South out of the Union. Now it was attempting to make the Middle West its slave and servant. As evidence he cited the railroad monopolies and the president's new taxes and tariffs. He saw them as benefiting companies in the East at the expense of the agrarian Middle West, and his accusations were not totally without foundation.⁵⁷ "The war was largely financed in the East; the East got the lion's share of government war contracts . . .

they were shifting their investments from trade to manufacturing." And most New England business leaders were Republican.⁵⁸

A majority of people in the Middle Western states shared Medary's long-standing belief in the superiority of their region. Between 1820 and 1860 most publications referred to the area as the Great West—"An Experiment in Humanity." According to David Donald, "This opinion persisted through . . . scores of private letters, stacks of sermons and piles of newspapers and literary journals" throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Many in the upper Ohio Valley honestly believed that "the Great West is destined to produce 'an enlarged and improved edition of . . . the species man.'" Politicians from the area did not ask for leadership positions in the nation's political affairs; they demanded them. Middle Westerners, therefore, were easily offended when their vision was threatened. And they typically viewed Eastern industrial interests as instigating the slights.⁵⁹

To oppose New England's domination Medary repeated his 1861 call for Ohio and the neighboring states either to establish a separate confederacy or to align with the South. Such an alliance would reopen Mississippi River trade routes and would force New Englanders to admit the error of their heavy-handed ways. Such a concept may seem fantastic today, but it troubled the president, who responded by placing great emphasis on the Western command of General Ulysses S. Grant. Lincoln closely monitored Grant's efforts to capture Vicksburg so the Union could control trade on the Mississippi River.⁶⁰

Peace Democrats were not concerned only about the material influence of New England interests, however. They had convinced themselves that the Puritan-Evangelical standards dominating New England religion lay behind the administration's steps to limit freedom. New Englanders, that is, were trying to impose their religious principles on the rest of the country. The Democratic *Cincinnati Enquirer* joined with the *Crisis* and other Peace Democrat papers in claiming this as a motivation. The *Enquirer's* editor, Washington McLean, said Ohioans opposed such views. New Englanders were "narrow and short-sighted . . . and they are intolerant, illiberal and cruel in their method of carrying them [their plans] out."⁶¹ Peace Democrats were exaggerating the influence of New England churches on Washington's thinking, but Robert Kelley feels that a sense of moralistic Republicanism did in fact guide the war effort. He notes,

however, that Union leaders built their perspective on more than a set of religious values. They drew their convictions from traditional Federalist and Whig thought, which championed a more unified national community. Unlike Peace Democrats, Republicans had updated their vision of America. Its origin notwithstanding, nationalism caused conservative Democrats grave concern.⁶²

Republicans more and more frequently referred to the Union as a nation, as opposed to a collection of states. The war was changing America's character. Nationalistic fervor threatened the Jacksonian-Democratic ideal of individual and states' rights and the agrarian, Middle Western way of life. In addition, it undermined the lifestyle and freedom of the idyllic Jeffersonian yeoman farmer. The Republican-controlled federal government needed a consensus to win the war, but Peace Democrats contended that the states preceded the federal government in existence and therefore in authority. Peace Democrats viewed federal hegemony as a way for Washington politicians to ravage civil liberties. The established prewar Jacksonian-Democratic mission remained clear. Centralized federal authority represented the greatest threat to liberty, and Democrats' mission was to oppose its growth. Since Andrew Jackson's first presidential campaign, Democrats had stressed that they "had to be fearlessly vigilant against the encroachment of power." They believed the struggle between central and self-government would always characterize the American political experience.⁶³

As 1862 progressed, Peace Democrats increasingly opposed the administration's activities. In May, Medary cautioned Republicans, "Would to God, that the authorities were fully sensible to the great blunder they have made [and] of the slumbering volcano underneath."⁶⁴ The reparation that leading Peace Democrats had in mind, however, was not violent in nature. They foresaw their party turning the tide by means of the ballot box. As Medary looked forward to the 1862 elections he counseled subscribers, "In this state of despair there is only one hope left [a Democratic initiative]." He urged readers to support Peace Democrats, who stood for returning the country to its previous state. He exhorted them to join together in turning "every man out of office who is in the least tinged with abolitionism ... and all the 'isms' that curse the nation."⁶⁵

From the Democratic perspective the franchise was the greatest defense against infringement on constitutional liberties. Peace Demo-

crats had taken a beating at the polls the previous year. On July 4, 1862, they met in Columbus for a state convention, which, they believed, presented an opportunity to reverse the nation's fortunes in the face of the overwhelmingly bad war news for the Union. The convention gained strength when several War Democrats reunited with the Peace faction of the party. They deserted the Union Party after war weariness began taking its toll. Although the news from the battlefield was bad enough, Medary did everything in his power to convince readers that the war was going even worse. In the *Crisis* he noted that after only a year lack of progress on the battlefield had tempered early optimism in the North. The promise that a superior Northern force could compel the Confederacy to rejoin the Union had become a pipe dream. In the words of Louise Stevenson, "the immediacy of privation and death began to outweigh the abstract goal of freedom" for the Northern public.⁶⁶

In nearly every issue of the *Crisis* Medary called the conflict a "monstrosity in every sense" that had no end in sight. He composed a list of the war's effects on everyday life in Ohio. "The resources of half the old Union [are] fastened up . . . prices of commodities doubled, taxation quadrupled . . . and the bastard government administered but on the caprices of reckless 'wire-pullers' [lobbyists]." ⁶⁷ Moreover, Medary and other leading Peace Democrats maintained an exhausting schedule of speaking engagements in which they delivered their extreme rhetoric to large crowds. The messages appealed most to Irish and German Americans, who feared the loss of their jobs to cheap black labor. The many Southerners who had immigrated to Ohio and become known as "Butternuts" had brought their anti-Negro bias with them to the state. Many in these groups lacked access to current information and were poorly educated or illiterate, so their leaders brought the news to them in highly volatile, highly biased language. "They tried to scare people into voting for them."⁶⁸ It often worked.

During the state convention Peace Democrats depicted themselves as the only genuine defenders of the Constitution. Resounding denunciations of the strong-arm measures the administration was using to deal with opponents of the war characterized the gathering. According to the speakers, such actions would help prolong the war. The delegates also claimed that the proposal to emancipate the slaves was unconstitutional. They did admit, however, that they could not hold President Lincoln responsible for all these actions, condemning

abolitionists for taking over control of the federal government and blaming them for discouraging Lincoln from following his (presumed) conservative inclinations.⁶⁹ The delegates appointed Medary to the Committee on Resolutions and put together a platform that proposed withdrawing the Union Army from the South and arranging an armistice. Medary joined with many others in the party who openly criticized the president. They argued that Lincoln should be impeached, either for violating the Constitution or "for incompetence and idiocy."⁷⁰

Shortly after the Peace Democrat convention adjourned, Union party members in the General Assembly restructured the state's congressional districts to head off the anticipated Peace Democrat resurgence. Their gerrymandering, however, could not stem the tide of Peace Democrat feeling that swept across the Middle West in late 1862.

With Ohio families receiving more bad news about casualties among relatives and friends almost daily and with the worsening economic situation, Peace Democrats were able to score a major victory in the November elections. Allen, Vallandigham, and Medary had provided strong leadership during the campaign. Peace Democrats won fourteen of Ohio's nineteen congressional districts, and Medary proclaimed it "the turning point of the war." Peace Democrats even succeeded in electing Dr. Edson Olds, still a prisoner in New York, to the Ohio Senate. Medary ecstatically called the achievement "the greatest 'revolution' since the political triumph of Andrew Jackson [in 1828]."⁷¹ He published a triumphant edition of the *Crisis* with a banner headline: "Unparalleled Democratic Victory at the Capital of Ohio." In the story beneath he wrote, "The whole city breathes free and easy . . . [because] the free negro and shoddy corruption went down in one fell swoop.... Free press and a white man's government is [*sic*] fully established by this vote."⁷² It was the first Democratic majority victory in Ohio since 1853. Indiana, Illinois, and half of Wisconsin also went to peace candidates and became openly anti-Lincoln in 1862.⁷³ To account for their defeat Unionists blamed bad news from the front and the inability of many Republican soldiers to vote in absentia. But two major disappointments cast a shadow on the Peace Democrat victory: (1) No gubernatorial elections had been held in any of the Middle Western states. If the seats had been available, Peace Democrats would probably have secured even greater influence. (2) Vallandigham lost his bid for Congress.

The Ohio legislature's gerrymandering had failed, except in Vallandigham's district. Medary had scolded Vallandigham in 1861 for being soft on congressional bills to fund the war, but shortly thereafter the two men formed an alliance based on the shared goal of a peaceful resolution with the South. In the 1862 campaign Vallandigham was running for reelection to the House of Representatives against Union war hero Robert Schenck. During his campaign speeches, the disabled general proudly displayed the wound to his right wrist that he had received in August as a commander at the Second Battle of Bull Run, but his heroism alone was not what won him the election. Legislative redistricting had placed him in a congressional district more predominantly Republican than the one Vallandigham had previously represented.⁷⁴ After Vallandigham's defeat, Medary branded the Republicans' remapping "disgraceful deviltry" and added, "The abolitionists have only this satisfaction. They beat him [Vallandigham] by legislation, not by voting."⁷⁵

The election victory empowered Peace Democrats, since their faction had converted most Ohio Democrats to their point of view. They repeated their call for conciliation with the South and restoration of the Union to its precession structure.⁷⁶ The Peace Democrats' political resurgence gave a boost to the *Crisis*. In November Medary remarked that subscriptions were increasing steadily. But despite the rising cost of ink and paper he declined to raise prices: "We will hereafter be the cheapest paper published. We owe no debt, receive no patronage and ask for no credit."⁷⁷ Medary was funding much of the operating budget of the *Crisis* out of his own pocket, and it was straining his resources. On a Columbus (Franklin County) census report from 1862 he reported a thousand dollars in personal holdings but listed no business assets.⁷⁸ Although he viewed himself as politically linked with like-minded Peace Democrats, he proudly clung to the fact that he published the *Crisis* independently. He owed no one for the labor or benefits of his undertaking, and he intended to keep it that way.

In December Medary wrote that he received daily additional requests "from the Atlantic to the Pacific" for subscriptions to the *Crisis*. He noted that after two years of publication the *Crisis* enjoyed the largest circulation of any newspaper in Columbus.⁷⁹ Medary claimed that he operated the *Crisis* solely for the people and added that he would continue with it only until, through lack of support, the people informed him that his undertaking was no longer worthwhile. Loyal

readers encouraged Medary by continually writing to affirm the importance of the *Crisis* in their lives. One devoted subscriber said, "I would rather wear my old boots without soles than do without *The Crisis*."⁸⁰ Medary reprinted similar messages in every edition. In a letter from Delaware, Ohio, five men praised him. "*The Crisis*," they wrote, "is the only paper through which men of intellect and statesmen of true patriotism can commune, and be heard without contracting their ideas to please the straight-laced notions of private interests."⁸¹ Such accolades heartened Medary against regular condemnation from the Republican press. He needed the encouragement; although Peace Democrat fortunes were improving, events were making his task ever more difficult.

On September 24, 1862, Lincoln extended suspension of the writ of habeas corpus to the entire Union. Under Article 1 of the Constitution the president's action was illegal because Congress had not approved his authority to suspend the writ. Medary noted, "Mr. Lincoln admits that he has acted in violation of the law, but hopes that Congress will legalize his illegal acts."⁸² Only the legislative branch of the federal government is allowed to suspend the writ "when in cases of Rebellion or Invasion the Public Safety may require it."⁸³ Congress finally did sanction the suspension six months later, on March 24, 1863. During the intervening months Lincoln justified his action by asking rhetorically, "Are all laws, but one (the writ) to go unexecuted, and the government itself go to pieces, lest that one be violated?"⁸⁴ With his action—and others that had preceded it during 1862—the administration's message was that it would not tolerate flagrant civilian dissent.

Nevertheless, following their success at the polls, Peace Democrats were justifiably optimistic about prospects for reversing the course of events during the coming year. After all, many Middle Westerners had shown their renewed faith in them with their votes. According to James McPherson, as the year ended the Peace Democrats "commanded the support of a large minority of the [Democratic] party—perhaps even a majority."⁸⁵

6

"We Have Just Passed the Rubicon . . . to the Season of Discussion"

By the beginning of 1863 Samuel Medary considered the *Crisis* a success. The Peace Democrats' 1862 election victory and the comments he received from subscribers had encouraged him to practice opposition journalism boldly. Typical of supportive readers' comments was a letter from Pennsylvania: "*The Crisis* is bound to flourish; its name is legion. I would not do without it for ten times the cost."¹ Another, from Kansas, pronounced: "There is not a Democratic journal now published in the United States that I esteem as much." The writer concluded: "There is none other that develops the *true* and *genuine* principles of Democracy with equal energy and perspicuity as does *The Crisis*."²

Medary said coast-to-coast circulation was ample reward for his efforts. Despite problems with periodic censorship of the *Crisis* by various postmasters, he continued to publish and distribute the most widely read Peace Democrat newspaper. He wrote, "Our paper seems equally well received wherever it is read____From New Hampshire to the Rocky Mountains it appears to meet the wants of a very large portion of our people." Medary's increased readership gave him hope that his editorials would generate a renewed "national sentiment favorable to a Union of the States at a future date."³ He made note of where his mail came from and what his readers did for a living. He regularly drew attention to farmers, who made up three-fourths of his subscribers. Most of the remaining readers were mechanics in small towns and villages. He told new subscribers that they could buy the

preceding two years' issues of the *Crisis* for four dollars, although he never said how many took him up on the offer.

As the year began, Medary continued to hope discussion between the North and South could bring an end to the war, which he labeled "the mistaken strife." On January 21, 1863, he wrote, "We have just passed the Rubicon, from Despotism and Military Bastilles, to the season of discussion. 1862 tried the nerve and courage of the military officer, 1863 will test the courage and ability of the statesmen."⁴ One of those statesmen, Abraham Lincoln, might have written the same words—but from a very different perspective. To him, men like Medary were part of the Union's problem. In January he told one Massachusetts senator, Charles Sumner, that he feared "the fire in the rear"—Peace Democrats in the Middle West—"more than our military chances."⁵ Lincoln was responding to the 1862 elections, which showed that the Peace Democrats were gaining strength. The president was not alone in his concern. Many other Northerners refused to wait for official policy to quell dissent. Zealous Unionists, spurred on by their distrust for anyone who challenged ardent patriotism, became even less tolerant in 1863.

Such Unionists quickly destroyed Medary's hope that 1863 would be the year in which cooler heads prevailed. On the night of March 5, during a fierce snowstorm, between one hundred and two hundred persons quietly made their way to Medary's office with the intent of stopping the paper's publication. Most were members of the Second Ohio Cavalry, which was reorganizing at Camp Chase (along the present Sullivant Avenue). They were recuperating after battling Southern sympathizers in Missouri and Kansas.⁶

Union enlisted men believed papers like the *Crisis* were prolonging the war. Most of them were from the Western Reserve part of Ohio, and they had been influenced by the intolerant editorials that appeared in the *Ashtabula Sentinel* and the *Cleveland Leader*.⁷ They maintained that Peace Democrat papers sent a message to the Confederacy that it could win the war because the North was badly divided.⁸ Confederate President Jefferson Davis did regard the Peace Democrats as important in helping the Southern cause. He said he thought the movement was "large and strong enough . . . to paralyze the war and majority party."⁹ The editor of the *Cleveland Leader* exercised little restraint in urging patriotic Ohioans to deal with Peace Demo-

crats as they saw fit. He wrote, "Treat Copperheads as assassins, as men who, if they would not aim the knife at your breast, would, at least, not move a finger to arrest the blow."¹⁰

Just before 10 P.M., the mob arrived at the *Crisis* office in the falling snow. They smashed windows, tore the front door off its hinges, and threw furniture and files into the street. The following day, the *Ohio State Journal* described the incident in detail. According to the *Journal*, "The gang of soldiers circled around the door with fixed bayonets and declared death on the man that interrupted."¹¹ The *Ohio Statesman* said some of the men were "armed with swords, and revolvers . . . [and] destroyed whatever they could lay their hands on."¹² After the attack on the *Crisis*, the group moved up the street, bent on wrecking the *Statesman's* offices as well. But just as they began battering that door, Columbus police and officers from Camp Chase arrived to halt further destruction.

On the night of the attack, Medary was in Cincinnati visiting Washington McLean, editor of the Peace Democrat *Enquirer*. When he returned to Columbus the next morning, a cheering throng greeted him at the railway station. The crowd, which was accompanied by a brass band, numbered nearly three thousand. From his supporters' perspective, the previous night's mob action proved that Medary was making progress toward a negotiated peace. Some members of the crowd hoisted him into a carriage, which they then pulled up High Street, before taking Medary to his house.¹³ When he was informed of the reason for his unanticipated welcome, Medary reacted with mixed emotions. He thanked God that the "brave men who met him at the depot" were not rioters but free men. He judged that, "Knowing their rights, [they] dared, in the face of executive scowls and military surroundings . . . [to] give public advertisement that they know how to defend them, and that they intend to do it."¹⁴

The \$600 to \$800 damage to Medary's office was unsuccessful in closing down the paper because it was still being published at Richard Nevins's firm on High Street. In fact, the incident strengthened the *Crisis's* reputation and Medary's tenacity. The episode proved to him that his opponents chose to engage in activities Peace Democrats would not lower themselves to: "We have not touched a printing press of theirs. Can they say the same for themselves?"¹⁵ Because no one publicly claimed responsibility for the incident, Medary initially

accused the publisher of the *Journal*, Francis Hurtt, of instigating the mob. He charged Hurtt with "liquoring up the mob," and with providing abolitionists with uniforms so they could pose as soldiers. Although a week later Medary wrote that he had discovered that soldiers from Camp Chase had actually made up most of the mob, he maintained that the abolitionist press had triggered the soldiers' hostility. Thus both sides accused elements of the press of causing violence.

Colonel August Kautz, commander of the Second Ohio Cavalry, wrote Medary a partial apology. Kautz disavowed responsibility and claimed that he could not punish the guilty soldiers because he was unsure who they were. With his letter he returned four bound volumes of the *Crisis* that he had "discovered" during a search of Camp Chase.¹⁶ But in a letter sent to a relative, Private Samuel Trescott, a member of the unit, acknowledged the soldiers' participation. He wrote a cousin, "The other night about 100 of the 2d O. went to Columbus and destroyed a secesh printing office, one of the worse [*sic*] kind." Trescott objected to Medary's assertion that an unruly mob had attacked the *Crisis* office. Rather, an orderly, disciplined group of soldiers, of whom Trescott was one, had executed a premeditated plan. Trescott's letter illustrated the earnest resentment Northern troops felt toward Peace Democrats: "It was a secesh paper and aided the rebels and as such should be put down."¹⁷

Reaction to the event, predictably, followed party lines. Impassioned Union civilians immediately heralded the soldiers' heroic act. Simultaneously, however, a faction of radical Peace Democrats for the first time called for retaliatory action. The comment of Wilbur Storey, editor of the *Chicago Times*, was typical: "We have been silent thus far, but . . . in every occurrence like that at Columbus, a reprisal should be made."¹⁸ The *Dayton Empire* added, "For every Democratic printing press destroyed . . . let an Abolition one be destroyed in turn." The *Placer (California) Herald* insisted, "No gang of soldiers . . . [is] strong enuf, thank God, to effectively stop the expressions and thoughts of American freemen. If the unhappy time should ever come, farewell then to civil liberty."¹⁹

Six days after the soldiers' action, Peace Democrats held a rally at the Franklin County Courthouse in Columbus. Among several resolutions passed that evening was one condemning such illegal activities. "To suppress by force the Democratic newspapers of this city," they said, "was an outrage that demands the exemplary punishment of the

guilty."²⁰ But words alone were not going to stop Medary's opponents. The following night, unknown antagonists set a fire behind the *Crisis* office in an attempt to burn it down. Columbus firefighters extinguished it before it did much damage.

Attacks on the *Crisis* and other peace papers reflected the growing revulsion that staunch Unionists felt toward Peace Democrats. They viewed the dissenters "as members of a party that 'had sunk so low' that it seemed impossible to sink lower."²¹ They branded their opponents a "fifth column." This expression came easily to rabid Northerners who viewed as traitors anyone who did not wholeheartedly support the Lincoln administration. They used every means available to persuade the populace that unyielding and unanimous support of the Union was the only way to end the war quickly. There was no room in the North for what the Peace Democrats called their "loyal opposition."²²

Peace Democrats initially supported the right of the Confederacy—of any state, in fact—to maintain its sovereignty, but they could not condone armed rebellion against other members of the Union. They stopped short, therefore, of supporting the South's belligerence. But according to Peace Democratic thought, the Union's purpose in the conflict should not be "to crush and conquer the South," nor should the North attempt to destroy the South's social system. Instead, Peace Democrats called for only enough force to repress and scatter the rebel army.²³ But reunion was of no interest to the South, whose leaders wanted peace only if it meant independence from the North.²⁴ It quickly became obvious that the peace faction lacked any real alternative to the fighting. The Confederate leadership rebuffed Medary's notion of compromise because it did not address secession, while Lincoln rejected the idea of the South as an independent nation. The Peace Democrats were, to a great degree, politically isolated from the rest of the country, both North and South.

