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An investigation of the attitudes expressed by Richmond's press toward Thomas Jefferson in the Presidential elections of 1800, 1804, and 1808

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AN INVESTIGATION OF THE ATTITUDES EXPRESSED
BY RICHMOND'S PRESS TOWARD THOMAS JEFFERSON
IN THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS OF 1800, 1804
AND 1808

A THESIS
PRESENTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY
UNIVERSITY OF RICHMOND

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE

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VIRGINIA

BY
EDWARD ALLISON BROWN

AUGUST 1964

PREFACE

This paper is an investigation of the attitudes expressed toward Thomas Jefferson by Richmond's press in the presidential elections of 1800, 1804, and 1808. Jefferson, revered and venerated today, was a controversial figure during these years and was attacked most severely by his political opponents and defended staunchly by his political friends. This investigation covers only the newspapers of Richmond during these election years, and no attempt has been made to deal with the multitudinous tracts, pamphlets, and other circulars printed in these years.

Principal reliance has been placed upon Richmond's three largest and most enduring newspapers of that day. Three other newspapers of short duration have contributed some interesting information to this investigation, and although the contents of this report have been gleaned almost entirely from the editorial columns of all these papers, a few entries of human interest have been included from the advertisements and other sections.

Of the three Richmond newspapers which spanned all three elections, each of them was constant in the attitude which is first expressed toward Jefferson in 1800.

The author has found the research for this paper to be a fascinating experience, and it is hoped that this feeling of interest will be conveyed to the reader.

INTRODUCTION

The rights of a free press were considered by Thomas Jefferson to be inviolable, even when he was the victim of a sharp-tongued Federalist editor. Due to his fundamental belief in the right of free expression, Jefferson often defended his traducers from personal, legislative, and judicial attack at the hands of his friends.¹ However, he was far from insensitive to the invective which was often hurled at him by the Federalist press, and he often criticized the newspapers for abusing their liberty.² His distrust of the press caused Jefferson to shy away from newspaper publicity, and he remained cool and aloof from all but a few editors whom he knew and trusted completely.

Richmond, the capital of Virginia, was considered a Federalist stronghold and was the home of the Virginia Gazette and General Advertiser which was a staunch supporter and outspoken advocate of the Federalist cause. For this reason and because of Richmond's importance as the capital of his native state, Jefferson strongly felt the need of an official Republican paper in Richmond which would express accurately the views of his administration. Therefore, when the Richmond Examiner, a Republican paper of five years' standing, failed early in 1804, Jefferson urged Thomas Ritchie, a young Richmond book seller and former school

¹James E. Pollard, The Presidents and the Press (New York: MacMillan Co., 1947), p. 52.

²Ibid., p. 80.

teacher, to establish a new Republican organ.³ Thus in May of that year the Richmond Enquirer published its first edition and began a long career devoted to Jeffersonian principles. In an advertisement placed in both of the other Richmond newspapers, Ritchie set forth the policy of the Enquirer, stating it to be the publication of the truth in all matters with no apologies to anyone. Writing in the third person, he indicated the editorial policy which the Enquirer's readers could expect in regard to Jefferson and roundly declared, "He [Thomas Ritchie] admires the character and conduct of Mr. Jefferson. He thinks that his Inauguration Speech is not unworthy of the author of the Declaration of Independence. He thinks that his official conduct has not disgraced the maxims of his Inaugural Speech."⁴

Richmond's other major papers during the first decade of the nineteenth century were the Virginia Argus, edited by Samuel Pleasants, Jr. who was a staunch supporter of Jefferson and the Virginia Gazette and General Advertiser, mentioned above and edited by Augustine Davis. The Richmond