Peace Democrats' concern about President Lincoln's broadening of federal authority grew out of the two parties' prewar agendas. From the perspective of the Democrats, who were out of power, the national emergency should not have changed the ground rules. Republican statements that the war presented circumstances unprecedented in American history and warranted restrictive policies and extraordinary actions to maintain a consensus war effort failed to move them. Republicans, who held power, felt that the war was

reason enough to halt the opposition party's disputes with official policy. They used the war to impugn the Jeffersonian vision of the Republic. By continuing in their traditional role of criticizing the party in power, Peace Democrats looked like conspirators against the resolution of a national predicament. A New York Peace Democrat, Samuel Tilden, summed up his party's dilemma. He said it was difficult being the opposition during the war because it was "necessary . . . to guard against its [the war] denigrating into faction, and to keep its measures directed to attaining the utmost practical good for the country."²⁵

The historian Henry Hubbart finds an immense paradox in the Peace Democrat movement. He notes that although Peace Democrats constituted perhaps "the most democratic and tolerant section in the United States . . . [they] could not become interested in the prosecution of war for 'freedom and Union.'" He theorizes that many in the Middle West probably rejected the motives for the war because of their blue-collar mentality. In his view they were one of the less intelligent populations of the country. Many individuals in Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois lacked the foresight to understand that war was the only way to deal with the South's intransigence.²⁶

The tension between Republicans and Peace Democrats extended to their interpretation of the Constitution. Throughout the war both parties portrayed themselves as defenders of the Constitution. Men like Medary thought of themselves as victims of the Republicans' broad interpretation. Peace Democrats were, in the Jeffersonian tradition, strict constructionists who believed they were the Constitution's special protectors. To Medary the document was a prescribed set of inalterable rules.²⁷

Republicans, on the contrary, saw the Constitution as "a living document that incorporated laws, customs and practices."²⁸ They believed it had to be adapted to the current crisis to preserve the Union. But Peace Democrats could not countenance curbs on liberty—a direct attempt to circumvent the Constitution in their minds—for any reason, let alone one of (to them) questionable merit. Medary argued that if the Constitution had been adhered to, there would have been no war: "Our Civil War was brought upon us by losing sight of the old marks of constitutional law."²⁹

The administration's attempts to enforce the draft and silence dissent proved to Peace Democrats that the administration was willing to subvert the Constitution to win the war. Medary feared that people in

the North would become overwhelmed by fanaticism and would neglect the basic principles of freedom and self-government that made the nation unique.³⁰ For Peace Democrats, being an American meant having civil liberties. When government officials put curbs on dissent, the democratic experiment would die. The trampling of civil liberties was as threatening "as an invading army."³¹

During 1863 fragmentation within the Peace Democrat Party diminished its potential. The reason for the disagreement was that Peace Democrats like Storey no longer agreed with Medary about the appropriate response to attacks on Peace Democrat newspapers. Medary clung to his conviction that the rhetorical redress that had inspired Democratic victories at the polls was the best answer, but Storey and others were more aggressive. The radical elements of the party no longer believed Medary's editorial approach alone was the solution to modifying national policy. Medary attempted to convince his colleagues that if they struck back, they were no better than their attackers. He advised them to resist impulsiveness: "In moments of high political excitement we all become enamored of our cause; and our hope and feeling may very likely run away with our cooler, calmer juster judgements."³² But he was aware that he could not help the party reach its goals if he distanced himself from or openly condemned their activities.

Despite Medary's calls for peaceful resistance, Democrats became more strident in their opposition to the Lincoln administration after enactment of the Enrollment Act on March 3, 1863. Medary wrote, "All conscription or other forced service of the citizen to the state is contrary to the genius and principles of republican government."³³ He did not encourage violent draft resistance, but his questioning of the government's right to enforce general conscription aroused some Peace Democrats to action. To many the act constituted proof of the government's intent to control their lives, and draft resistance became common in Ohio.

Just after the government made the Enrollment Act public, a group of a hundred Ohio Democrats attempted to protect a deserter against a provost marshal at Hoskinsville in Noble County. Upon the arrival of two companies of Union infantrymen from Cincinnati the protest disbanded, but officials fined or imprisoned fifteen men for their part in the affair.³⁴ The incident was not as significant as Republican newspapers claimed in their initial stories about the confrontation, but

Unionists used it for maximum political effect against peace proponents. Medary wrote about the smear tactic, "If such scrapes are to be gotten up to make abolition votes in Ohio, it will be a dear electioneering campaign for taxpayers."³⁵ Even so, radical Peace Democrats persisted in their defiance, making Medary's protestations that Republicans were exaggerating look like lies.

In early June Democrats assaulted a draft official in Holmes County. When resistance continued in that area and the number of men involved grew, Governor David Tod sent in the militia. Nine hundred men who opposed conscription, armed with shotguns and four small howitzers, barricaded themselves in a makeshift fort. The presence of the militia led to successful negotiations, and the resisters fired only a few shots. The troopers wounded two men. During the next two years it became necessary for the militia to put down a dozen draft riots in the north central and west central parts of Ohio. The state militia was kept on alert to watch for activity particularly in Holmes and Crawford Counties. Democrats referred to these two counties as the Backbone area because the large number of hard-working farmers who lived there were almost all ardent Peace Democrats.³⁶

Opposition to conscription also flared up in other Middle Western states during 1863. In the Indiana and Illinois legislatures, majority Peace Democrats passed bills that would have convened a peace conference of all the states and established a cease-fire. They also attempted to wrest control of the militia from the states' Republican governors. Both governors adjourned the legislatures before either could act on its plans.³⁷ At one point General Ulysses S. Grant had to disband two Illinois regiments in Mississippi because so many men deserted. Additional soldiers let themselves be captured by Confederate troops in the hope of being paroled and sent home.³⁸

The Middle West was not the only area in which antidraft sentiment erupted into violence in 1863. From July 12 through July 16, riots led to more than one hundred deaths during antidraft, antiblack riots in New York City. The city's large population of working-class Irish instigated the violence. During the uproar the mob called for Horace Greeley to be hanged and twice sacked and burned the *New York Tribune's* offices. Many draftees throughout the Union hired substitutes or paid a \$300 commutation fee, while others fled west or to Canada. Use of proxies continued the abuses that had character-

ized the earlier militia draft. Before the end of the war more than 160,000 of 776,000 Northerners drafted refused to serve.³⁹

In March, Ohio's Dr. Edson Olds filed charges against Governor Tod for his earlier imprisonment, which he called kidnapping. Olds had been back in Ohio since December 15, 1862, when Lincoln had released him from prison because of his election to the Ohio General Assembly. Upon his return to his Lancaster home, an admiring crowd (estimated at 10,000) greeted Olds with a parade. With the help of a Fairfield County common pleas judge, Olds filed a warrant for Tod's arrest. When the governor posted bond and the court granted him a continuation, Olds filed a civil suit for \$100,000 against him. Tod's attorneys were able to have the case transferred to federal jurisdiction. As the case dragged on, and the complexion of the war changed, Olds's suit against Tod never went to trial.⁴⁰

As outspoken opposition increased throughout the Middle West during 1863, the War Department decided to take more decisive steps to deal with it. General Ambrose Burnside, best known for his mutton-chop sidewhiskers, had been commander of the Union Army when it suffered a disastrous defeat at Fredricksburg, Virginia, in December 1862. Lincoln relieved him of his command in January and re-assigned him to direct the military Department of the Ohio. The area of his new command included the heartland of Peace Democrat territory: Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois. The general determined to improve on his war record by dealing harshly with the traitors, as he called Peace Democrats, in the Middle West. On April 13, from his headquarters in Cincinnati, Burnside issued General Order No. 38 in which he served notice that he would no longer tolerate "treason, expressed or implied" in the area under his command. The order explicitly contained a warning that "the habit of declaring sympathy for the enemy will not be allowed in this department." Burnside said he would arrest persons who he determined were spies or traitors. He would then try them and send them "beyond our lines into the lines of their friends." The general also served special notice on "orators and presses" that they should be careful of their words and "must not use license and plead that they are exercising liberty. I shall use all the power I have to break down such license."⁴¹

The mandates outraged Medary. Seeing Burnside's order as the most flagrant move yet by the Lincoln administration to suppress

freedom of the press, he forecast "the complete overthrow of public liberties. . . . [It is] the darkest hour since the outbreak of the rebellion."⁴² As for Burnside, he believed that suppression of dissent was the way to improve the North's chances of winning the war. According to Frank Klement, Burnside defined the issue too simplistically. "He interpreted criticism of the administration as sympathy for the rebels, and naively believed the treason charges bandied about by the Republican propagandists."⁴³ Burnside established himself as de facto judge and jury of what constituted treasonous activities. He believed civil courts had failed to carry out their responsibility by not dealing with the problem. General Order No. 38 was no less than a military gag order on opposition sentiments.

Also during April the administration named General William Rosecrans the Union military commander of Missouri. He immediately gave orders to stop circulation of opposition newspapers in that state. The postmaster in St. Louis halted distribution of the *Crisis*, the *Chicago Times*, and five New York Peace Democrat papers. In May, West Virginia's postmaster halted circulation of the *Cincinnati Enquirer* in that state. Union soldiers in Indianapolis met a train delivering the *Enquirer* and threw all the copies into a creek. Medary saw these incidents as additional evidence that the War Department had declared open season on press freedom. Despite the curtailment of circulation, "*The Crisis* [would] maintain that in politics or religion, it is no crime to have honest convictions—mere opinions are not punishable."⁴⁴ Many in the North did not agree.

One man who did, but who intended to do more than write editorials about the War Department's more aggressive policies, was Vallandigham. Although they agreed about the fundamental Peace Democrat concerns of securing peace and safeguarding civil liberties, Medary and Vallandigham differed in their approach. As a journalist who held to his belief that logic and arbitration could settle all differences, Medary persisted in being a political theoretician. The *Crisis* was a sounding board that he used to explain and justify the Peace Democrat cause, including freedom of the press. Because of his belief in the power of newspapers, he felt he could change public opinion through reason and alter the course of the nation through rational discussion. Vallandigham was an activist. Although less experienced than Medary, he was familiar with the prevailing mood in Washington because he had served as a congressman until the end of 1862.

His congressional experience had convinced him that it would take more than editorials to change Republican minds. Twenty years younger and a great deal more emotional than Medary, the impatient Vallandigham believed Peace Democrats could win only through confrontation.

Vallandigham became conspicuous and disliked throughout the Union when he informed fellow congressmen in January 1862 that the North could not defeat the Confederacy militarily. At the end of 1862 he forfeited his congressional seat. Medary was concerned about Vallandigham's inflammatory rhetoric and earlier had questioned his resolve, but he saw in the man a leader who could aid the Peace Democrat cause. Medary had been impressed with Vallandigham's opposition stance in Congress. He wrote in the *Crisis* that Vallandigham's farewell speech to the House was the most "remarkable which ever overtook any nation or people" and that it had been made "by no ordinary man."⁴⁵ Robert Harper calls Vallandigham "the most effective antagonist the government had to deal with during the war... outside of the Confederate armies."⁴⁶

Burnside's order was a challenge that Vallandigham could not ignore. He saw it as an opportunity to shed more light on the right of civilians to disagree with federal policy. On Friday, May 1, 1863, Vallandigham spoke before a large Democratic rally under a starlit sky in Mt. Vernon, Ohio, a Peace Democrat stronghold, and challenged Burnside's authority. Other Peace Democrats, such as Samuel Cox and George Pendleton, shared the podium and joined with Vallandigham in voicing their indignation. The real confrontation, however, was between Burnside and Vallandigham. Because of Vallandigham's charisma and penchant for militant rhetoric, Burnside already considered him the most dangerous Democrat in the Middle West. Two soldiers in civilian dress attended the rally and took copious notes on Vallandigham's comments. It pleased him that the soldiers were there; they helped fulfill his plan of defying Burnside's mandate. The insolent Democrat was fully prepared to offer himself as a martyr, if necessary, to prove the preeminence of constitutional free speech.

During Vallandigham's address, he insisted that his right to dissent under "General Order No. 1—the Constitution" exceeded that of General Order No. 38, which he said he despised and wanted to "spit upon... and trample under [his] feet."⁴⁷ Four days later Burnside sent

a train loaded with 150 soldiers from Cincinnati to Dayton. They broke down the door of Vallandigham's house before dawn, woke him from his sleep, and arrested him. The soldiers took Vallandigham to Cincinnati, where Burnside ordered him held in Kemper Barracks until a military court could try his case. Lincoln wired Burnside upholding his action. The president said, "In your determination to support the authority of the government and suppress treason in your Department, you may count on [my]... firm support."⁴⁸

The following evening, a crowd of two hundred Vallandigham supporters set fire to the Republican *Dayton Journal's* offices. An editorial in the Peace Democrat *Dayton Empire* calling for retribution had inflamed the throng. The flames engulfed half a block of adjacent buildings, which burned to the ground because the mob cut firefighters' hoses. Burnside was forced to send more troops to Dayton. The soldiers soon restored order, but not before they had killed one belligerent rioter and jailed several dozen others.⁴⁹ The showdown between Vallandigham and Burnside bewildered Medary. In reporting Vallandigham's arrest he glossed over the Democratic-fueled violence in Dayton and blamed Unionists for the rising tension. In his eyes the administration had committed an injustice: "Vallandigham is under arrest as a traitor. Governor Tod is still at large. Judge ye of the Government that so judges men!"⁵⁰

A week later, in the Cincinnati court of Judge Humphrey H. Leavitt, attorney George Pugh attempted to defend Vallandigham. Burnside charged Vallandigham with "uttering disloyal sentiments... [and] encouraging unlawful rebellion against the government of the United States." His military court had already found Vallandigham guilty of violating General Order No. 38. Pugh argued that a military court had no jurisdiction over a civilian. He contended that prosecution in such a court violated a civilian's rights under the Constitution. But Leavitt ruled that the president's war powers allowed Burnside to enforce his order, and he turned Vallandigham over to Burnside for punishment. The general sentenced Vallandigham to be held at Fort Warren (in Boston) for the duration of the war. Lincoln, however, feeling that the case would only further inflame Middle Western antagonism, commuted Vallandigham's sentence and exiled him to the Confederacy.⁵¹

Lincoln used the incident to comment on the curtailment of civil liberties in the North. He claimed that the Southern rebellion had

been able to reach into the Union "under the cover of 'liberty of speech,' 'liberty of press/ and 'habeas corpus.'" It was necessary to stifle such dissent because the entire country had become a war zone. He summed up his difficulty in this way: "Must I shoot a simple-minded soldier who deserts, while I must not touch a hair of a wily agitator who induces him to desert?" The allowance in the Constitution for setting aside the writ of habeas corpus made his choice clear: "I think that in such a case to silence the agitator and save the boy is not only constitutional, but withal a great mercy."⁵²

Confederate leaders were uncertain what to do with Vallandigham. His presence served no purpose of theirs, and he had not violated their laws. He was an embarrassment—not a help—to their cause. They put him on a blockade runner that carried him to Bermuda before the end of June, and a few weeks later his Confederate overseer told Vallandigham he could do as he wished. Desiring to be as close as possible to events in Ohio, Vallandigham boarded a ship that sailed north, and by mid-July he arrived in Niagara Falls, Canada. He could see the Union but could not return to it.⁵³

Vallandigham became a hero within the Peace Democrat Party in Ohio. Medary engineered a campaign in the *Crisis* to win Vallandigham the party's gubernatorial nomination. He also began a Vallandigham fund, soliciting donations to support the impoverished exile, and *Crisis* readers mailed in a large number of contributions. The Vallandigham case, harassment of Democratic newspapers, and conscription helped Peace Democrats build on the base they had established in the 1862 elections.

On June 11, 1863, Peace Democrats held their annual state convention in Columbus. Because such a large crowd (between 5,000 and 10,000) attended, proceedings had to be moved from a downtown hotel to the south lawn of the Capitol. Moderates in the party wanted Zanesville's Hugh Jewett nominated for governor, but the Peace faction, led by Medary and Pugh, succeeded in having Vallandigham selected. Medary also convinced the delegates to form a group, the Ohio Committee, to ask Lincoln to allow Vallandigham to reenter the United States.

On June 26 the committee wrote a letter to the president saying Vallandigham had been a gubernatorial candidate at the time of his arrest, so his exile violated the constitutionality of the electoral process. They further protested Burnside's usurpation of authority,

charging, "If freedom of speech and of the press are to be suspended in time of war, then the essential element of popular government to effect a change of policy in the constitutional mode is at an end."⁵⁴ Lincoln replied that he was amenable to Vallandigham's return to Ohio only if the Peace Democrats agreed to (1) recognize the war as a Southern rebellion; (2) agree that the use of force to suppress it was legal; and (3) support and provide for Union troops. The committee rejected the proposal on the basis that it questioned their loyalty to the Union.⁵⁵ The president then refused the committee's request.

The Union Party also held its 1863 convention in Columbus during the first week in July. It drew an equally large crowd. But because many in the party did not believe that Governor Tod had spoken strongly enough in favor of emancipation, he lost the party's nomination to "Honest Johnny" Brough, founder of the *Cincinnati Enquirer*, a lawyer, and a War Democrat. Brough, though an undiplomatic politician, was considered a palatable compromise candidate.

If Vallandigham could win the race for Ohio's governorship, Medary knew, Peace Democrats could have a major impact on the future of both Ohio and the Union. In addition, his victory would embarrass the Lincoln administration. The campaign generated widespread interest. Both parties staged rallies throughout the state, which were attended by thousands of passionate supporters. Medary did all he could in the *Crisis* and on the stump to convince Ohioans that the "gallant exile" was the solution to the problems war had brought to the Middle West. Even if Ohio could not change opinion in the rest of the nation, with Vallandigham as its chief executive, Peace Democrats could isolate the state from Washington politicians and Eastern business interests. A win would allow Ohio to lead in reconciling North and South.

Politics took center stage in the Middle West throughout the summer. Democrats held several large peace rallies in Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois. One big gathering took place in Springfield, Illinois, where nearly 40,000 participated in a demonstration that eventually had to be broken up by Union troops. At another, in Mattoon, Illinois, a three-mile-long procession of anti-Unionists carrying shotguns, rifles, and muskets argued for their constitutional right to bear arms. Union soldiers disbanded the rally by confiscating weapons and beating and jailing many protesters.⁵⁶ In retaliation against Peace Democrat attempts to arouse public support for Vallandigham, angry Unionists

assaulted marchers in a Democratic parade in Van Wert, Ohio, in September, seriously injuring several people. Medary called for moderation on both sides but held Republicans responsible for precipitating the violence. "They are men of wealth and prominence—the oligarchy of our State and the North. They are the natural enemies of liberty, [and] the Constitution. . . . The Negro is simply a means to accomplish their ends."⁵⁷

In July the war came to southern Ohio when Confederate general John Morgan, commanding 2,500 men, crossed the Ohio River near Cincinnati. Morgan's cavalry rode roughshod through much of southern Ohio, randomly stealing or destroying property, scaring residents, and skirmishing with the state militiamen who pursued them. The town of Jackson was particularly hard hit during a two-week period in which Morgan's men wrecked the office of the *Standard*, the Republican newspaper in town. When the militia arrived too late to capture Morgan's men, they in turn destroyed the Democratic *Express*. The militia finally captured the Confederates near East Liverpool. They were imprisoned at the Ohio Penitentiary in Columbus.

Other Peace Democrat newspapers suffered during the summer as well. On June 11 Major General James Blunt, Union commander in Kansas, barred circulation by mail of the *Crisis*, the *Cincinnati Enquirer*, the *New York World*, and the *New York Caucasian* in that state. The editor of the *Marietta (Ohio) Democrat* had been harassed throughout the war; in 1863 a hostile crowd destroyed his printing plant. In August a mob that disagreed with his editorials severely beat the editor of the *Brown County (Ohio) Argus*, J. G. Doren. In September the office of the *Cadiz (Ohio) Sentinel* was ransacked and its contents scattered in the street. Medary noted that many of his subscribers had become the targets of threats in their communities because they received the *Crisis* in the mail. It became common for postmasters, all of whom were Republican, to identify those who received the *Crisis* and report them to the local provost marshal. But the biggest case of suppression of a newspaper during the summer involved General Burnside.

Wilbur Storey's *Chicago Times* was the most aggressively antiwar big-city Democratic paper in the North. The volatile Storey carried sidearms and even hand grenades when he walked the streets of Chicago, because, he claimed, he anticipated possible abolitionist attacks. On June 1 Burnside padlocked the doors of the *Times*. In ordering the

closure, he said, "On account of the repeated expression of disloyal and incendiary sentiments, the publication of the newspaper known as the *Chicago Times* is hereby suppressed."⁵⁸ Burnside's action alarmed people across the Northern political spectrum. The Illinois legislature, controlled by Peace Democrats but repelled by Storey's actions, nevertheless immediately protested the action to the president. William Herndon, Lincoln's former law partner, and Supreme Court Justice David Davis wrote to the president advising him to revoke Burnside's order. The U.S. Senate also passed a motion of protest. Lincoln rescinded Burnside's order, and the *Times* reopened after three days.⁵⁹

The case of the *Times* was unique. For the first time during the war prominent Republican papers joined Peace Democrat publishers in denouncing federal newspaper suppression. Henry Raymond, editor of the *New York Times*, was a solid Lincoln supporter, but after Burnside's action, he wrote in an editorial, "It is very rarely that a military man can be found who is capable of understanding what public opinion is or who can be made to comprehend that the press has any other rights than those which he may be pleased to confer upon them." Raymond urged the president to stop Burnside from suppressing other papers.⁶⁰ In addition, in a rare display of wartime unanimity, a bipartisan group of twelve of New York City's newspapers sent a letter of protest to Lincoln, arguing that any restriction on the press should be limited to "areas where hostilities actually existed or were threatened."⁶¹ When he countermanded Burnside's order, the president, in a letter written by Secretary of War Edwin Stanton, forbade Burnside to use General Order No. 38 against newspapers without presidential approval. Silencing Storey was counterproductive because "the irritation produced by such acts is . . . likely to do more harm than the publication would do."⁶² Burnside, humiliated, sent the president his resignation, but Lincoln rejected it.

If election day had fallen in late June, Vallandigham might have won. Between then and October, however, events eroded his advantage. Vallandigham's biggest handicap was that he could not leave Canada. His exile made it impossible for him to use his considerable talents as a public speaker. Out of necessity he conducted his campaign through correspondence published in the *Crisis*.⁶³ The Peace Democrats used now-familiar antiadministration arguments. Pugh,

who was in charge of Vallandigham's campaign, said that if Vallandigham won, 50,000 armed Democrats would march to Canada and escort the new governor to Columbus.

Medary chose not to print Pugh's threats. The riot in Dayton and belligerent speeches by men like Pugh and Olds showed that many Peace Democrats no longer believed Medary's newspaper campaign could work. In addition, to Medary's consternation, Vallandigham failed to highlight governmental abuses of civil liberties as his primary campaign issue. In his letters to Ohioans Vallandigham said that his time in the South had convinced him that the Union could not defeat the rebels. Medary was not so concerned about who won on the battlefield as he was about which side would dictate the future of the nation in peacetime. Both men contended that the North should settle with the Confederacy, but for different reasons. Pugh's rhetoric represented a third faction that wished for more aggressive tactics.

Medary no longer believed compromise with the South was an option. Instead, he felt Vallandigham could best convince voters to choose him by emphasizing the need for Northerners to preserve their civil liberties. Medary saw this as the most compelling issue for Ohioans because his greatest fear was Republican management of the North, but Vallandigham disagreed.

Despite their differences Medary saw a win by Vallandigham as offering the best chance for traditional Peace Democrat goals. On July 29 Medary said he would, for the first time during the war, be taking a vacation because he was ill. Three weeks later he informed readers that instead of recuperating he had been in Canada with several other Peace Democrats visiting Vallandigham. He had found "'the gallant exile' ... in remarkably good spirits. Buoyed up by the love of his fellow citizens ... he enjoys a confidence in the future which no tyrant can feel, no sycophant appreciate." Medary also said that during his travels he had visited New York's Democratic governor, Horatio Seymour. While in New York he had discovered that "Horace Greeley ... is the real president of the United States, and Lincoln is only Greeley's 'subservient tool.'"⁶⁴ Medary's abhorrence for Greeley's influence was a thorn in his side. Medary firmly believed in the ability of the *Crisis* to shape public opinion. But Greeley's statements in the *New York Tribune* had an enormous impact on the public and the president that Medary greatly envied.

Medary continued to tell Ohioans that Vallandigham was the answer to the problems of the war. "Every vote cast for Vallandigham is a vote for liberty, and every vote cast for Brough is a vote for despotism."⁶⁵ Other events also affected the gubernatorial race. The tide of the war was finally turning in favor of the North. In the first two weeks in July, Union troops repulsed the Confederates at Gettysburg, and Grant's forces finally captured Vicksburg. Possession of Vicksburg gave the North total control of the Mississippi River. Together, the major wins—one in the west and one in the east—marked the military turning point of the war. They also badly crippled Vallandigham's chief argument: that the Union could not subdue the Confederacy militarily. And by this time much of the Middle West was benefiting from a war-driven economic prosperity. The boom undermined Medary's claim that the conflict was destroying the Middle West economically.⁶⁶

During the campaign Unionists found ways to blame "The Great Unhanged"—their name for Vallandigham—for helping to bring about recent negative events. Brough, a convincing public speaker, frightened Ohioans by telling them that while Vallandigham was in the South, he had helped plan Morgan's raid and Robert E. Lee's advance into Pennsylvania. Unionists assured Ohioans that a vote for Vallandigham would bring the war to Ohio with vengeance. Union politicians in the legislature, reacting to pressure from Governor Tod, granted Ohio soldiers at war the right to cast absentee ballots in state elections. The move benefited Republican soldiers and the candidates they favored more than it did Peace Democrat soldiers. Peace Democrat soldiers who were bold enough to acknowledge their political preference were already being denied access to peace papers by Union commanders. In addition, because of their involvement in a war that was lasting longer than anticipated and the abuse they received from fellow enlisted men, many Peace Democrats switched to the Republican Party during their enlistment.⁶⁷

The South's leaders also were aware of what a Vallandigham victory could mean to their cause. At Chattanooga, Ohioans were among the Union troops patrolling defenses across from Southern pickets. Confederate soldiers repeatedly asked their Northern counterparts about the progress of the campaign in the days preceding the election.

Election day, October 13, 1863, was a warm, sunny fall day in Ohio, and the state's polling places witnessed the largest voter turnout in state history. For Peace Democrats, however, the day was gloomy. Out of 475,000 votes cast, Vallandigham lost by over 100,000. The absentee soldier vote, overwhelmingly in Brough's favor, was not even necessary to win the election for him. The margin of victory was the largest in any gubernatorial race in the history of the United States. The landslide astonished both sides. Following Brough's victory, Lincoln telegraphed the new governor: "Glory to God in the Highest. Ohio has saved the Union."⁶⁸ Refusing to believe that he could have so badly misjudged the sentiments of Ohioans, Medary labeled the loss the result of fraud. He wrote, "We are convinced that the people of Ohio have been . . . cheated out of the election of the Democratic ticket."⁶⁹ But the facts were indisputable. The North was finally winning on the battlefield, and Vallandigham's reputation for intrigue and violence had made him too radical for Ohio voters.⁷⁰

7

"The Victory for Free Discussion Is Being Won"

By 1863 Samuel Medary's health was deteriorating. In September he hired Thomas Massey, a veteran editor from Minnesota, to publish the *Crisis* while he attempted to recover.¹ Medary told readers that his doctor had diagnosed his illness as "inflammatory rheumatism," brought on by two and one-half years without outdoor exercise." The doctor's prescription was time off relaxing and "inhaling the clean air" near Lake Erie. Acknowledging that he had not taken a vacation since founding the *Crisis* in January 1861, Medary obeyed his doctor.² The long hours, destruction of his office, election defeats, and curtailment of the *Crisis's* circulation had taken their toll on Medary's physical and psychological well-being. During the remainder of the year, Medary wrote only a few stories.

Medary's health problems antedated the war. In January 1857 he and other Democrats had eaten at the National Hotel in Washington on the day of James Buchanan's inauguration. Several men, including Medary, became seriously ill. Suspicious Democrats alleged that abolitionists had poisoned the food, but they were unable to prove the accusation. After a difficult recovery Medary returned to Ohio, but one of his daughters, Flora Nevins, said, "He never appeared entirely well after the mysterious occurrence."³

Because 1863 was ending on a sour note for Peace Democrats, the time was doubly difficult for Medary. Over the past three years he had pushed himself to the point of exhaustion trying to influence Northern opinion. And although Peace Democrats had scored a major election victory in 1862, his best efforts had not been enough to help elect

Vallandigham in either of two campaigns. Medary believed in Vallandigham's ability to make the party more influential. But Brough's win instead gave Unionists an even stronger base from which to support the Lincoln administration's policies. Medary, however, still refused to deviate from his conviction that electing Peace Democrats remained the only good path toward change. In October he remarked, "The feeling is growing hourly that if the Democratic Party cannot save the country, all is lost."⁴

Winning an even bigger prize, the 1864 presidential election, would certainly reverse Republican momentum. Medary was certain that he could, after three years of Abraham Lincoln's policies, bring Northerners to their senses by helping to elect a conservative Democratic president. According to him, "Mr. Lincoln called out immense armies ... drenching the peaceful fields with human blood, involving the people in debt untold and incalculable ... [and] disturbing the interests of the civilized world."⁵ Medary reminded readers that, although battered, the *Crisis* stood fast. He said it continued to support "the principles of Thomas Jefferson, the division of power in the general government, their complete subordination to the Constitution, and a zealous regard for the sovereignty of states." These were the only ideals that could reunite the Union.⁶

By January 1864 Medary was back in his editor's chair, with Massey continuing as his assistant. Somewhat improved health had renewed his resolve to practice dissenting journalism. Although Peace Democrats were doing poorly politically, Medary saw signs that his First Amendment battle was achieving success. Characterizing the nation as a house, he wrote that though he had offended some during the last three years, "While the house was on fire, it was no time to read essays on sleeping apartments." He explained that "the victory for free discussion is being won ... we will put the fire out." For the first time, however, Medary conceded that the war had changed the nation. It had made the ideal Jeffersonian America impossible. It was time to make the best out of what remained: "We will repair the charred damages. Liberty will be rebuilt on the old site—wiser if not better—more watchful if less ostentatious."⁷

Despite this acknowledgment, Medary had no intention of writing more balanced commentary. Any political appointee who abused the public's trust—not just Republicans and abolitionists—was a fair target for caustic remarks. Criticism of state and national officeholders

was not routine in widely circulated newspapers during the war, since during much of the nineteenth century state judges held that disparaging newspaper editorials exceeded acceptable standards of appropriateness. State judiciaries did not consider opposition editorials honorable journalism, according to Timothy Gleason. They believed that journalists who wrote sharp-tongued columns were inspired by motives other than sincere concern for public welfare. In the courts' view, "personal attacks and counterattacks in the political press did not meet judicial standards of propriety and rational discussion." Any publisher who invoiced the First Amendment as a justification for writing adversarial material found himself in an untenable position. State courts "refused to grant publishers special status . . . or to expand the existing narrow fair report privilege."⁸

Other Columbus newspapers reflected this legal atmosphere and were conspicuous in demonstrating patriotism through lack of critical analysis. Medary, however, saturated the *Crisis* with political commentary and relegated print advertising to the last two pages. His primary competitor in Columbus, the *Ohio State Journal*, differed from the *Crisis* in both appearance and content. Its publisher, Francis Hurtt, filled nearly fifty percent of his four-page daily with advertising, most of which focused on material and medicinal needs of soldiers and their families. The editor of the *Journal*, Issac Jackson Allen, made use of appealing artwork and displayed it throughout the paper, even on the front page. As the state Republican organ, the *Journal's* editorials consistently refuted Medary's arguments. Allen wrote, for example, that he would "not hesitate to strip the guise from traitors and sympathizers with rebellion." He said Peace Democrats were disloyal because they "cloak their treasonable sentiments under the hypocritical cry for a peace that is to be obtained only by compromise with the call to arms."⁹

The *Journal* did not, however, attack Peace Democrats with Medary's skill. While he supported his editorials with historical, philosophical, religious, and political citations, the *Journal* relied on optimistic Associated Press war dispatches and assurances from Republican politicians that the Union was winning. Because it considered Union leaders exemplary, elected officials were acting in the country's best interests. Through extensive use of wire reports and short editorials, the *Journal* gave the appearance of being less partisan than the *Crisis*. But the bias of the *Journal's* stories, its unequivocal

support for the Union Party, and the tenor of its advertising left little doubt about its allegiance. It would not permit stories that might cast the Union administration or military in a negative light because Hurtt believed that faultfinding undermined the war effort.

Medary did not feel similarly restrained. He continually criticized the *Journal* for its shabby journalism and "unobjective" reporting. He also charged that "the cause of good government has been more deeply injured by the daily journals that have professed to uphold it, than by all the other newspapers together."¹⁰ He admonished Republican editors for not exposing questionable government practices, contending that they were not doing so because they owed their allegiance to politicians and advertisers instead of to subscribers. In his opinion, if all newspapers fearlessly supported the constitutional principle of free and open discussion, "men elected to office will fear them instead of use them."¹¹ Medary also accused the *Journal* of filling its columns with rumors and padding. Northerners should consult the *Crisis* for accurate reporting and analysis of the "doubtful romance [i.e., news]" that the *Journal* printed.¹²

Medary's charges seemed to be vindicated during 1863. Accusations circulated for several months that Hurtt, a captain in the Union Army, was also a thief and an embezzler. In December Northern officials brought formal charges against him. Hurtt was Ambrose Burnside's quartermaster and top aide in the Department of the Ohio. When the *Journal's* publisher was found guilty of diverting military funds and supplies for personal use, the episode humiliated Burnside and Union officials. Hum's arrest confirmed what Medary had been telling his readers about Unionists using the war for selfish purposes.¹³

One of Medary's most prominent themes had been that corrupt politicians had led the nation into war. He lamented that Northern officeholders had profited from the situation. He insisted that the nation's problems had grown "out of the wickedness and corruption of politicians. The whole atmosphere of Washington is bedimmed with error [and] mischief."¹⁴ Jean Baker says that Peace Democrats saw in the expanding federal bureaucracy a "'swollen' civil service full of patronage holders, 'shoddy' contractors, and stockjobbers, who swarmed over the land 'like locusts.'"¹⁵ Many dishonest Northerners did in fact profit from the conflict. Lincoln dismissed his first secretary of war, Simon Cameron, for illegally awarding contracts for military

materials. Suppliers of scarce goods for Union troops, taking advantage of the military's needs, overpriced supplies or shortchanged buyers. The trading of confiscated cotton became a major scandal in the North. Union politicians, many of whom retained their business interests while they were in office, also used inside information to increase personal profits.

The ineptitude of Union generals, which according to Medary led to the unnecessary sacrifice of thousands of heroic soldiers, was another subject for his wrath. Peace Democrats were willing to die for the Union, but "we surely have had enough of the generalship of these mere political favorites—not half as fit, many of them, to command as 9/1 Os of the privates in their ranks."¹⁶ His remarks about the army's ineffectual leadership seemed to ring true, since Lincoln had to change the leadership of the Northern army six times before the war was won under the command of Ulysses S. Grant.

Another favorite issue was the tremendous financial burden that the war imposed on the civilian population. The administration enacted the nation's first income tax on August 5, 1861. On July 1, 1862, the Internal Revenue Act levied taxes on "almost everything but the air Northerners breathed." Congress taxed liquor, tobacco, patent medicines, and newspaper advertising and created the Bureau of Internal Revenue.¹⁷ The tax on newspaper advertising hit closest to home for Medary. In his view the Republicans had created an oppressive array of "tax collectors who lived off the people" in many new, surreptitious ways.¹⁸ The passage of each excise tax and tariff, Medary remarked, brought new suffering to the Middle West. The war was not only costing Ohioans their lives but guaranteeing a lifetime of debt.¹⁹

State officials were not exempt from Medary's biting criticism. He charged that Governor David Tod, in his capacity as president of the Cleveland & Mahoning Railroad, was unnecessarily transporting arms and troops around the state to make money. (The Unionist-controlled legislature never investigated Medary's charges.) Medary wrote several stories criticizing the activities of Ohio general John Fremont, who commanded the Department of the West early in the war. The War Department eventually dismissed Fremont after accusing him of corruption and fraud. Medary also charged that conditions at Columbus's Camp Chase were disgraceful. The military confined many Confederate prisoners of war and Peace Democrats there,

where they were "treated worse than ordinary criminals—like dogs."²⁰ After the war, investigators learned that more than 2,250 prisoners had died while confined at the camp.²¹

Loyal readers were pleased with Medary's accusations. In a typical letter to the *Crisis*, one woman wrote, "Wherever there is wrong in the conduct of public business, you are prompt to point it out—It is good to have a watchman on the heights."²² Such comments encouraged Medary in his efforts and heartened him as he became increasingly critical of Lincoln. He regarded Lincoln as freedom's biggest enemy. After the Emancipation Proclamation, Medary believed the administration was moving to enslave Northern whites who opposed its restrictive policies. He justified making derogatory comments about the president and other politicians by citing their constitutional duty to the public. In July 1863 he wrote, "We have nothing to do with Jefferson Davis but fight him, but we have to do with Abe Lincoln and every other person who holds office in the Union; and for whose good or bad deeds we feel the effects."²³

By the beginning of 1864, Medary's fight for press freedom had become personal. In August 1863, following the Union Army's triumphs, Lincoln issued an open letter to the nation's Republican newspapers in which he thanked black soldiers and rebuked Peace Democrats. The president wrote that when victory finally came, "Some black men ... [will] remember that... they have helped mankind on to this great consummation." He singled out Peace Democrats for doing damage to the Union cause. He said, "I fear, there will be some white ones, unable to forget that, with malignant heart, and deceitful speech, they have strove to hinder it."²⁴ Medary published no rebuttal.

Medary was, however, very discouraged that he could not stop the war by influencing voters, or convince them to oppose threats to their civil liberties. Until 1864 he had been willing to accept the bipartisan rumor that Lincoln was a puppet who was not responsible for the constraints imposed in the North. He also was aware that although the War Department took action against peace newspapers, Lincoln had never openly opposed freedom of the press. But when Medary learned that the administration was allowing absentee-soldier voting and that the army was intimidating Peace Democrat enlisted men, he became convinced that the administration was behind Vallandigham's defeat. On January 27, 1864, he wrote, "Lincoln is using

troops to coerce elections in Republican favor at the tip of a bayonet. On such a basis of hostile action does Mr. Lincoln expect to elect himself President, Emperor or Dictator for four more years?"²⁵ For Medary, this prospect was real; its realization would mean the end of freedom.

After the Union Army's gains in 1863, Lincoln believed that 1864 could bring victory to the North. On March 9 he appointed another Ohioan to lead the army as it attempted to finish off the Confederacy. Because of his success in the West, the president made Ulysses S. Grant lieutenant general in command of all the Union troops, promoting a man Medary had befriended when he had first come to Ohio as a teacher.²⁶ But even if the North did win, it would not change the future Medary foresaw for the Republic. Lincoln had all the components in place to ensure absolute control of the nation: martial law, suspension of the writ of habeas corpus, and a standing army. Even worse, in Medary's view, the president had most of the population convinced that their loss of civil liberties was part of the price of military victory. In the *Crisis* Medary warned: "Lincoln is running our country to perdition—destroying 'life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness,' [and] everybody not crazy with 'negro on the brain' knows and knows it well."²⁷ The 1864 presidential election was Peace Democrats' last chance to head off Lincoln's scheme to make himself king.

In January 1864 Medary informed readers why he was continuing his campaign for an unrestricted press: "Having resolved to maintain the liberty of the press, we conceived the best way to do it was to practice it freely." He argued against the sentiment that men like him were just poor losers. "A jury can only return a just verdict when all the facts of the case are fairly presented for their consideration," Medary said, adding, "I ask but to be heard, and let judgement follow."²⁸ Unlike many Unionists Medary did not call for suppression of newspapers that opposed his views. He told fellow journalists it was their duty to be accurate regardless of their political perspective. In 1861, before the first attacks on Peace Democrat papers, he had written, "Every man has the right to his own views. . . . We only ask him to quote correctly, state the facts as they exist, and then let him make his own comments." He also cautioned journalists against printing misleading stories. He added, "If the newspapers could generally be brought to this wholesome condition [truthfulness] it would be a great blessing to mankind in general."²⁹ Medary could not tolerate

journalists who, as he believed, supported the war without questioning its leaders' methods or the consequences of their actions.

Few Republican publishers shared Medary's views about the press in wartime. Many, like Henry Raymond, editor of the *New York Times*, were more comfortable placing their faith in the Union's leaders than in Peace Democrats. Raymond wrote that "freedom of the press and other 'minor rights and duties' may have to be curtailed in the presence of 'overwhelming public necessity.'" The *Times's* editor, who managed Lincoln's 1864 reelection campaign, said he did not believe restricting press opinion during the war would lead to enduring censorship. "The temporary surrender of these rights is a small price to pay for their permanent and perpetual enjoyment," he advised readers.³⁰ The publisher of the *New York Herald*, James Gordon Bennett, also was willing to accept diminished press freedom, even though he often criticized the Lincoln administration on other issues. He commented, "In times of peace the rights of the press are determined by the Constitution, but in times of war, 'the laws of war prevail.'" ³¹ The Republican publisher of the *Chicago Tribune*, Joseph Medill, went even further. He said there was no such thing as "absolute freedom of the press because in society, speech is always limited by the prevailing conditions." He argued that civil law worked in restraining the press during peacetime, but that at other times "the greater the danger, the narrower the limitations" on press freedom. Medill observed, "Until the war is over 'we must be content to accept whatever the altered conditions of the times and the country may demand as a requisite of national salvation.'" ³² National security exceeded Republican editors' concern that press freedom might become a casualty of the war.

Republican publishers saw more of a middle-ground role for the wartime press than Medary did. Medill came closest to conceiving his role in Medary's terms when he described the press as "narrators of facts, exponents of policy and [the] enemy of wrongs." He affirmed the role of the press as a watchman on the walls when he wrote that editors "must not hold their peace when incompetence or rascality is in evidence. Nothing exempts the military from criticism or denunciation." He tempered this stance, however, when he wrote that he did not condone those who did not support the Union. "It was the duty of the press to denounce anyone inside or outside the government who stood in the way of victory."³³ Bennett, whose *Herald* enjoyed the

largest documented circulation of any U.S. newspaper during the war, also agreed that the press should not criticize the government's handling of the war. Newspapers' critical commentary became of secondary importance in wartime. "The press must necessarily assume the position of 'a voluntary department of government,' morally bound to sustain the government and to refrain from publishing 'dangerous and ill-timed criticism.'" He admitted, however, that there "must be some trade-off; the government should keep the press well-informed and under control."³⁴ But he did not say who should oversee this mediation or determine acceptable press behavior.

The federal government was uncertain about the best way to handle the press during the Civil War. Precedents for the situation were scarce in American history. Beyond censorship of reporters' dispatches that revealed military strategy, neither the president nor Congress was willing to enact legislation that would gag the nation's newspapers. Part of this hesitancy grew out of a desire to avoid the restraints that existed under the Alien and Sedition Acts.³⁵ Medary frequently reminded readers of the "reign of terror" that had resulted from enforcement of the acts. During the Civil War the federal government passed no new seditious libel laws.³⁶ Yet men in Lincoln's cabinet like Secretary of War Edwin Stanton took a hard line when dealing with the press. Stanton had imposed restrictions on correspondents' telegraph usage early in the war and had assumed control of the postal service. "Newspapers are valuable organs of public intelligence and instruction . . . but no matter how useful or powerful the press may be . . . it is subordinate to the national safety," he said.³⁷

Members of Congress were as unsure as Lincoln about what to do with those who continually castigated Union policy. Most members of Congress criticized the president for his conduct of the war at one time or another. Lincoln feared that dealing harshly with the dissident press would further polarize civilian opposition in the North to the war. The president had great respect for the power of the press. "Lincoln knew that 'words had to complete the work of guns.'"³⁸ "Rigid, across-the-board restraints might have [had] the effect of antagonizing some newspapers that were useful to the cause or of alienating segments of the population whose loyalties wavered," says John Lofton.³⁹ And Lincoln was hardly a hero to the press, Republican or Democrat. He did not go out of his way to explain his policies to them, and not until the war was over did most editors acknowledge

Lincoln's positive impact during the nation's greatest crisis. In the words of one editor, "It is our great desire to sustain the president and we deplore the opportunity he has let go by, to sustain himself."⁴⁰

Because either his action or inaction always seemed to offend someone, Lincoln made decisions only when necessary. Throughout the war he maintained that each incident had to be considered on an individual basis. David Donald says the president "can be cited on all sides of all questions. His policy was to have no policy. He insisted on resolving conflicts only as they arose." This ambiguity, says Donald, is what made Lincoln great.⁴¹

Some historians believe the president's ambivalent attitude toward the opposition press can be traced to his political heritage. Lincoln had belonged to the Whig Party for most of his political life and did not join the antislavery Republican Party until 1856. Whigs interpreted the Constitution liberally, believing it gave federal officials the authority to apply it according to the existing situation. Albert Beveridge says the president was slow to convert to Republicanism because he felt uncomfortable dictating the public agenda. He continually measured public opinion, moving slowly and making decisions only after determining that broad consensus existed. Lincoln "neither set nor retarded mass movements—but actually reflected them."⁴² He purposely remained flexible on most issues and employed what William Carleton calls "a calculated shrewdness which parried dissidence."⁴³

Mark Neely argues that Lincoln's pragmatism diverted him from considering civil liberties issues on a constitutional basis. When difficult issues arose, the president did not automatically consider the constitutional implications of his decisions. Ironically, Lincoln, when pressed on his right to suspend the writ of habeas corpus, cited a case involving Medary's hero, Andrew Jackson, at the end of the War of 1812. He noted that Jackson, in 1815, had imposed martial law in New Orleans and had rejected a writ of habeas corpus. The president continued, "The permanent right of the people to public discussion, the liberty of speech and the press . . . suffered no detriment whatever by the conduct of General Jackson, or it's [*sic*] subsequent approval by the American Congress."⁴⁴

Lincoln seemed to draw a line between "legitimate party opposition that worked no palpable harm" and blatant disloyalty,⁴⁵ a position that allowed him to maintain the appearance of not sanctioning

press suppression while representatives of the federal government like Burnside undertook restrictive action with the president's tacit approval. In Lincoln's defense it must be said that he often became aware of military newspaper suppression only after it occurred, as he allowed commanders to use their discretion when it came to dealing with opposition papers. Likewise the president took no steps to ensure that similar incidents did not recur. Neely says that while Lincoln privately criticized individual cases of Northern press censorship as heavy-handed, he "publicly defended a policy that permitted suppressing disloyal papers."⁴⁶

Harper's Weekly noted the problem the president faced in trying to uphold the Constitution while preserving the Union. "The press represents the people and must always be given the maximum of freedom." But "the question [is] 'whether newspapers, working for private ends or in the interest of unpatriotic malcontents, should be suffered to weaken the hands of government during wartime.'"⁴⁷ Most Republican politicians readily supported Lincoln in his attitude toward dissident newspapers. Senator Henry Lane of Indiana said, "The administration has shown a forbearance beyond all parallel in history. No government on earth would tolerate [the] treason of these papers."⁴⁸ In the words of James McPherson, "More than any of his contemporaries, [Lincoln] pursued policies that were governed by a central vision"—preserving the Union.⁴⁹ The president believed the only way to do this was by winning the war while refraining as much as possible from antagonizing the Northern public.

Civilian groups showed no such restraint in their actions against peace papers. Medary said states' rights forbade the federal government to end slavery. Private citizens implicitly opposed the cause of states' rights by suppressing dissident newspapers in their states. During the war all Northern states had laws that addressed libel and slander. State courts were unprepared, however, to prosecute publishers for editorials questioning national policy. But civilian violence against papers that expressed unpopular opinions dated from the Revolutionary War. Between the end of the Revolutionary War and the beginning of the Civil War "the mainstream party press was generally immune from majoritarian violence." In American history "violence [against the press] is used only when normal inhibitions... fail to prevent improprieties in public discourse. Boundaries to expression always exist."⁵⁰

Medary was a member of an industry that was under no legal restraints and had grown to be "prosperous, aggressive and independent" in the years immediately preceding the war.⁵¹ In these circumstances only community opinion exercised control on newspapers with extreme editorial positions. Private citizens even felt obligated to take action against Peace Democrat papers. "America during the nineteenth century was a society of island communities."⁵² Each locale set the limits of acceptable opinion, and members of the community expected newspaper editors to stay within them. Because people respected the ability of an influential newspaper to mobilize public opinion, they feared the persuasive power of papers like the *Crisis*. The Middle Western public was divided passionately over the war, and Unionists felt no compunction about using harsh measures against extreme views that might detract from the war effort. Lincoln may have felt constrained by the Constitution or by fear of dividing the North further, but members of local communities did not.

During the winter of 1864, before Grant mounted his spring campaign against Lee's Confederate forces, the Union Army furloughed many Northern soldiers. Some who returned to Ohio joined with civilians in additional harassment of Peace Democrat newspapers. In January mobs ransacked both the *Mahoning County Sentinel* and the *Lancaster Ohio Eagle*. On the last day of February, soldiers of the Forty-fourth Ohio Volunteer Infantry entered the office of the *Dayton Empire*. They had become infuriated at the *Empire's* publishing editorials attacking Lincoln personally for seven consecutive days. During the incident soldiers "threw type out the windows and set the building on fire." Although the city's fire department extinguished the blaze, the confrontation resulted in the death of one civilian and the wounding of two soldiers. The following day the *Empire* ran a story about the latest attack under the succinct headline "Another Riot."⁵³

Mobs ransacked or burned six peace newspapers in other Middle Western states during the same period, but Ohio's Peace Democrat papers bore the brunt of the attacks. In the first week in March, another group of soldiers wrecked the office of the *Greenville Democrat*. A week later civilians destroyed the *Ohio Messenger* in Fremont. At the height of the attacks, the editor of the Peace Democrat *Boston Courier* remarked, "The mobbing of Democratic newspapers has been revived as a pleasant pastime."⁵⁴ Military suppression of peace papers also continued throughout the Middle West. On July 8, Captain Ewald

Over, Union commandant at Wheeling, led a contingent of troops into the office of the Peace Democrat *Wheeling Daily Register*. The bayonet-wielding soldiers barricaded the office and put the editor, Lewis Baker, and several other employees in jail. Lincoln overturned the arrests, citing his concern that the action might inflame Peace Democrats even more. Baker remarked after his release that he remained free only “until some petty fool of Abraham Africanus sees fit to again attempt to wreak the black malice of a rotten heart upon my personal liberty.”⁵⁵

On May 18, 1864, the War Department suspended publication of two Peace Democrat newspapers, the *New York World* and the *New York Journal of Commerce*. The newspapers ran into trouble after publishing a fake declaration by the president. The phony story said Lincoln was calling for a day of fasting and prayer to accompany the enrollment of 400,000 more men into the Union Army. The false announcement was “the product of Joseph Howard Jr., city editor of the *Brooklyn Eagle*.” Howard hoped the hoax would allow him to make a profit in the stock market.⁵⁶ The bogus story could have triggered additional rioting in New York City, but most newspapers refused to print it. Union general John Dix suspended publication of both newspapers for two days.

Meanwhile, Ohio Peace Democrats were mounting a campaign to influence the national Democratic convention in the fall. On March 23 they met in Columbus to choose state delegates to the Chicago convention and determine their plan of action. The group agreed that the Lincoln administration was a failure and again called for a peace initiative with the South. The delegates also condemned the disorder in the North that encouraged mobs to attack Peace Democrat newspapers. The Ohio convention blamed the federal government’s policies for civilian violence. “The tyranny of the present administration has sown seeds from which we are now reaping a harvest of crime.”⁵⁷ When it came time to choose a delegate to the national convention, Medary received several votes on the first ballot but not enough to secure the nomination. On the second ballot he urged supporters to shift their support to Vallandigham. But with the Northern army making progress on the war front, many Peace Democrats were moderating their demand for peace short of military victory, and Vallandigham’s compromise agenda was losing popularity among Peace Democrats. Vallandigham also did not receive enough votes to be nominated.⁵⁸

Medary had rejected the move to be appointed delegate for several reasons. The *Crisis* was in financial trouble—and so was its editor. He was forced to solicit readers for an increase in advertising to support the paper. The reason for his appeal was that "our circulation is largely among the farming classes of the country, and the mechanical class in the cities; the men who buy, instead of those who sell."⁵⁹ This observation partially explained the *Crisis's* difficulty in generating advertising revenue, but the paper's blatant partisanship also put many advertisers off. Damage to its office and reduced circulation had hurt Medary financially. In addition, although he did not say so, he was not feeling well enough to be a delegate.

On April 6 Medary apologized to readers for being unable to print all the letters and exchange stories he received. He had spent several days in bed because of a severe recurrence of his illness and could not complete his work. Medary also put a note in his weekly column to fellow Peace Democrat newspapers that it had become necessary for him to cut down on his exchanges. Because of the cost and his inability to read all the papers he received each week, he could no longer keep up. Two weeks later Medary reprinted a story headlined "Goodbye Sam" that had originally run in the Republican *Cincinnati Commercial*. His purpose was to refute the *Commercial's* advice that he should "take a vacation . . . [because] the Democratic Party has passed you by."⁶⁰ Although he assured readers that nothing could be further from the truth, there is no doubt that sickness was making it difficult for him to maintain the pace he had set over the previous three years.

A month later Medary suffered an even more significant setback. On May 20 two provost marshals from Cincinnati entered the *Crisis* office with a warrant for his arrest. A federal grand jury had indicted him on a charge of "conspiracy against the Union." Although the two marshals were evasive about exactly why they were arresting him, they immediately ordered him onto a train that took all three to Cincinnati. The next day Medary appeared before Judge Humphrey Leavitt in U.S. district court. Leavitt informed Medary that he had issued a warrant for his arrest because of his involvement in the Cathcart case. The Ohio General Assembly had appointed Charles Cathcart, a Peace Democrat, commissioner of Ohio public schools after the Democratic landslide in 1862. But in October 1863 he resigned under pressure after Governor Tod accused him of militant anti-

Union plotting.⁶¹ The Cathcart case was minor compared with other Peace Democrat activities that Medary could have been linked with.

The charge astounded Medary, who denied any involvement with Cathcart. He demanded to know who had accused him of the crime. Leavitt told him that he would learn that in October, when the trial began. The publisher of the *Cincinnati Enquirer*, Washington McLean, posted a \$3,000 bond to release Medary on his own recognizance. For some reason Medary had not been indicted for dissenting editorials in the *Crisis*. The War Department was finally taking action against him, but not because of his newspaper crusade. McLean believed the case might be used to strengthen the Peace Democrats' cause, declaring that freedom of the press would be vindicated when the jury found Medary innocent.

On his return to Columbus, Medary wrote about his arrest in the *Crisis*: "It is too vile a business to spend breath over. They dared not even try us." He said he did not know who had "dreamed up" his involvement with the Cathcart case. Medary was convinced that the underlying purpose of his arrest was to silence the *Crisis*. He speculated that the president was behind the accusation: "It is just the thing for the tools of Lincoln's despotism to injure our paper, and that is all they care about." But he would "abide the court of Judge Leavitt" and hope for a speedy trial so "some light could be shed upon the truth."⁶² Other Peace Democrat newspapers agreed with Medary that the Cathcart case was not the real reason for his indictment. The *Freeman's Journal* of New York called the charge outrageous and preposterous. The *Philadelphia Age* speculated that the government had arrested Medary because he had "dealt many and heavy blows upon the heads of Lincoln, [William] Seward and Stanton." The *New York Daily News* said the conspiracy charge made Medary's friends laugh in scorn.⁶³

The grand jury had indicted Cathcart, Medary, and seven other Peace Democrats on three counts of armed conspiracy against the Union. The charges said the nine had planned and participated in an October 1863 plot to free Confederate prisoners from three locations in Ohio. According to the allegation, the conspirators intended to liberate more than thirty-six hundred Confederate prisoners housed at McLean Barracks (in Cincinnati), at Camp Chase, and at the Ohio Penitentiary (both in Columbus). Union military leaders had become especially suspicious of all Peace Democrat activities in Columbus.

Anxiety about Northern aid to Southern prisoners had risen following the daring escape of General John Morgan and several other Confederates from the Ohio Penitentiary in November 1863. The Southerners had tunneled out of the penitentiary and made their way back across Southern lines, where they were honored for their accomplishments. There was no proof that anyone on the outside was involved in Morgan's escape, but the incident, which made headlines across the nation, embarrassed Burnside, and the general was eager to find a scapegoat.

The Cathcart case also was another attempt to link Medary and the others with the supposedly seditious Knights of the Golden Circle. Although Medary was never tried, the case against the others continued for two more years. Attorneys for both sides called many witnesses, but the case ended in April 1866 when the federal attorney in charge of the case told Leavitt he no longer wished to continue because of lack of evidence. None of the defendants was found guilty.⁶⁴

Circumstances not mentioned in the initial indictment contributed to suspicions about Medary and the others. In May the Union Army had suffered grievous losses in battles at the Wilderness and Spotsylvania Court House in Virginia. Ohioans knew that more draft calls were coming, and the administration feared renewed opposition. Many within the federal government became concerned about rumors that some Peace Democrats were plotting subversive activities against the Northern government. And Burnside in fact had not been mistaken in suspecting that some Northerners might be involved in attempts to free Confederates from Ohio prisons. But he arrested the wrong people. In May 1864 the Confederacy had dispatched agents to Canada to try to convince Vallandigham to aid the Southern cause in any way possible.⁶⁵ The agents told him they wanted to help bring peace to the nation; but in reality Jefferson Davis had sent them to Vallandigham hoping that they could convince him to help the South gain independence.

The Knights of the Golden Circle had made Vallandigham their supreme commander in February. Unionists believed that this secret society of Peace Democrats, whose members wore a copper penny on their lapel as identification, intended to establish a Middle West confederacy by force and to assassinate Lincoln. As part of their **plan**, Confederate agents hoped to convince the Knights to join **them in** freeing Southern prisoners from Johnson's Island (on Lake Erie) and

at Camp Chase. In addition, they wanted to influence Northern opinion by subsidizing Peace Democrat newspapers. From the beginning, however, Southerners had difficulty convincing Peace Democrats that the plans had merit. Because Vallandigham was primarily interested in achieving peace, the rebels were unable to interest him in joining in an armed uprising. On at least five occasions Southerners organized attacks on military depots and prisons in the North, but each time apprehensive Knights backed out beforehand.

Lincoln did not take the rumors of dissident activities seriously, branding the Knights "a mere political organization, with about as much of malice [as of] puerility."⁶⁶ He persisted in his belief that Peace Democrats were unlikely to resort to violence. Republicans like Horace Greeley used the rumor as a scare tactic to alarm Northerners. Stories concerning subversive activities "were embroidered with many rumors and much hearsay, some incidental, most contrived."⁶⁷ At any rate, no one produced any evidence that Medary had received any subsidy from the Knights, condoned their plans, or even knew of their existence.

In the June 1 edition of the *Crisis*, a reader attempted to cast Medary's plight in a more positive light. The letter writer said, "If you would be arrested once a week the circulation of your paper would be largely increased." In the same issue Medary printed a story from the *Albany (New York) Atlas and Argus*. The editor of that paper warned, "After the press shall have been abolished, there will be little of popular freedom left." The *Atlas and Argus's* editor added that Medary's arrest was "one of those errors into which the administration blunders from its mere want of intelligence and capacity." Medary decided that his indictment was part of a secret federal conspiracy. Other Peace Democrat newspapers agreed. A typical comment appeared in the *Iowa Courier*. "It has always been a mania with Lincoln to arrest American citizens without warrant and to suppress American papers without authority."⁶⁸

The *Crisis's* financial troubles continued to increase after Medary's arrest, forcing him to do what he had previously avoided—raise subscription prices. "Following our arrest, our receipts fell off heavily ... [because] such business is injurious to our paper."⁶⁹ He told subscribers publication costs were forcing him to raise the yearly subscription cost of the *Crisis* from two dollars to three dollars.

Despite Medary's predicament, Peace Democrats got a final

chance to succeed during the summer of 1864. Since Grant had taken command the Union Army had suffered 55,000 casualties, and Lee had Grant's army stymied at Cold Harbor. The War Department also was drafting more men, which intensified peace initiatives. Lincoln realized he was facing a renewed crisis. Unless the Union Army did something dramatic, there was little chance for his reelection. This time the cries for peace came from a new direction. Many of Lincoln's supporters, as for example New York Republican Thurlow Weed, were cynical about his chances. "Lincoln's reelection is an impossibility unless he can bring peace or victory. . . . The people are wild for peace."⁷⁰ Greeley also succumbed to war weariness, writing, "Our bleeding, bankrupt, almost dying country . . . longs for peace" and urging him to drop emancipation as a condition. Lincoln refused, however, because he knew the South still wanted independence.⁷¹

Because of the problems Lincoln faced on the battlefield and from various political factions, his 1864 candidacy seemed hopeless. The president told advisers that it was unlikely he could be reelected. Yet despite a move by radical Republicans to nominate Ohio's Salmon Chase (Lincoln's secretary of the treasury), convention delegates renominated the president in June.⁷² Many Republicans questioned Lincoln's strategy, but no one had a better plan for ending the war that was widely acceptable to Republicans. The Democrats saw Lincoln's renomination as a prime opportunity to win the White House.

On June 15 Vallandigham, wearing a cape and a false beard, sneaked across the Detroit River in a boat. From Detroit he traveled by train to a hiding place near Hamilton, Ohio. Several of Vallandigham's friends had assured him that if he returned he would be named a delegate to the Democratic National Convention. They believed public support for Vallandigham would be so strong that it would make it difficult for the president to have him arrested. Shortly after his return, Vallandigham publicly announced that he was back in Ohio. Republican newspapers welcomed his return, however, saying he would prove to be an embarrassment to the struggling Peace Democrats. Lincoln apparently agreed and decided not to have Vallandigham arrested.

Because of the stalemate on the battlefield at Petersburg, Virginia, Democrats postponed their convention from July 4 until the end of August. War and Peace Democrats needed a compromise candidate in

order to compete effectively with Republicans. Most party members believed that the choice of a military man would convince voters the party had the North's best interests in mind. The Peace faction feared, however, that nomination of a War Democrat would prolong the fighting. Medary's son Charles, a Union artillery officer stationed in Virginia, shared his concern about the pending nomination in a letter to his father. "As the winds of peace are blowing favorably . . . it is best not to nominate any man who has any war in him," he wrote on July 20. Charles added, "I just hear that a call has been made for 500,000 more men. If so, Lincoln is deader than dead."⁷³

When Democrats finally held their convention, two Ohioans shared the compromise ticket. Delegates nominated a War Democrat, General George McClellan, for president and a Peace Democrat, George Pendleton, for vice president. Peace Democrats hoped the ticket would bridge the differences within the party. Vallandigham attended the convention and attracted great curiosity but succeeded only in weakening public trust in the party's sincerity. He and several other Democrats, including Medary, could not support McClellan because he was unwilling to pursue peace unconditionally. The Peace faction wanted a prompt end to hostilities, but Eastern War Democrats headed off the attempt. McClellan said he did not favor reunion with the South because agreeing to peace without total victory would betray his army comrades. He added that he would not make emancipation a prerequisite for peace but favored continuing the war until the Confederacy dropped its goal of independence. His primary purpose as president would be to restore the Union, and he could not accept a negotiated peace that fell short of that target. The compromise position so upset Medary that, for the first time in his long newspaper career, he refused to put the Democratic presidential ticket on the banner of the *Crisis*.

Medary's health had prevented him from attending the convention. Throughout the summer, days of working at the *Crisis* were interrupted by weeks off as he attempted to regain his strength. Medary's concern for freedom of the press was lost in the squabble over the Democratic ticket's peace program. Another more upsetting circumstance was that his trial would not take place until fall, and he still did not know who had accused him or why. Was the administration trying to silence his dissenting voice? If so, why was the military allowing the *Crisis* to continue publishing? No one was able to provide the answers. With these troubles on his mind, he summed up his

melancholy mood by writing, "Thus we drift along."⁷⁴ As for the problems that had beset him during the past two years, he said, "Against all this we have wielded what force an independent press could bring to bear, not for ourselves and posterity alone ... [but] for all men ... for all must suffer alike in the end." He pleaded with Middle Westerners to help defend freedom of the press because "if a man cannot read a paper in favor of law, or civil and just government, what can he read?"⁷⁵

Though things looked bad for Lincoln's reelection through July, they suddenly changed for the better in late summer. At the same time that General William Sherman's Union forces overwhelmed Atlanta, General Phillip Sheridan's command gained control of the Shenandoah Valley in Virginia. Republicans could finally see that the end of the war was in sight. A few Peace Democrats distanced themselves even further from the hopeless McClellan ticket. On September 14 Medary, Vallandigham, George Pugh, and Edson Olds met in Columbus. Because the two parties' platforms were much the same, they decided to break all ties with the Democratic ticket. They called for a convention in Cincinnati on October 18 and invited Peace Democrats from all the Middle Western states to join them. But when fifty delegates from across the Middle West showed up, Medary was too sick to attend. The publisher of the *Cincinnati Enquirer*, Washington McLean, refused to sanction the Peace Democrats' gathering because he supported hometown vice presidential candidate Pendleton. Vallandigham also stayed away because Pendleton and McLean had convinced him to back the McClellan ticket so the Democratic party could maintain the appearance of being united. The convention lacked leadership and consensus; it disbanded in confusion.⁷⁶

Two months before, on the evening of August 23, Columbus Peace Democrats had held a rally on the front steps of the Franklin County Courthouse. Amid Democratic tirades against the war and Republican taunts from the crowd, several fights broke out. Medary was scheduled to deliver the keynote address, but just after beginning to speak he became seriously ill and had to be helped off the podium. His doctor again ordered him to bed. During his subsequent two-month absence from the *Crisis*, he apologized to readers for being weak and unable to do much writing. Massey filled the *Crisis*'s columns with exchange stories and short commentaries that lacked Medary's distinctive depth. Leavitt postponed Medary's trial because the defendant was too weak to face charges.

On Election Day 1864, November 8, it was raining and chilly throughout most of the North, but bad weather did not keep voters away from the polls.⁷⁷ When all the ballots were finally counted, Lincoln had won his second presidential term by a margin of nearly 500,000 out of four million votes cast. The Democratic ticket failed to carry a single state in the Middle West.⁷⁸ Party leaders blamed the defeat on several factors: battlefield reversals, the Republican treason campaign against them, and the soldier vote. All these reasons were legitimate, especially the last. Following Governor Tod's lead, Secretary of War Stanton had granted leaves so that Union enlisted men could cast ballots. Three-fourths of them voted Republican.⁷⁹ In Pennsylvania Lincoln won by only twenty thousand votes—and without the furloughed soldier vote would not have carried the state at all.⁸⁰ But another big factor was that the Northern public had elevated Lincoln to statesman status. By fall 1864 "the majority of people were magnetized by his sincerity and integrity—so the Copperhead charges [against Lincoln] seemed out of character."⁸¹ The Republican victory effectively spelled the end of the Peace Democrat movement.

One Union soldier Lincoln's victory failed to excite was Lieutenant Charles Medary. Stanton had released the younger Medary from an army hospital so he could be with his ailing father. Charles had been recovering from injuries suffered when his horse fell on him, but when he arrived in Columbus on November 8, he was too late to see his father alive. After months of illness, Samuel Medary died on November 7, 1864, the night before Lincoln's reelection victory, at the age of sixty-three. Charles said after his arrival that his father would not have voted if he could have. It is unclear what finally killed Medary. Some said he had a heart attack. Others speculated that exhaustion finally caught up with him. One thing was certain: the struggle of the previous three and a half years had taken their toll on him.

The day after Medary's death, representatives from all the Columbus newspapers gathered at City Hall to pay tribute to the Old Wheel Horse of the Ohio Democratic Party. They passed a resolution recognizing him as "one of the best... editors of the state ... whose native talent, [and] incorruptible integrity ... were most effective in bringing the Western press to its present high and noble position."⁸² Given the protracted partisan battles that had taken place between Medary and his capital city colleagues, it was generous of them to base their final judgment on his journalistic credentials.

Republican newspapers' comments after Medary's death ranged from guarded compliments to outright rejoicing. In Columbus's *Ohio State Journal*, Issac Jackson Allen eulogized: "Few men in our state... exerted more influence—We have known him for more than a quarter of a century—During all that period we cannot now recall an instance in which . . . our views have been coincident with his."⁸³ The *Nevada Gazette* was considerably less magnanimous: "He was an accomplished political trickster, one of the vilest scoundrels that ever lived.... He ruined more young men through his wiles and false doctrines than any other man of his age."⁸⁴ In the Democratic *Cincinnati Enquirer*, on the other hand, McLean wrote that no one had better understood the political crisis through which the country was passing. He added, "In Ohio, few of its citizens were more widely known, wielded a greater influence . . . or whose reputation is more likely to be historical. His name has become a household word."⁸⁵ The Democratic *Ohio Statesman* commented, "On the eve of the final struggle between freedom and despotism, when constitutional liberty seems about to go down . . . its most ardent supporter, Sam Medary is dead." On the same front page, just under the death notice, was a story reporting Lincoln's reelection.⁸⁶ The death announcement in the Democratic *Ohio Sun* in Batavia, read: "His greatest anxiety seemed to arise from the fear that he would outlive constitutional law."⁸⁷ (The *Sun* was the paper where Medary had begun his newspaper career nearly forty years earlier.) At the burial service on November 9, 1864, a minister pronounced Medary "the greatest journalist of the West and most distinguished citizen of Columbus."⁸⁸

Medary's controversial journalistic experiment was over. He had not been able to mobilize fellow Northerners to force Lincoln to end hostilities with the South, nor had he convinced them that a newspaper's right to publish dissenting opinion was as important to democracy during wartime as the pursuit of victory. He died believing he had accomplished little and that his dream for an independently governed nation made up of common men had perished with him.

8

"We Have Told Some Unpalatable Truths ... and Time Vindicates Them"

From the first issue of the *Crisis* in January 1861, Samuel Medary recognized that the public might not appreciate the value of what he was doing, and time proved him right. But even though the violence that greeted him and other Peace Democrat publishers must have astounded him, Medary refused to retreat from his unpopular point of view. Late in the war he wrote, "We have told some unpalatable truths to some men, we have no doubt, but they were truths nevertheless, and time vindicates them."¹ Perhaps he hoped that someday history would look favorably on his editorial perspective.

Initially Medary's goal in publishing the *Crisis* had been to lobby for peace. But as the war progressed, his efforts increasingly turned to championing journalists' right to publish opposition commentary. In his prewar career a belief in Jeffersonian republicanism had guided his perception of the role of journalists in America. Later, his involvement with Andrew Jackson's administration convinced him that publishers could help make Thomas Jefferson's locally governed, primarily agrarian society a reality. Medary believed self-reliant individuals and sovereign states were vital to ensure the realization of this potential. He concluded that a bold and uninhibited press was crucial to helping achieve that dream. But as a veteran of the most turbulent political period in American history, Medary feared that civil war jeopardized his vision for the country. By the time of his death, his anxiety had been justified.

Medary's aspirations for America did not survive the war. The *Crisis* newspaper nonetheless helped make a contribution to the con-

cept of press freedom that historians have previously overlooked. To assess any effect he may have had on the practice of journalism in America, it is necessary to evaluate Medary's career from two perspectives, the political and the journalistic. The substantial reputation he achieved as a politician in the prewar years was diminished, but his role as the crusading publisher of a dissenting newspaper helped illuminate a journalistic privilege that still endures.

The result of the conflict between Peace Democrat editors and those who opposed the right to question the Union war effort has probably best been summarized by Donna Dickerson: "The Civil War years added a great deal to the debate over the boundaries of freedom of press and even increased people's understanding of the vital role the press could play in times of upheaval."² As a prominent Peace Democrat publisher and an outspoken proponent of First Amendment protection for dissenting newspaper commentary, Medary had a hand in provoking that debate.

It is impossible to determine one man's contribution to the development of freedom of the press. In war, generals win battles in terms of tangible ground gained, but journalists fight press battles on a largely symbolic basis. It is understandable that Medary died believing he had accomplished little. To determine the extent of First Amendment protection, journalists must challenge its perceived limits through practical application. They can celebrate victories in this realm only by assessing the increased latitude they gain in ability to disagree with majority opinion on controversial issues. To understand what Medary's struggle helped accomplish, one must examine both what did and what did not occur as a result of publication of the *Crisis*. Medary's controversial endeavor poses a number of questions. For example, why did Northern military authorities never suppress the *Crisis*, in spite of its extensive circulation and apparent opposition leadership role? And while zealous civilian Unionists were viciously harassing less influential publishers, why did they permit the *Crisis* to proceed (relatively) unscathed for most of the war? Finally, why was Medary never charged with either conspiracy or treason for what he wrote?

In 1791 the framers of the Constitution wrote, "Congress shall make no law ... abridging the freedom ... of the press." They could not anticipate that within seventy years the people they sought to bring together with these words would be irreparably divided by a

calamitous civil war.³ Given his knowledge of European history, Jefferson anticipated that Americans would eventually disagree with each other passionately over politically charged issues. He also recognized that, in the life of a democratic nation, autonomous newspaper editors would be required to help oversee government officials, who inevitably abuse their authority. These two factors explain why Jefferson and the other Founding Fathers placed journalists in such an important position in the Constitution. They added the Bill of Rights to ensure that despotism would never subvert the delicate balance between elected officials and those who elect them. Medary's interpretation of the First Amendment was, therefore, that it unquestionably gave publishers special license to criticize any public issue or official—regardless of the national circumstances.

But "freedom of expression is not a doctrine, it is a process. Its strength is not in its careful definition, but in its liberal interpretation."⁴ Before 1861 the First Amendment right of publishers to challenge the operation of the federal government during a controversial war had not yet been established. The lack of clarity on this point became especially noticeable when editors like Medary sought to exercise the right to dissent to its liberal extreme. Medary was as mistaken in believing that his prerogative to comment was unlimited as were Unionists in maintaining that the conflict gave them the latitude to shut down opposition newspapers.

Abraham Lincoln could have silenced Peace Democrat newspapers during the war and would have received both official and unofficial support throughout the North for doing so.⁵ He took many drastic steps under martial law to maintain peace in the North. But he recognized that government censorship of opposition newspapers was an extreme step that could be not just unpopular but unconstitutional. Lincoln understood, as the writers of the Constitution had, that "while actions might be properly punished, mere words discussing political issues should not be criminal."⁶ It was his duty to save the Union, but as part of his presidential oath he had also promised to uphold the Constitution. The Civil War made it necessary for Lincoln to act decisively to thwart attempts by Southern sympathizers to undermine the Northern cause. But it is significant that despite the president's suspension of the writ of habeas corpus and his institution of martial law, he allowed opposition newspapers unbridled freedom to comment. By his refusal to deal more harshly with dissenting pub-

Ushers, he tacitly acknowledged that, although papers like the *Crisis* might fuel discontent and make the North's task more complicated, peace papers were still less than treasonous.

Robert Wagman has even said that because Lincoln did not censor opposition newspapers, he should be considered a champion of press freedom.⁷ But that gives the chief executive a bit more credit than he deserves. Lack of action does not prove support. Lincoln refrained from ordering military censorship, but he also failed to take decisive steps to prevent it from happening.

Analysis by several historians confirms Lincoln's reactionary management style and shows that he considered placing limitations on the opposition press too volatile a step to take. Although he put limits on the Bill of Rights to maintain order during the conflict, he knew if he went too far he would violate the very standard for which he was waging war. Lincoln acknowledged the dilemma he was in. In 1863 he wrote, "Must a government of necessity be too strong for the liberties of its people, or too weak to maintain its own existence?"⁸ His rhetorical question highlights his fundamental philosophical difference from Medary. Above all else, Medary preferred individual freedom to a strong central government; a government that in any way diminished personal freedoms was only one step away from assuming totalitarian control. But by his actions the president maintained that the importance of preserving the federal government had to surpass the significance of safeguarding individual rights.

Not only did Medary practice dissenting journalism, he also counseled readers that the Constitution *guaranteed* him the right to challenge the Northern government's actions. He warned Unionists that if he were silenced, all civil liberties would be threatened. Adamant Unionists doubted Medary's integrity in invoking the First Amendment as a defense for his dissent because of his history of partisanship and their support for an emotional war. For an opposition journalist, freedom of the press remained an ideal that Northerners refused to sanction until a publisher proved that a newspaper like the *Crisis* served some worthwhile purpose. Medary attempted to do exactly that by explaining the need for journalists to show that one could look at the war from many points of view.

Unfortunately for Medary, his credibility was hurt by the fact that his political platform was built on out-of-date notions. He distrusted Northern leaders because of the threat their management of the war

posed to civil liberties. Indeed, because he questioned even the initial reasons for imposing any and all restraints, he found ample evidence to substantiate his fears. During his prewar career he had shown that he was willing to compromise both friendships and ideals to maintain party harmony or gain political favor for himself. In this regard he was not unlike most politicians. But Medary took a different tack between 1861 and 1864. His wartime political agenda consisted of restoring peace at any price and supporting any Democrat who shared his goal. He was willing to make concessions with the Confederacy in the name of peace, but his anxiety about the loss of personal freedoms in the North prohibited him from compromising with fellow Northerners on other political issues.

Medary's years in Ohio had led him to believe that the Middle West was the most exceptional section of the country. But the war was diminishing the area's influence on the rest of the nation. He detested rich Eastern industrialists because he believed they were manipulating the war for selfish interests at the expense of the rest of the country. His belief in the preeminence of states' rights directly opposed Lincoln's concept of a unified nation. The president believed that to win the war the Northern states had to act as one nation, not as separate entities; but as a lifelong conservative Democrat, Medary doubted the sincerity of the Republican-controlled Unionist cause. Rapprochement with them on issues on which they differed from him was unthinkable. His lack of adaptability to an evolving reality hurt his credibility even within his own fragmented Democratic Party. Many members of the party saw compromise, even on formerly sacred constitutional issues, as necessary to win the war.

Emancipation of the slaves was another issue on which Medary was unbending. His desire to protect his friends—Ohio's farmers and laborers—against former slaves blinded him to the morality of freeing the slaves. He could not see that slavery was more than just an economic or a political concern. North and South had drawn the lines of demarcation concerning abolition long before 1861. The willingness of many on both sides to kill each other, even before the war, proved that most Americans saw something terrible in the institution of slavery that Medary refused to acknowledge.

He was never to accept the idea that reassessing and adjusting one's position could be admirable. Instead he persisted in believing that any alteration of a person's stand on various issues indicated a character flaw. Medary reacted with paranoia to nearly every change

during the war. That winning a civil war required the ability to adapt and to take extraordinary measures never penetrated his understanding. As a result he was unable to visualize how the country could be unified to defeat an external threat while simultaneously allowing states to maintain local autonomy. He failed to acknowledge that although nationalism was the antithesis of local decision making, it was an inevitable step for the threatened nation if it was to survive and mature. Why was a man who had been intimately involved with the political scene for many years so imperceptive? Perhaps because the changing times had passed him and other Peace Democrats by. Narrow-mindedness was characteristic of the Peace Democratic Party during the conflict and led to a universal inability within the faction to adjust to an evolving nation.

When the war began in 1861, Medary was sixty-one years old. He had spent parts of four decades involved in passionate state and federal political battles. His health was deteriorating, and he was tired both mentally and physically. His dream for the realization of Jeffersonian America in the "Great Middle West" had vanished, though he could not admit it. The revolutionary European spirit that he had invoked ten years earlier to update Ohio's state constitution somehow eluded him, and the changes that the Civil War was bringing to America scared and depressed him. He was a weary, disheartened man, and he could not accept the new reality that was superseding his lifelong ideal.

Eastern industrialism, westward migration, and railroad expansion had irrevocably opened up and linked previously distant sections of the continent. Medary had even promoted several of these developments. But by the beginning of the war, traditional Jacksonian Democrats had lost the political cause they espoused, and it is questionable whether the idyllic Jacksonian order had ever existed in the first place. And though Medary called for peace, he offered no practical alternative to war. His calls for reunion following secession were impossible for both the North and the South. His demand for any solution short of victory over a Confederacy that demanded independence made it logical for Unionists to brand him a traitor. Medary's belief in the *Crisis* as an agent to overcome the highly charged patriotic spirit that had enveloped the nation was chimerical. He did not understand that only Lincoln's pragmatic approach was adequate to direct the Union to victory and eventual reunion with the Southern states.

It is likely that Medary's editorials in the *Crisis* sowed the seed for

the vicious civilian retribution he so detested. Did this make Medary a traitor? Not really, for he never ceased to support the democratic process, even as he attacked politicians' actions. Numerous less discerning Peace Democrats, however, probably became more belligerent after reading his editorials. Medary's comments also likely spurred draft resistance and antiemancipation activities. As the war dragged on, radical Peace Democrats increasingly rejected Medary's statements that election victories were the way to change the course of events. Passionate Unionists refused to acknowledge that Medary's dissent was moderate and responsible. At no point did he recommend the overthrow of the federal government. He was always willing to adhere to due process of law. In his references to impeaching the president and establishing a separate Northwestern alliance of states, he relied on use of the ballot box—legal means. He never called for armed rebellion or for helping the Confederacy defeat the North. His idea of revolt was to encourage his readers to go to the polls, defeat Unionists, and elect Democrats.

Northerners who opposed the war did so for a variety of reasons. The intensity and manner of their resistance also extended across a broad spectrum. From those with outright pro-Southern sympathies, to Peace Democrats like Clement Vallandigham and Wilbur Storey, to antiabolitionists, they made their point in very different ways. Unfortunately for Medary, though, Unionists in general did not differentiate between his style of written dissent and that of people who were intent on creating havoc to speed things along. Most Unionists interpreted any challenge to the cause, including Medary's scathing editorials, as favoring treasonous action. But there was a difference. The reaction of Peace Democrats to the destruction of the *Crisis* and Medary's arrest, as compared to the reaction to Ambrose Burnside's apprehension of Vallandigham, accentuates the public's contrasting perceptions of the two men. Whereas Medary's difficulties earned him a sympathetic parade and editorial support, Vallandigham's incarceration resulted in indignant rioting and violent revenge. Medary did not believe that Peace Democrats should publicly confront government representatives, as Vallandigham had done with General Burnside. Nor did he think that going to prison would accomplish as much as continuing to reach out with his antiwar messages. And contrary to the sentiments of some fellow journalists, Medary knew calls for vengeance after assaults on peace newspapers would only cast

Peace Democrats in a more negative light. As a man who wholeheartedly believed in the political process to achieve change, Medary maintained that the most judicious and patriotic means of affecting government decision making was through the electoral process. His perception that the *Crisis* could wield such power was a responsible but naively idealistic sentiment.

At the same time that he was seeking peace, Medary was an unwilling participant in an evolving wartime newspaper business. Between 1861 and 1864 two approaches to journalism vied for public acceptance. A more objective style of journalism was gradually supplanting Medary's technique. Once again he refused to acknowledge a revolution in progress. During the war newspapers increasingly relied on frontline correspondents who reported breaking news. Patriarchal editors who single-handedly interpreted and commented on events and policy were going out of style. The Civil War marked the beginning of the end of the type of partisan journalism Medary practiced. The public was less interested in partisan editorials and more preoccupied with what was happening to their loved ones, not to mention which side was winning and how soon the fighting would end. They "demanded facts about the war, deemphasizing the traditional opinion function of the party press."⁹ Newspapers became both more sensational and more objective. With increasing literacy came a populace that was less interested in depending on political leaders to tell them how they should think. People were moving toward learning to sample various versions of the truth, so they could form their own opinions. Medary's mistrust of wire services and reporters and his persistence in keeping the *Crisis* strictly partisan left him behind the times. The world of journalism was moving on; the popularity of the new style indicated that the public was ready to move with it.

Medary's pugnacious commentaries set him apart as a journalist who criticized public officials while simultaneously citing the First Amendment as protection for his right to do so. Yet not until after the war did most publishers begin defending their "editorial and news-gathering practices in terms of their duty to serve the public interest."¹⁰ Unionists charged that politics motivated Medary's criticism, and to a great extent they were correct. But official investigations proved that his abuse-revealing editorials were often highly accurate and beneficial.

Medary's use of editorials to affix blame underscores his contribu-

tion to what recent historians see as the positive consequences of wartime friction between Unionists and Peace Democrats. Medary's warnings helped head off some excesses of the War Department's increasingly oppressive policies in the name of national security. The lively debate the Peace Democrats precipitated "contributed to the North's conduct of the war."¹¹ Peace Democrats' questioning military justice and abuses of civil liberties tempered the War Department's aggressiveness in dealing with the civilian North. Medary argued that national security was not an all-inclusive reason for restricting press or public dissent during wartime, particularly in noncombat areas. By doing so he helped set a precedent for upholding civil liberties. Peace Democrats, in effect, "helped keep the army and the Republicans honest."¹²

After the war, the U.S. Supreme Court supported to a great degree the Peace Democrats' objections to military abuses. In December 1864 a military court convicted Lambdin Milligan and two other Indiana Peace Democrats of treason in connection with the discovery of a cache of illegal arms by Union troops in that state. The War Department sentenced the men to be hanged in May 1865, but Milligan's friends appealed the case to the Supreme Court. In April 1866 the justices ruled in *Ex parte Milligan* that the military could not try civilians when civil courts were functioning. The decision became a cornerstone of American civil liberties defenses. In the opinion of Justice David Davis, "A citizen, not connected with the military service, and resident in a State where the courts are all open . . . cannot, even when the writ of habeas corpus is suspended, be tried, convicted, or sentenced otherwise than by the ordinary courts of law."¹³

But a court of law did not decide the issue of opposition press freedom. Only practical application could accomplish that. In U.S. history the mainstream press has not "stood in the forefront of the fight for freedom of expression." Only in a few instances have editors put principle above business interests. During the Civil War, editors who supported the Union had no reason to challenge Northern press censorship. After all, they were not threatened in the way their Peace Democrat colleagues were. Elijah Lovejoy is one example of a person willing to die for press freedom, but the public did not see him as a hero during his lifetime. During the 1830s most perceived Lovejoy as a "zealot and a stubborn, dangerous radical.... Yet who would dispute that he simply recognized many truths before his contemporaries

did?"¹⁴ The same observation can be made of Medary. During the Civil War his motives in publishing an opposition newspaper were to restore national peace and to help preserve civil liberties. These were not self-serving ambitions. Medary spent most of his own money and worked himself to exhaustion to keep the *Crisis* afloat. There is no evidence that he sought political office, wealth, or fame from his undertaking. His goals were ideals.

The study of Northern politics during the Civil War is "a study of tensions."¹⁵ The varying distinctions made by the Lincoln administration, Northern citizens, and Peace Democrats about how far peace papers could go in criticizing the conduct of the war caused rising tension between the three conflicting entities. All can be viewed as important participants in a metaphorical tug of war in which each attempted to prescribe the limits of freedom of the press. While Medary campaigned for unlimited editorial freedom, the Northern public and military officials wanted restraint. Each side looked to the president to validate its perspective, but he chose to attempt a cautious reconciliation of the two.

Medary maintained that if Northerners heard information from the perspective only of jingoistic Unionists, they would not know if the government was misleading them, and he insisted that the minority version of the controversial war issue had to be heard. Of course, conduct of the war became an issue only because men like Medary raised it in the public's consciousness. His conviction that the First Amendment's guarantee could survive even the most extreme test in the nation's history lent vigor to his refusal to back down. His unyielding defense of his right to disagree may have looked like just a partisan ploy to other Northerners, but it accomplished much more. By practicing dissenting journalism he established a symbolic precedent, showing readers that constructive newspaper dissent during a national political crisis was possible and useful. Medary proved that even in the nation's most harrowing hour the democratic process could work if journalists were allowed to exercise their ability to expound both sides of the predicament.

Unless some entity threatens their freedom, "established general circulation newspapers have tended to go along with efforts to suppress deviations from the prevailing political and social orthodoxies of their time and place rather than to support the right to dissent."¹⁶ The Civil War was typical in that only newspapers like the *Crisis* defended

their right to oppose majority opinion. But although he criticized their professionalism and disagreed with their editorial views, Medary never called for censorship of Unionist newspapers. Many Republican publishers could not have made the same claim about the *Crisis*.

It is true that there was no official press censorship against opposition publishers during the war. But the perceived threat of suppression "indicated that there was a line, albeit fuzzy and smudged, over which the majority of newspapers—both loyal and opposition—dared not step."¹⁷ An abstract limit on permissible press opinion existed only for those who sought to enforce one, or others who understood the value of having such a limit. Medary's work demonstrated that the narrow press limitations most Unionists supported were inhibiting the necessary checks and balances of democracy. The First Amendment is only as strong as the public's willingness to accept "the validity of the philosophical premise on which it is based."¹⁸

Historically it has been the responsibility of "anti-establishment papers and magazines [to] test the limits of community toleration and, therefore, of free expression."¹⁹ In helping expand the limits of freedom of the press, Medary manifested an innate understanding, based on a lifetime of democratic free-press idealism, of just how far he could go with adversarial journalism. This kept him out of more serious trouble. Wendell Phillips wrote, "The work of the agitator consists chiefly in talk; he is the counterweight of sloth and indifference."²⁰ Although Phillips was referring to abolitionists, his description applies to men like Lovejoy and Medary as well. Patriotic spirit no doubt helped the Union win the Civil War, but it also sought to penalize honest dissent. Medary's challenge helped journalists more fully express their right to disagree with their government in wartime.

Medary could earn greater press freedom only by defying popular opinion, by probing the cost of unpopular commentary, and by citing the First Amendment as his shield. His refusal to be intimidated led to his rejection of a more restrained definition of press freedom. Although Lincoln recognized that Medary might indirectly have abetted civil unrest, the president understood that restraining newspapers like the *Crisis* would cause even more unrest. Lincoln's unwillingness to support General Burnside's censorship and his refusal to enact any repressive press laws showed that he proceeded with extreme discretion.

The president understood that, despite the cost to his own agenda, it was necessary to allow minority opponents to present their side of the issue so the public could consider all options.

Lincoln was confident that when the reality of the war issues became clear to the Northern public, the veracity of his own and the fallacy of the Peace Democrats' arguments would become clear. Unlike many in the War Department and the public, Lincoln and Medary shared a belief that the democratic process did not require coercion to arrive at the truth. And in fact, as the Civil War progressed, exposition of both sides of the issue showed that the Peace Democrats' agenda was outmoded and that Lincoln's unprecedented measures were justified.

Medary and Lincoln both loved their country very much, but they had conflicting visions for its future. They met on common ground, however, concerning tampering with a free and open press. Each recognized that interference by the federal government would set America on the road to the end of the democratic experiment.

Harold Nelson best summarized the results of the Civil War confrontation over press freedom when he noted that both the government and journalists learned a great deal. Journalists learned that "total war meant some compromise of democratic forms, including even freedom of the press." The government began to realize that "a people tutored in access to news needed information when war came if its maximum support was to be elicited."²¹ Although American history has not witnessed a recurrence of Civil War circumstances, redefining the limits of the opposition press has remained a question in every subsequent American war. A healthy, if usually combative, tension must exist in a democracy to ensure that the balance of power is appropriately maintained. The meaning of First Amendment press protection remains a continually disputed, evolving ideal. But journalists should remember Samuel Medary as one of the uncelebrated publishers who played a role in helping broaden the ability of the First Amendment to protect the opposition press.

Notes

Chapter 1

1. These sentiments were expressed by opposition newspapers of the day and have been repeated in such works as Henry Clyde Hubbart, *The Older Middle West, 1840-1880: Its Social, Economic and Political Life and Sectional Tendencies before, during and after the Civil War* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1936); Robert S. Harper, *The Ohio Press in the Civil War* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1964); Frank L. Klement, *The Limits of Dissent: Clement Vallandigham and the Civil War* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1970); and George W. Knepper, *Ohio and Its People* (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1989).

2. Eugene H. Roseboom, *The Civil War Era: 1850-1873*, vol. 4 of *A History of the State of Ohio* (Columbus: Ohio Historical Society, 1944), 200-201.

3. For further discussion of the Jacksonian agenda, see Joel H. Silbey, *A Respectable Minority: The Democratic Party in the Civil War Era, 1860-1868* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1977); and Jean H. Baker, *The Political Culture of Northern Democrats in the Mid-Nineteenth Century* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983).

4. Samuel Medary, "Newspapers and Periodicals" (Batavia, 1826); cited in Medary W. Stark, *Ohio Journalism Hall of Fame* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1932), 12.

5. Frank L. Klement, *The Copperheads in the Middle West* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), vii.

6. David Donald, ed., "Died of Democracy," in *Why the North Won the Civil War* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1960), 77.

7. Eric J. Cardinal, "The Ohio Democracy and the Crisis of Disunion, 1860-1861," *Ohio History* 86 (Winter 1977): 19.

8. Michael Linfield, *Freedom under Fire: U.S. Civil Liberties in Times of War* (Boston: Southend Press, 1990), 23.

9. Attributed to Harold L. Nelson, ed., *Freedom of the Press from Hamilton to the Warren Court* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1967), 221-22.

10. It is uncertain exactly how many newspapers were damaged by opponents during the war. The figure could have been as low as sixty, according to Robert J. Wagman, *The First Amendment Book* (New York: Pharos, 1991), 48; but John Nerone places the total closer to one hundred in "Violence against the Press in U.S. History," *Journal of Communication* 40 (Summer 1990): 17.

11. Federal Population Census, 1860; Franklin County (City of Columbus, Wards 1-5), Microfilm #653, Roll #964, Muskingum County Genealogical Society, Zanesville, Ohio.

12. **R. Carlyle Buley**, *The Old Northwest: Pioneer Period 1815-1840* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1950), 2:518.

13. **Frank Luther Mott**, *American Journalism, A History: 1690-1960*, 3d ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1962), 259.

14. Osman C. Hooper, "The Crisis and the Man: An Episode in Civil War Journalism," *Ohio State University Journalism Series* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1939), 1:9.

15. According to Ralph Ray Fahrney, *Horace Greeley and the "Tribune" in the Civil War* (Cedar Rapids, Iowa: Torch Press, 1936), 2.

16. Medary's successor as editor of the *Crisis* reprinted this quotation from the *Nevada Gazette*, with an editorial defending Medary, in the *Crisis*, January 25, 1865.

17. Robert S. Harper, *Lincoln and the Press* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1951), 333.

18. Researchers who have substantiated this claim include Wood Gray, *The Hidden Civil War: The Story of the Copperheads* (New York: Viking, 1942), 73; and Justin E. Walsh, *To Print the News and Raise Hell: A Biography of Wilbur F. Storey* (Durham: University of North Carolina Press, 1968), 170. The number of Peace Democrat papers was set at 154 in 1861 by the *New York Journal of Commerce* (cited in Mott, *American Journalism*, 355). In addition, a late nineteenth-century history of Columbus notes that at one point the *Crisis* had a circulation of 22,000 and was a "decided success." Comment and figure cited in Alfred E. Lee, *History of the City of Columbus* (New York: Munsell, 1892), 1:433.

19. **Klement**, *The Limits of Dissent*, 21.

20. **Silbey**, *A Respectable Minority*, ix.

21. **Mark E. Neely Jr.**, *The Fate of Liberty: Abraham Lincoln and Civil Liberties* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 209.

22. **Jeffrey A. Smith**, *Printers and Press Freedom: The Ideology of Early American Journalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 164-65.

23. For further discussion of this point, see Timothy W. Gleason, *The Watchdog Concept: The Press and the Courts in Nineteenth Century America* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1990), 3. For additional comments on the

press under common law during the nineteenth century, see Wagman, *The First Amendment Book*, 45; and Kent R. Middleton and Bill F. Chamberlin, *The Law of Public Communication* (New York: Longmans, 1988), 3-7.

24. Edward Christian, ed., *Blackstone's Commentaries* (Boston: T. B. Wait & Sons, 1818), 4:151-52; cited in Gleason, *The Watchdog Concept*, 3.

25. Linfield, *Freedom under Fire*, 3.

26. David Donald, *Lincoln Reconsidered: Essays on the Civil War Era*, 2d ed. (New York: Vintage, 1956), 103,127.

27. John D. Stevens, *Shaping the First Amendment: The Development of Free Expression* (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1982), 63.

Chapter!

1. Lovis H. Everts, *History of Clermont County, Ohio* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1880), 131.

2. Peter M. Senge, *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization* (New York: Doubleday Currency, 1990), 247.

3. Elbert Russell, *The History of Quakerism* (New York: Macmillan, 1942), 164.

4. Howard M. Jenkins, *Historical Collections Relating to Gwynedd*, 2d ed. (Philadelphia: published by the author, 1897), 432.

5. This statement of Quaker doctrine is related in William W. Comfort, *The Quakers: A Brief Account of Their Influence on Pennsylvania* (University Park: Pennsylvania Historical Association, 1986), 8-9.

6. See Russell, *History of Quakerism*, 301-29; and Comfort, *The Quakers*, 41-49, for further discussion of the Great Separation.

7. When a Friend married a non-Quaker, he or she was referred to as "married out" and was "disowned" by members of the faith. See Comfort, *The Quakers*, 41.

8. The accounts of Medary's early life have been constructed from a number of sources, including Jenkins, *Historical Collections*, 432; Medary W. Stark, *Ohio Journalism Hall of Fame* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1932), 10; Helen P. Dora, "Samuel Medary—Journalist and Politician, 1801-1864," *Ohio State Archaeological and Historical Quarterly* 53:14-15; Edmond L. DeLestry, ed., "State Builders of the West: Samuel Medary, Third Territorial Governor of Minnesota," *Western Magazine*, November 1917, 138; and William A. Taylor, *Centennial History of Columbus* (Columbus: published by the city), 2:73-74.

9. *Ohio Farmer & Western Horticulturist*, March 15, 1834.

10. *Bethel Ohio Sun*, June 23, 1828; cited in Henry Howe, *Historical Collections of Ohio* (Cincinnati: State of Ohio, 1904), 1:414.

11. Everts, *History of Clermont County*, 156.
12. Cited in Stark, *Ohio Journalism Hall of Fame*, 11-12.
13. Louise L. Stevenson, *The Victorian Homefront: American Thought and Culture, 1860-1880* (New York: Twayne, 1991), 137.
14. *Lawrence (Kansas) Republican*, March 1, 1860.
15. William E. Gienapp, *The Origins of the Republican Party, 1852-1856* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 6.
16. Marie Buckore, "Bethel, Ohio, Recollects 150 Years: Big Sons of a Little Village," *Bulletin of the Historical and Philosophical Society of Ohio* 1 (January 1949): 129-30.
17. Medary's statement was cited in an editorial reply in the Georgetown, Ohio, *Western Aegis and Public Advertiser*, June 24, 1828.
18. The opinion that democratic ideology reached its climax during this period is espoused in Elbert B. Smith, *The Death of Slavery: The United States, 1837-65* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967), 1.
19. Michael F. Holt, *The Political Crisis of the 1850s* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1978), 24.
20. Jonathan S. Baily, "Samuel Medary, 1801-1864: Party Political Ideology as an Expression of Societal Goals in Ardent Jeffersonians" (master's thesis, Ohio State University, 1987), 3-6.
21. Robert H. Wiebe, *The Search For Order: 1877-1920* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1967), xiii.
22. Joel H. Silbey, *Political Ideology and Voting Behavior in the Age of Jackson* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1973), 6-8.
23. John M. Blum et al., *The National Experience: A History of the United States*, 6th ed. (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1985), 227-29.
24. Frederick Austin Ogg, *The Reign of Andrew Jackson: A Chronicle of the Frontier in Politics* (Toronto: Glasgow, Brook, 1919), 128.
25. For more on Jefferson's view of press freedom, see Frank L. Mott, *Jefferson and the Press* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1943), 5.
26. *Ibid.*, 5-6.
27. *Ibid.*, 4.
28. *Ohio Statesman*, April 5, 1838; cited in Baily, "Samuel Medary, 1801-1864," 3-6, 24.
29. Stark, *Ohio Journalism Hall of Fame*, 12.
30. Harry R. Stevens, *The Early Jackson Party in Ohio* (Durham: Duke University Press), 155.
31. Dorn, "Samuel Medary," 16.
32. Edwin Emery and Michael Emery, *The Press and America: An Interpretative History of the Mass Media*, 5th ed. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1984), 130.

33. Medary's was the third agricultural magazine published in Ohio. It was established eight years after the first, the *Western Tiller* (Robert L. Jones, *History of Agriculture in Ohio to 1880* [Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1983], 401).

34. Ohio Farmer and Western Horticulturist, September 15, 1835.

35. *Ibid.*, March 1, 1835.

36. Eugene H. Roseboom and Francis P. Weisenburger, *A History of Ohio* (Columbus: Ohio State Archaeological and Historical Society, 1961), 2:113.

37. This claim has been made in Taylor, *Centennial History of Columbus*, 74; Dorn, "Samuel Medary," 17; and Eugene Roseboom, *The Civil War Era: 1850-1873* (Columbus: Ohio Historical Society, 1944), 200.

38. Edward Pessen, *Jacksonian America: Society, Personality and Politics* (Homewood, Ill.: Dorsey Press, 1969), 347.

39. Roseboom, *The Civil War Era*, 199-200.

40. Frank Luther Mott, *American Journalism, A History: 1690-1960*, 3d ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1962), 357.

41. Dorn, "Samuel Medary," 15.

42. For more on this influence, see Stephen E. Maizlish, *The Triumph of Sectionalism: The Transformation of Ohio Politics, 1844-1856* (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1983), 44; and Hazel Dicken Garcia, *Journalistic Standards in Nineteenth-Century America* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989), 57.

43. Gienapp, *Origins of the Republican Party*, 9.

44. For a more detailed examination of this period, see Gerald J. Baldasty, "The Press and Politics in the Age of Jackson," *Journalism Monographs* 89 (August 1984).

45. David Donald, *Lincoln Reconsidered: Essays on the Civil War Era*, 2d ed. (New York: Vintage, 1956), 197.

46. Maizlish, *The Triumph of Sectionalism*, xi.

47. In 1839 Ohio ranked first in wheat production, but in the years thereafter its ranking fell as production increased in Illinois, Wisconsin, and Indiana. Ohio gained the number one ranking in corn production in 1849 but was quickly supplanted by Illinois (George W. Knepper, *Ohio and Its People* [Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1989], 126).

48. Henry Clyde Hubbart, *The Older Middle West, 1840-1880: Its Social, Economic and Political Life and Sectional Tendencies before, during and after the Civil War* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1936), 76.

49. Harry N. Scheiber, *Ohio Canal Era* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1969), 214, 271.

50. William G. Shade, *Banks or No Banks: The Money Issue in Western Politics, 1832-1865* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1972), 117, 124, 157.

51. *Ohio Statesman*, December 1, 1838.
52. Eric Foner and Olivia Mahoney, *A House Divided: America in the Age of Lincoln* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1990), 35.
53. Richard Jensen, "Armies, Admen and Crusaders: Types of Interparty Election Campaigns," *The History Teacher* 2 (January 1969): 33-50; cited in Joel H. Silbey, *A Respectable Minority: The Democratic Party in the Civil War Era, 1860-1868* (New York: W.W.Norton, 1977), 7-11.
54. Robert W. Fogel, *Without Consent or Contract: The Rise and Fall of American Slavery* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1989), 284.
55. *Ohio Statesman*, March 19, 1839.
56. Glyndon G. Van Deusen, *The Jacksonian Era, 1828-1848* (New York: Harper, 1963), 97.
57. Foner and Mahoney, *A House Divided*, 39-43.
58. For a more extensive statement of Medary's views on slavery, see the *Ohio Statesman*, January 14, 1839, and March 5, 1849. For an analysis of the majority Northern opinion toward Negro equality, see Foner and Mahoney, *A House Divided*, 9, 44.
59. *Ohio State Journal*, December 22, 1827.
60. Frederick J. Blue, S#/#mo« *P. Chase: A Life in Politics* (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1987), 35.
61. These accounts of abolitionist activities in Ohio have been compiled from William R. Collins, *Ohio: The Buckeye State* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1968), 166-67; Knepper, *Ohio and Its People*, 208-10, 215-16, 221-24; and Francis P. Weisenburger, *The Passing of the Frontier, 1825-1850*, vol. 3 of *The History of the State of Ohio*, ed. Carl Wittke (Columbus: State of Ohio, 1941), 476.
62. *Ohio Statesman*, March 5, 1849.
63. Krum's account originally appeared in the *Alton Spectator*. It was reprinted in the *Ohio Statesman*, November 18, 1837.
64. Charles Sellers, *The Market Revolution: Jacksonian America, 1815-1846* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 312.
65. Pessen, *Jacksonian America*, 323.
66. Foner and Mahoney, *A House Divided*, 47-48.
67. James D. Richardson, comp., *A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents, 1789-1902* (10 vols., Washington, 1905), 3:304-7.
68. Van Deusen, *The Jacksonian Era*, 66.
69. For more on this campaign, see Knepper, *Ohio and Its People*, 166-67.
70. *Ohio Statesman*, August 18, 1840.
71. Osman C. Hooper, "The Crisis and the Man: An Episode in Civil War Journalism," *Ohio State University Journalism Series* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1939), 1:13-14.

- 72. *Ohio Statesman*, August 7, 1838.
- 73. Hooper, "The Crisis and the Man," 11.
- 74. Roseboom, *The Civil War Era*, 199-200.

Chapter[^]

- 1. For more on Medary's role in the Oregon controversy, see Gerald Carson, "Fifty-Four Forty or Fight," *Timeline* (June-July 1990): 7-9, 12-14.
- 2. For additional details on the Democratic Party struggle in Ohio during the prewar years, see Thomas E. Powell, *The Democratic Party of Ohio* (Columbus: Ohio Publishing Co., 1913); and Reginald C. McGrane, *William Allen: A Study in Western Democracy* (Columbus: Ohio Historical Society, 1925).
- 3. Joel H. Silbey describes the Democrats as political purists who believed that "compromise on principles was not an acceptable political strategy" [*A Respectable Minority: The Democratic Party in the Civil War Era, 1860-1868* [New York: W. W. Norton, 1977], 106].
- 4. *Ohio Statesman*, cited in Carson, "Fifty-Four Forty or Fight," 16.
- 5. *Ibid.*, 7.
- 6. For further discussion of the candidates' agreement, see John M. Blum et al., *The National Experience: A History of the United States*, 6th ed. (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1984), 283.
- 7. *Washington (D.C.) Globe*, June 5, 1844.
- 8. Silas Wright to Martin Van Buren, May 26, 1844; cited in Jonathan S. Baily, "Samuel Medary, 1801-1864: Party Political Ideology as an Expression of Societal Goals in Ardent Jeffersonians" (master's thesis, Ohio State University, 1987), 47.
- 9. Howard K. Beale, ed., *Diary of Gideon Welles* (3 vols., New York, 1960), 2:387; cited in Eric Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party before the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), 150-51.
- 10. Samuel Medary to James K. Polk, November 10, 1849, Polk Papers, Library of Congress; cited in Stephen E. Maizlish, *The Triumph of Sectionalism: The Transformation of Ohio Politics, 1844-1856* (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1983), 34.
- 11. Martin Van Buren Papers, January 1853, Library of Congress; cited in Maizlish, *The Triumph of Sectionalism*, 183.
- 12. Edwin M. Stanton to Benjamin Tappan, January 10, 1845, Stanton Papers, Library of Congress; cited in Maizlish, *The Triumph of Sectionalism*, 41.
- 13. *Ohio Statesman*, June 18, 1846.

14. A. C. Perrill to William Medill, September 18, 1847, Medill Papers, Library of Congress; cited in Maizlish, *The Triumph of Sectionalism*, 75.

15. William Allen Papers, September 25, 1848; Ohio University, Athens, Ohio.

16. Stanton to Tappan, October 12, 1848; cited in Benjamin P. Thomas and Harold M. Hyman, *Stanton: The Life and Times of Lincoln's Secretary of War* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1962), 32-33.

17. For further discussion of Quaker involvement in the antislavery movement see Eric Foner and Olivia Mahoney, *A House Divided: America in the Age of Lincoln* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1990), 44; and Blum et al., *The National Experience*, 41-45.

18. These examples are taken from Medary's February 20, 1860, speech to the Kansas Territorial Legislature, in which he vetoed "An Act to Prohibit Slavery in Kansas." Reprinted in the *Crisis*, August 1, 1861. Numerous similar references pepper his writings.

19. Samuel Medary to Martin Van Buren, May 5, 1848, Van Buren Papers, Library of Congress; cited in Helen P. Dorn, "Samuel Medary—Journalist and Politician, 1801-1864," *Ohio State Archaeological and Historical Quarterly* 53:22.

20. See Eugene H. Roseboom, *The Civil War Era: 1850-1873*, vol. 4 of *A History of the State of Ohio* (Columbus: Ohio Historical Society, 1944), 126.

21. Betty Garrett, *Columbus: America's Crossroads* (Tulsa, Okla.: Continental Heritage Press, 1980), 62.

22. George W. Knepper, *Ohio and Its People* (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1989), 228.

23. For additional discussion of Medary's private and public-service interests, see Osman C. Hooper, "The Crisis and the Man: An Episode in Civil War Journalism," *Ohio State University Journalism Series* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1939), 1:15-17.

24. *Columbus New Constitution*, May 5, 1849.

25. For further discussion of Medary's opinions on the European revolutionary movement and his personal life, see Dorn, "Samuel Medary," 23-25; and Tahlman Krumm Jr., "The Gethsemane Factor: A Historical Portrait of Samuel Medary of Ohio and an Analysis of the Rhetorical Dilemma of His Crisis Years, 1861-1864" (Ph.D. diss., Ohio State University, 1978), 67-70.

26. For a more complete discussion of the roots and agenda of the Locofoco movement in Ohio, see C. C. Huntington, "A History of Banking and Currency before the Civil War," *Ohio State Archaeological and Historical Quarterly* 24 (1915): 423-31; and Francis P. Weisenburger, *The Passing of the Frontier, 1825-1850*, vol. 3 of *The History of the State of Ohio*, ed. Carl Wittke (Columbus: State of Ohio, 1941), chap. 25.

27. *New Constitution*, October 20, 1849.

28. Ibid., May 29, 1849.
29. For further discussion see Emilius O. Randall and Daniel J. Ryan, *History of Ohio* (New York: Century History Co., 1912), 98-100.
30. *New Constitution*, June 2, 1849.
31. Ibid., July 7, 1849.
32. Ibid.
33. See Eugene H. Roseboom and Francis P. Weisenburger, *A History of Ohio* (Columbus: Ohio State Archaeological and Historical Society, 1961), 2:163-64.
34. *New Constitution*, May 5, 1849.
35. For more details on the constitutional convention, see Knepper, *Ohio and Its People*, 211-13.
36. Ibid., 212-14.
37. See Frank V. Quillin, *The Color Line in Ohio: A History of Race Prejudice in a Typical Northern State* (New York: Negro University Press, 1913), 60.
38. Reported in the *Ohio State Journal*, July 7, 1851.
39. See Roseboom, *The Civil War Era*, 134.
40. See Hooper, "The Crisis and the Man," 17.
41. For more on Medary's relationship with Douglas, see Robert W. Johannsen, *Stephen Douglas* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), 356.
42. *Ohio Statesman*, February 18, 1854.
43. Ibid., March 1, 1854.
44. For further details on this transformation, see Joseph P. Smith, *History of the Republican Party in Ohio* (Chicago, 1898), 1:33-39; cited in Roseboom, *The Civil War Era*, 303.
45. *Ohio Statesman*, February 22, 1855.
46. Dorn, "Samuel Medary," 27.
47. *Ohio Statesman*, October 7, 1856.
48. See Henry C. Hubbart, *The Older Middle West, 1840-1880: Its Social, Economic and Political Life and Sectional Tendencies before, during and after the Civil War* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1936), 76-78.
49. *Ohio Statesman*, March 19, 1857.
50. Pugh, Cox, Pendleton, and others to President James Buchanan, March 6, 1857, *Territorial Papers*, Kansas, Film Number 10-055 (U.S. Department of State); cited in Baily, "Samuel Medary, 1801-1864," 47.
51. *Cincinnati Daily Commercial*, March 16, 1857.
52. *Ohio State Journal*, March 13, 1857.
53. *Cleveland Daily Herald*, March 14, 1857.
54. William W. Folwell, *A History of Minnesota* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 1921), 1:395.

55. Governor Medary's message to the Senate and House of Representatives of the State of Minnesota, Friday, December 11, 1857 (St. Paul: Earle S. Goodrich, Incidental Printer, 1857), 1.

56. Edwin Stanton to Samuel Medary, December 31, 1857; included in the Medary Collection, Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul. For more on Medary's tenure in Minnesota, see Thomas A. McMullin, *Biographical Directory of American Territorial Governors* (New York: Mecklear, 1984), 200-201.

57. *Columbus Gazette*, February 19, 1858.

58. *Ohio State Journal*, November 25, 1858.

59. See F. G. Adams, ed., *Transactions of the Kansas State Legislature* (Topeka: Press of the Kansas State Printing Co., 1896), 5:571.

60. Blum et al., *The National Experience*, 332.

61. *Ibid.*, 565.

62. Taken from Medary's appeal during his veto speech to the Kansas Territorial Legislature, February 20, 1860; reprinted in the *Crisis*, August 1, 1861.

63. For further discussion of Medary's term in Kansas, see Alice Nichols, *Bleeding Kansas* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1954), 240—41; and William Frank Zornow, *Kansas: A History of the Jayhawk State* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1957), 79-80, 86.

64. Governor Medary to President James Buchanan, December 28, 1858, in Adams, *Transactions of the Kansas State Historical Society*, 5:565-66.

65. *Lawrence (Kansas) Republican*, December 20, 1860.

Chapter 4

1. For more information on this period, see Francis P. Weisenburger, *Columbus during the Civil War* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1963), 10-14.

2. In 1850 it was reported in *Manuscript Population Schedules* that by a large margin Pennsylvania was the state that had contributed the largest proportion of immigrants to Ohio's population, 38 percent of Ohio's total population. Virginia was second with 17 percent, and New York was third with 15 percent. Cited in Hubert G. H. Wilhelm, *The Origin and Distribution of Settlement Groups: Ohio, 1850* (Athens, Ohio: published by the author, 1982), 25.

3. For more information about Columbus during this period, see Betty Garrett, *Columbus: America's Crossroads* (Tulsa, Okla.: Continental Heritage Press, 1980), 58-70.

4. *Ibid.*, 62-64.

5. Charles Sellers, *The Market Revolution: Jacksonian America, 1815-1846* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 427.
6. Lincoln quotation from Roy P. Basler, ed., *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1952-55), 3:482; Douglas from Robert W. Johannsen, "Stephen A. Douglas, Popular Sovereignty and the Territories," *Historian* 22 (August 1960): 379; both cited in Eric Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party before the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), 215,307.
7. According to the 1860 census, with 2,377,917 residents, Ohio had the third largest free-state population, ranking behind only New York and Pennsylvania. Cited in George W. Knepper, *Ohio and Its People* (Kent: Kent State University Press, 1989), 225-28.
8. F. G. Adams, ed., *Transactions of the Kansas State Historical Society* (Topeka: Press of the Kansas State Printing Co., 1896), 5:617.
9. *The Crisis*, September 16, 1863.
10. *Lawrence (Kansas) National Democrat*, December 20, 1860.
11. Cited in Henry F. Bedford, *The Union Divides: Politics and Slavery, 1850-1861* (New York: Macmillan, 1963), 65.
12. Reported in the *Lawrence (Kansas) Republican*, March 1, 1860.
13. *The Crisis*, January 31, 1861.
14. He repeated this statement in several forms on numerous occasions during the four years he published the *Crisis*. It first appeared in the January 31, 1861, issue, but it also can be found in the May 2, 1861, and November 11, 1863, issues.
15. Basler, ed., *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, 4:150-51, 154-55.
16. *The Crisis*, January 31, 1861.
17. *Ibid.*
18. *Ibid.*
19. *Ibid.*
20. *Ibid.*, January 28, 1863.
21. *Ibid.*
22. *Ibid.*, March 11, 1863.
23. *Ibid.*, February 14, 1861.
24. *Ibid.*, March 14, 1861.
25. *Ibid.*, April 18, 1861.
26. *Ibid.*, February 19, 1862; cited in Helen P. Dorn, "Samuel Medary—Journalist and Politician, 1801-1864," *Ohio State Archaeological and Historical Quarterly* (Columbus: Ohio Historical Society, 1944), 33.
27. James L. Vallandigham, *A Life of Clement L. Vallandigham* (Baltimore: Turnbull Brothers Publishing, 1872), 8,22.

28. *The Crisis*, February 7, 1861.
29. Figures from Robert S. Harper, *Ohio Handbook of the Civil War* (Columbus: Ohio Historical Society, 1961), 7-8.
30. Statement attributed to Whitelaw Reid, *Ohio in the War* (Columbus: Ohio State Archaeological and Historical Society, 1893), 1:35-36.
31. Details from Harper, *Ohio Handbook of the Civil War*, 7-8; and Garrett, *Columbus: America's Crossroads*, 70.
32. *The Crisis*, April 18, 1861.
33. Jean H. Baker, *Affairs of Party: The Political Culture of Northern Democrats in the Mid-Nineteenth Century* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1983), 319-22.
34. *The Crisis*, February 28, 1861.
35. "Rough Notes from a Knapsack" began in the *Crisis* in the May 16, 1861, issue. The first of Medary's articles concerning the poor treatment of troops in Union camps appeared in the May 23, 1861, issue.
36. *The Crisis*, November 7, 1861.
37. John D. Stevens, *Shaping the First Amendment: The Development of Free Expression* (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1982), 41.
38. For additional discussion of this quandary and resulting censorship efforts, see Edwin Emery and Michael Emery, *The Press and America: An Interpretative History of the Mass Media*, 5th ed. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1984), 191-200.
39. This figure is cited by James M. McPherson, *Abraham Lincoln and the Second American Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 57.
40. Seward's claim is cited in Baker, *Affairs of Party*, 167.
41. Ex parte *Merryman*, 17 Fed. Cas. 144; cited in James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 287-88.
42. Sherman wrote these comments in a letter to his brother, cited in Edwin H. Ford, *Selected Readings in the History of American Journalism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1939), 268.
43. Lincoln appointed Stanton, a former Ohio Democratic ally of Medary's, to replace Simon Cameron as secretary of war in January 1862.
44. For further discussion of frontline censorship during the war, see Leonard W. Levy, *Legacy of Suppression: Freedom of Speech and Press in Early American History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964), 176.
45. *The Crisis*, May 2, 1861.
46. *Ibid.*, February 21, 1861.
47. *Ibid.*, April 18, 1861.
48. For a more complete description see Emery and Emery, *The Press and America*, 338-39.

49. *The Crisis*, July 25, 1861.

50. For an in-depth study of the exchange system, see Richard B. Kielbowicz, *News in the Mail: The Press, Post Office, and Public Information, 1700-1860s* (New York: Greenwood, 1989).

51. *Ibid.*, 141-55.

52. *The Crisis*, February 7, 1861.

53. Osman C. Hooper, "The *Crisis* and the Man: An Episode in Civil War Journalism," *Ohio State University Journalism Series* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1939), 1:33.

54. *The Crisis*, March 7, 1861.

55. *Ibid.*

56. See Robert S. Harper, *Lincoln and the Press* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1951), 113.

57. Carl M. Becker, "Newspapers in Battle: The *Dayton Empire* and the *Dayton Journal* during the Civil War," *Ohio History* 99 (Winter-Spring 1990): 29.

58. Silbey contrasts the two factions by saying the Legitimists "favored legitimate opposition to the administration but not to the war," while Purist Democrats "favored peace as a way to save the Union." Cited in James A. Rawley, *The Politics of Union: Northern Politics during the Civil War* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1974), viii.

59. For further discussion, see Charles Ray Wilson, "The *Cincinnati Daily Enquirer* and Civil War Politics: A Study in 'Copperhead' Opinion" (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1934), 258-59.

60. Knepper, *Ohio and Its People*, 236.

61. *The Crisis*, April 18, 1861.

62. Avery Craven, *The Repressible Conflict, 1830-1861* (Baton Rouge, 1939), 5; cited in Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men*, 3.

63. Michael Holt, *The Political Crisis of the 1850s* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1978), 1-6.

64. *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, April 18, 1861; cited in Henry H. Simms, *Ohio Politics on the Eve of the Conflict* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1961), 28.

65. *The Crisis*, May 28, 1862.

66. *Ibid.*, February 14, 1861.

67. *Ibid.*, April 4, 1861.

68. Louise L. Stevenson, *The Victorian Homefront: American Thought and Culture, 1860-1880* (New York: Twayne, 1991), 42-45.

69. *The Crisis*, April 18, 1861.

70. This concept is discussed in McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 494.

71. *The Crisis*, May 16, 1861.

72. *Ibid.*, June 20, 1861.

73. Charles M. Gould to Samuel S. Cox, October 15, 1863, Cox Papers (microfilm) at Hayes Memorial Library, Fremont, Ohio; and Frank L. Klement, *Dark Lanterns: Secret Political Societies, Conspiracies, and Treason Trials in the Civil War* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1984), 3.
74. The *Crisis*, August 29, 1861.
75. *Ibid.*, September 5, 1861.
76. *Ibid.*, November 30, 1861.
77. Hooper, "The Crisis and the Man," 20.
78. The *Crisis*, August 29, 1861.
79. *Ibid.*, April 18, 1861.
80. *Ibid.*, October 24, 1861.
81. *Ohio Statesman*, December 22, 1861.

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1. The *Crisis*, June 20, 1861.
2. *Ibid.*
3. Wendell Phillips, cited in James B. Stewart, ed., *The Constitution, the Law, and Freedom of Expression, 1787-1987* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois State University Press, 1987), 1.
4. Frank Friedel, ed., *Union Pamphlets of the Civil War* (New York: G. P. Putnam Sons, 1905), 2:301-2.
5. The *Crisis*, November 11, 1861.
6. *Ibid.*, December 19, 1861.
7. *Ibid.*, August 18, 1861.
8. *Ibid.*, September 29, 1861.
9. For more concerning Greeley's stand on emancipation, see Edwin Emery and Michael Emery, *The Press and America: An Interpretative History of the Mass Media*, 5th ed. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1984), 184-85, 192.
10. The *Crisis*, October 1, 1862.
11. *Ibid.*
12. Robert E. Sterling, "Civil War Draft Resistance in the Middle West" (Ph.D. diss., Northern Illinois University, 1974), 97.
13. The *Crisis*, October 1, 1862.
14. For further discussion of Lincoln's stand on slavery, see Donna Dickerson, *The Course of Tolerance: Freedom of the Press in Nineteenth Century America* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1990), 143.
15. Roy P. Basler, ed., *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1952-55), 2:130, 255.
16. *Ibid.*, 532.

17. *Ibid.*, 281-82.
18. Eric Foner and Olivia Mahoney, *A House Divided: America in the Age of Lincoln* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1990), 118.
19. *The Crisis*, June 27, 1861.
20. *Ibid.*, March 5, 1862.
21. *Ibid.*, July 4, 1862.
22. William **Osborne** to **H. V. Poor**, February 18, 1863, President's Letter Book, W. H. Osborne, Illinois Central Railroad Co. Papers; cited in Frank L. Klement, *The Copperheads in the Middle West* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), 11.
23. The comment was originally printed in the *Cairo (Indiana) Gazette* in July and was reprinted in the *Crisis*, September 17, 1862.
24. James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 507.
25. *The Crisis*, January 29, 1862.
26. *Ibid.*, April 5, 1862.
27. *Ibid.*, August 3, 1864.
28. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 506.
29. The 37th U.S. Congress numbered 105 Republicans, 43 Democrats, and 30 other party members in the House of Representatives, and 31 Republicans, 10 Democrats, and 8 others in the Senate (William Lerner, ed., *Historical Statistics of the U.S., Part 2: Colonial Times to 1970* [Washington: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, 1971], 1083).
30. Shelby Foote, *Civil War: A Narrative, Vol. I: Fort Sumter to Perryville* (New York: Random House, 1958), 538.
31. Sterling, "Civil War Draft Resistance in the Middle West," 96-97.
32. *The Crisis*, July 23, 1862.
33. Tahlman Krumm Jr., "The Gethsemane Factor: A Historical Portrait of Samuel Medary of Ohio and an Analysis of the Rhetorical Dilemma of His *Crisis* Years, 1861-1864" (Ph.D. diss., Ohio State University, 1978), 150.
34. See examples of such letters in the *Crisis*, November 19, 1862, and December 10, 1862.
35. *Ibid.*, December 5, 1861.
36. *Ibid.*, December 9, 1861.
37. Dickerson, *The Course of Tolerance*, 144.
38. For a more in-depth discussion of such activities, see Henry C. Hubbart, *The Older Middle West, 1840-1880: Its Social, Economic and Political Life and Sectional Tendencies before, during and after the Civil War* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1936), 224.
39. For more examples of Republican newspaper activities that support this statement, see Justin E. Walsh, *To Print the News and Raise Hell: A Biography of Wilbur F. Storey* (Durham: University of North Carolina Press, 1968), 196.

40. Apparently this did not occur in Ohio, but it did take place in Philadelphia, according to Dickerson, *The Course of Tolerance*, 165.

41. For further discussion, see Dickerson, *The Course of Tolerance*, 171-72.

42. Robert S. Harper, *The Ohio Press in the Civil War* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1964), 9.

43. *The Crisis*, October 22, 1862.

44. *Stark County (Ohio) Democrat*, October 22, 1862.

45. *The Crisis*, October 12, 1862.

46. No two journalism historians agree exactly as to how many "peace" newspapers were attacked during the war. Much of the confusion arises from differences in definition (what constituted an attack), historical records, and multiple attacks on the same paper. According to *The American Annual Cyclopedia and Register of Important Events, Vol. 1:1862-1865* (New York: D. Appleton, 1875), cited in Dickerson, *The Course of Tolerance*, 171, twenty-four were suppressed and twenty-nine destroyed. Robert J. Wagman sets the total figure at sixty in *The First Amendment Book* (New York: Pharos, 1991), 48. But John C. Nerone places the total closer to one hundred in "Violence against the Press in U.S. History," *Journal of Communication* 40 (Summer 1990): 17. My own count of recorded incidents, including multiple attacks on the same newspapers, supports Nerone's higher total.

47. For further discussion of the newspapers that were closed during this period, see Hubbart, *The Older Middle West*, 204; and Klement, *The Copperheads in the Middle West*, 18-20.

48. *The Crisis*, December 5, 1861.

49. *Ibid.*, February 19, 1862.

50. Jean H. Baker, *Affairs of Party: The Political Culture of Northern Democrats in the Mid-Nineteenth Century* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983), 166-68.

51. *Ibid.*, 155.

52. *The Crisis*, August 1, 1861.

53. *Ibid.*, July 25, 1861.

54. *Ibid.*, July 18, 1861.

55. David Donald, *Lincoln Reconsidered: Essays on the Civil War Era*, 2d ed. (New York: Vintage, 1956), 27.

56. *The Crisis*, March 4 and 18, 1863.

57. For additional discussion of the New England influence argument used by Peace Democrats, see McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 593; and Frank L. Klement, *The Limits of Dissent: Clement Vallandigham and the Civil War* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1970), 106.

58. William G. Carleton, "Civil War Dissidence in the North: The Perspective of a Century," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 65 (Summer 1965): 391.

59. Donald, *Lincoln Reconsidered*, 167-70.
60. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 593.
61. The January 1, 1863, editorial comment from the *Cincinnati Enquirer* and further discussion of the perceived New England agenda can be found in Joel H. Silbey, *A Respectable Minority: The Democratic Party in the Civil War Era, 1860-1868* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1977), 74.
62. Robert L. Kelley, *The Cultural Pattern in American Politics: The First Century* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1979), 232.
63. Samuel S. Cox, *Eight Years in Congress from 1857 to 1865, Memoir and Speeches* (New York: D. Appleton, 1865), 309.
64. *The Crisis*, May 13, 1862.
65. *Ibid.*, March 19, 1862.
66. Louise L. Stevenson, *The Victorian Homefront: American Thought and Culture, 1860-1880* (New York: Twayne, 1991), 145.
67. *The Crisis*, July 16, 1862.
68. Silbey, *A Respectable Minority*, 79.
69. This account of the deliberations of the convention are from Eugene H. Roseboom, *The Civil War Era: 1850-1873*, vol. 4 of *A History of the State of Ohio* (Columbus: Ohio Historical Society, 1944), 400.
70. *The Crisis*, July 9, 1862.
71. *Ibid.*, October 22, 1862.
72. *Ibid.*, October 29, 1862.
73. For further discussion, see Hubbart, *The Older Middle West, 1840-1880*, 190.
74. For further discussion of the campaign, see Klement, *The Limits of Dissent*, 103-5.
75. *The Crisis*, October 22, 1862.
76. Wood Gray, *The Hidden Civil War: The Story of the Copperheads* (New York: Viking, 1942), 140-41.
77. *The Crisis*, November 26, 1862.
78. Federal Population Census, 1860; Franklin County (City of Columbus, Wards 1-5), Microfilm #653, Roll #964, Muskingum County Genealogical Society, Zanesville, Ohio.
79. *The Crisis*, December 17, 1862.
80. *Ibid.*, November 19, 1862.
81. *Ibid.*, June 27, 1862.
82. *Ibid.*, October 1, 1862.
83. This case is thoroughly argued in Michael Linfield, *Freedom under Fire: U.S. Civil Liberties in Times of War* (Boston: Southend Press, 1990), 24.
84. Basler, *Works of Abraham Lincoln*, 2:430.
85. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 592.

Chapter 6

1. *The Crisis*, January 14, 1863.
2. *Ibid.*, January 21, 1863.
3. *Ibid.*, June 18, 1862.
4. *Ibid.*, January 21, 1863.
5. Charles Sumner to Francis Lieber, January 17, 1863; in Edward L. Pierce, *Memoirs and Letters of Charles Sumner* (Boston, 1877-93), 4:114; cited in James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 591.
6. Whitelaw Reid, *Ohio in the War* (Columbus: Ohio State Archaeological and Historical Society, 1893), 1:754-61.
7. Frank L. Klement, *The Limits of Dissent: Clement Vallandigham and the Civil War* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1970), 144.
8. Eugene H. Roseboom, "The Mobbing of the *Crisis*," *Ohio State Archaeological and Historical Quarterly* 59 (April 1950): 151.
9. Clifford Dowdey and Louis H. Manarin, eds., *The Wartime Papers of Robert E. Lee* (New York: Da Capo Publishing, 1961), 507-9.
10. *Cleveland Leader*, March 28, 1863.
11. *Ohio State Journal*, March 6, 1863.
12. *Ohio Statesman*, March 6, 1863.
13. *Ibid.*
14. *The Crisis*, March 11, 1863.
15. *Ibid.*
16. *Ibid.*, March 11 and 18, 1863.
17. Private Samuel C. Trescott, Co. C, Second Ohio Volunteer Cavalry, to his cousin, Miss Cordelia Miller of Braceville, Trumbull County; cited in Roseboom, "The Mobbing of the *Crisis*," 153.
18. *Chicago Times*, reprinted in the *Crisis*, March 18, 1863.
19. *Placer (California) Herald*, reprinted in the *Crisis*, June 3, 1863.
20. Resolutions reported in the *Columbus Gazette*, March 17, 1863; cited in Francis P. Weisenburger, *Columbus during the Civil War* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1963), 22.
21. Comment attributed to James Russell Lowell by Milton Lomask, *Andrew Johnson: President on Trial* (New York: Farrar, Strauss, 1960), 186.
22. This is the light in which Peace Democrats depicted themselves. For discussion of the validity of this claim, see Jean H. Baker, "A Loyal Opposition: Northern Democrats in the 37th Congress," *Civil War History* 25 (1979): 139-55. In this article, Baker reports on her analysis of 1,176 roll calls that took place in Congress between 1861 and 1863. The findings support her conclusion that Peace Democrats in Congress consistently voted with the goal in mind of limiting the growth of centralized power.

23. Joel H. Silbey, *A Respectable Minority: The Democratic Party in the Civil War Era, 1860-1868* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1977), 78.
24. William K. Scarborough, ed., *The Years of Hope, April 1861-June 1863*, vol. 2 of *The Diary of Edmund Ruffin* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1976), 34.
25. John Bigelow, *The Life of Samuel J. Tilden* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1895), 1:171.
26. Henry C. Hubbart, *The Older Middle West, 1840-1880: Its Social, Economic and Political Life and Sectional Tendencies before, during and after the Civil War* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1936), 209.
27. *Ibid.*, 78.
28. Jean H. Baker, *Affairs of Party: The Political Culture of Northern Democrats in the Mid-Nineteenth Century* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983), 153.
29. *The Crisis*, May 7, 1862.
30. Silbey, *A Respectable Minority*, 73.
31. James L. Vallandigham, *A Life of Clement L. Vallandigham* (Baltimore: Turnbull Brothers Publishing, 1872), 137.
32. *The Crisis*, January 27, 1864.
33. *Ibid.*, May 13 and July 22, 1863.
34. Wayne Jordan, "The Hoskinsville Rebellion," *Ohio State Archaeological and Historical Quarterly* 67 (Spring 1938): 319-54.
35. *The Crisis*, April 1, 1863.
36. Alfred E. Lee, *History of the City of Columbus: Capital of Ohio* (New York: Munsell, 1892), 458-59.
37. William B. Hesseltine, *Lincoln and the War Governors* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1948), 311-18.
38. Bruce Catton, *Glory Road: The Bloody Route from Fredricksburg to Gettysburg* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1952), 246.
39. Eugene C. Murdock, *Patriotism Limited 1862-1865: The Civil War Draft and the Bounty System* (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1967), 5.
40. George H. Porter, *Ohio Politics during the Civil War Period*, vol. 40, no. 2 of *Columbia University Studies in History, Economics and Public Law* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1911), 157-58.
41. Ben Pearley Poore, *The Life and Public Service of Ambrose Burnside: Soldier-Citizen-Statesman* (Providence: J. A. and R. A. Reid, 1882), 206-7.
42. *The Crisis*, March 18, 1863.
43. Ambrose Burnside to Henry B. Carrington, April 21, 1863, Carrington Papers, Archives Division, Indiana State University; cited in Frank L. Klement, *The Copperheads in the Middle West* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), 88.

44. The *Crisis*, November 18, 1863.
45. *Ibid.*, January 21, 1863.
46. Robert S. Harper, *Ohio Handbook of the Civil War* (Columbus: Ohio Historical Society, 1961), 35.
47. A complete account of Vallandigham's speech and subsequent trial is available in Reid, *Ohio in the War*, 1:99-124.
48. Abraham Lincoln to Ambrose Burnside, May 8, 1863, Burnside Papers, General's Papers and Books, Record Group 94, National Archives Building, Washington, D.C.; cited in Craig D. Tenney, "To Suppress or Not to Suppress: Abraham Lincoln and the *Chicago Times*," *Civil War History* 27 (Summer 1981): 250.
49. For a more detailed analysis of the ongoing confrontation between the two rival Dayton newspapers during the war, see Carl M. Becker, "Newspapers in Battle: The *Dayton Empire* and the *Dayton Journal* during the Civil War," *Ohio History* 99 (Winter-Spring 1990): 29-50.
50. The *Crisis*, May 13, 1863.
51. Reid, *Ohio in the War*, 1:120-22.
52. From a letter published in the *New York Tribune*, June 15, 1863; cited in Klement, *The Limits of Dissent*, 183.
53. Vallandigham secretly returned to Ohio in June 1864. See chapter 7 for details of his return and his impact on the 1864 presidential campaign.
54. The statement appeared in a letter that was sent to Lincoln by the Ohio Committee, in *The Complete Works of Lincoln*, 8:803-6; cited in Robert S. Harper, *Lincoln and the Press* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1951), 247.
55. *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, series 2, vol. 6 (Washington, 1899), 48-53, 56-59, 64-68; cited in Eugene Roseboom, *The Civil War Era: 1850-1873*, vol. 4 of *A History of the State of Ohio* (Columbus: Ohio Historical Society, 1944), 416.
56. The Mattoon incident was reported in the *Chicago Times* and reprinted in the *Crisis*, August 26, 1863. For more details on these incidents, see Hubbart, *The Older Middle West*, 200.
57. The *Crisis*, October 7, 1863.
58. Burnside's statement was part of article 3 of General Order No. 84, which was issued from Cincinnati (Poore, *The Life and Public Service of Ambrose Burnside*, 210).
59. For a thorough analysis of this case, see Tenney, "To Suppress or Not to Suppress," 248-59.
60. *New York Times*, June 4, 1863; cited in John Lofton, *The Press as Guardian of the First Amendment* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1980), 104.
61. *New York Times*, June 9, 1863; cited in Donna Dickerson, *The Course*

of Tolerance: Freedom of the Press in Nineteenth Century America (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1990), 176.

62. Letter cited in Tenney, "To Suppress or Not to Suppress," 253.

63. For examples of Vallandigham's letters, see the following issues of the *Crisis*: July 22, August 12, September 13, and October 21, 1863.

64. The *Crisis*, August 19, 1863.

65. *Ibid.*, September 23, 1863.

66. For further discussion of this point, see Hubbart, *The Older Middle West*, 220.

61. Richard L. Manion, "Sandusky County in the Civil War," *Northwest Ohio Quarterly* 63 (Summer/Autumn 1991): 70-72.

68. Quoted in Daniel J. Ryan, *Lincoln and Ohio* (Columbus: Ohio Historical Society, 1923), 212.

69. The *Crisis*, October 28, 1863.

70. For a thorough analysis of the gubernatorial race, see Klement, *The Limits of Dissent*, 229-56.

Chapter 7

1. The *Crisis*, September 9, 1863.

2. *Ibid.*

3. Comment cited in Howard M. Jenkins, *Historical Collections Relating to Gwynedd*, 2d ed. (Philadelphia: Published by the author, 1897), 433.

4. The *Crisis*, October 23, 1863.

5. *Ibid.*, September 16, 1863.

6. *Ibid.*, September 23, 1863.

7. *Ibid.*, January 20, 1864.

8. Timothy W. Gleason, *The Watchdog Concept: The Press and the Courts in Nineteenth Century America* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1990), 61.

9. *Ohio State Journal*, August 12, 1862.

10. The *Crisis*, August 29, 1861.

11. *Ibid.*, May 28, 1862.

12. *Ibid.*, June 18, 1862.

13. For more about this case, see Robert S. Harper, *The Ohio Press in the Civil War* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1964), 22.

14. The *Crisis*, April 9, 1862.

15. Jean H. Baker, *Affairs of Party: The Political Culture of Northern Democrats in the Mid-Nineteenth Century* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983), 154.

16. The *Crisis*, June 20, 1863.

17. James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 447.
18. Baker, *Affairs of Party*, 154.
19. *The Crisis*, June 27, 1862.
20. *Ibid.*, December 24, 1863.
21. *Columbus Dispatch*, July 11, 1992, 2D.
22. *The Crisis*, September 16, 1863.
23. *Ibid.*, April 23, 1863.
24. Roy Basler, ed. *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1952-55), 4:409-10.
25. *The Crisis*, January 27, 1864.
26. During his teaching career in Clermont County, Medary and his family initially bordered with the Simpson family. Medary became acquainted with the Simpsons' grandson, a very young Ulysses Grant.
27. *The Crisis*, January 27, 1864.
28. *Ibid.*, June 27, 1862.
29. *Ibid.*, June 13, 1861.
30. *New York Times*, September 8, 1861.
31. *New York Herald*, September 10, 1861; cited in Donna Dickerson, *The Course of Tolerance: Freedom of the Press in Nineteenth Century America* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1990), 170.
32. *Chicago Tribune*, June 17, 1863.
33. *Ibid.*, October 3, 1861.
34. *New York Herald*, March 3, 1862; cited in Dickerson, *The Course of Tolerance*, 153.
35. James A. Rawley, *The Politics of Union: Northern Politics during the Civil War* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1974), 58.
36. Frank Friedel, ed., *Union Pamphlets of the Civil War* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1905), 1:80-83.
37. Robert S. Harper, *Lincoln and the Press* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1951), 133.
38. Garry Wills, *Lincoln at Gettysburg: The Words That Remade America* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992); cited in the *Columbus Dispatch*, June 28, 1992, 6G.
39. John Lofton, *The Press as Guardian of the First Amendment* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1980), 103.
40. David Donald, *Lincoln Reconsidered: Essays on the Civil War Era*, 2d ed. (New York: Vintage, 1956), 60.
41. *Ibid.*, 18, 136.
42. Albert J. Beveridge, *Abraham Lincoln, 1809-1858* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1928), 2:354-55.

43. William G. Carleton, "Civil War Dissidence in the North: The Perspective of a Century," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 65 (Summer 1966): 401.
44. Basler, *Works of Abraham Lincoln*, 6:264-65.
45. Mark E. Neely Jr., *The Fate of Liberty: Abraham Lincoln and Civil Liberties* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 28.
46. *Ibid.*
47. *Harper's Weekly*, August 3, 1861; cited in Dickerson, *The Course of Tolerance*, 145.
48. Anna E. Carroll, *In Defense of the President's War Measures* (Washington: Henry Polkinghorn, 1861), 14-15.
49. James M. McPherson, *Abraham Lincoln and the Second American Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 114.
50. John C. Nerone, "Violence against the Press in U.S. History," *Journal of Communication* 40 (Summer 1990): 16.
51. Edwin Emery and Michael Emery, *The Press and America: An Interpretative History of the Mass Media*, 5th ed. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1984), 195.
52. Robert H. Wiebe, *The Search for Order: 1877-1920* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1967), xiii.
53. Incidents related in Harper, *The Ohio Press in the Civil War*, 26.
54. *Boston Courier*, January 1864; cited in Harper, *The Ohio Press in the Civil War*, 26.
55. *Ibid.*, 32.
56. Emery and Emery, *The Press and America*, 197.
57. *Ohio Statesman*, March 24, 1864.
58. For a thorough report on the proceedings of the convention, see Frank L. Klement, *The Limits of Dissent: Clement L. Vallandigham and the Civil War* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1970), 267.
59. *The Crisis*, February 17, 1864.
60. *Ibid.*, April 20, 1864.
61. Francis P. Weisenburger, *Columbus during the Civil War* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1963), 25.
62. *The Crisis*, May 25, 1864.
63. Newspapers' comments cited in Harper, *The Ohio Press in the Civil War*, 30.
64. *United States v. Charles W. H. Cathcart, Samuel Medary, et ai*, 166 RG 21 (7th Cir. Southern District of Ohio, Western Division of Cincinnati, April 23d, 1864), National Archives, Chicago, Illinois.
65. Oscar A. Kinchen, *Confederate Operations in Canada and the North: A Little Known Phase of the American Civil War* (North Quincy, Mass.: Christopher Publishing, 1970), 29-30.

66. Frank L. Klement, *The Copperheads in the Middle West* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), 205.
67. Frank L. Klement, *Dark Lanterns: Secret Political Societies, Conspiracies, and Treason Trials in the Civil War* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1984), 2.
68. Comments cited in Harper, *The Ohio Press in the War*, 30.
69. *The Crisis*, June 1, 1864.
70. Thurlow Weed cited in Wood Gray, *The Hidden Civil War: The Story of the Copperheads* (New York: Viking, 1942), 174.
71. Greeley to Lincoln, July 7, 1864, and Lincoln to Greeley, July 9, 1864; cited in McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 762.
72. For additional details about Lincoln's fears during this campaign, see J. G. Randall and David Donald, *The Civil War and Reconstruction*, 2d ed. (Boston: D. C. Heath, 1961), 478-79.
73. Charles Medary to Samuel Medary, July 20, 1864; in Samuel Medary Papers, Ohio Historical Society, Columbus.
74. *The Crisis*, October 5, 1864.
75. *Ibid.*, June 29, 1864.
76. For details of this movement, see the *Crisis*, September 24 and October 18, 1864.
77. Noah Brooks, *Recollections of Washington D.C. in Lincoln's Time* (New York: Collier Books, 1962), 195.
78. For more details on the election results, see John M. Blum et al., *The National Experience: A History of the United States*, 6th ed. (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1985), 382.
79. Statistic cited in Eric Foner and Olivia Mahoney, *A House Divided: America in the Age of Lincoln* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1990), 124.
80. Donald, *Lincoln Reconsidered*, 80.
81. Klement, *The Copperheads in the Middle West*, 239.
82. Reprinted in the *Ohio State Journal*, November 8, 1864.
83. *Ibid.*
84. The *Nevada Gazette* story was reprinted in the *Crisis* by Medary's successor for purposes of rebuttal, January 25, 1865.
85. *Cincinnati Enquirer*, November 8, 1864.
86. *Ohio Statesman*, November 9, 1864.
87. Cited in Osman C. Hooper, "The Crisis and the Man: An Episode in Civil War Journalism," *Ohio State University Journalism Series* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1939), 1:33.
88. *Ohio Statesman*, November 10, 1864.

Chapter 8

1. *The Crisis*, June 27, 1861.
2. Donna Dickerson, *The Course of Tolerance: Freedom & the Vtr. in Nineteenth Century America* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1990), 150.
3. Amendment 1, Constitution of the United States, 1791; cited in Robert J. Wagman, *The First Amendment Book* (New York: Pharos, 1991), ix.
4. John D. Stevens, *Shaping the First Amendment: The Development of Free Expression* (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1982), 147.
5. Ken Ward argues that whereas preceding presidents, including Andrew Jackson, had been able to allocate printing contracts and manipulate the political press for their own purposes, Lincoln was unable to use such techniques because the press had grown in numbers and independence. See Ken Ward, *Mass Communications and the Modern World* (Chicago: Dorsey Press, 1989), 28-29.
6. Jeffrey A. Smith, *Printers and Press Freedom: The Ideology of Early American Journalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 163.
7. Wagman, *The First Amendment Book*, 49.
8. Abraham Lincoln to "Hon. Erastus Corning & others," June 12, 1863, Robert Todd Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress; cited in Frank L. Klement, *The Limits of Dissent: Clement Vallandigham and the Civil War* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1970), 323.
9. Edward L. Carter, "The Revolution in Journalism during the Civil War," *Lincoln Herald* 73 (Winter 1971): 230.
10. Timothy Gleason, *The Watchdog Concept: The Press and the Courts in Nineteenth Century America* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1990), 66.
11. James A. Rawley, *The Politics of Union: Northern Politics during the Civil War* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1974), 3.
12. Mark E. Neely Jr., *The Fate of Liberty: Abraham Lincoln and Civil Liberties* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 209.
13. *Ex parte Milligan*, 71 U.S. (4 Wallace) 1-143 (1866); cited in Klement, *The Limits of Dissent*, 320-22.
14. John Lofton, *The Press as Guardian of the First Amendment* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1980), 290.
15. Rawley, *The Politics of Union*, 58.
16. Lofton, *The Press as Guardian of the First Amendment*, 119.
17. Dickerson, *The Course of Tolerance*, 179.
18. Lofton, *The Press as Guardian of the first Amendment*, 191.

19. Stevens, *Shaping the First Amendment*, 77.

20. Wendell Phillips cited in Richard Hofstadter, *The American Political Tradition, and the Men Who Made It* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1948), 138.

21. Harold L. Nelson, ed., *Freedom of the Press from Hamilton to the Warren Court* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1967), 250.

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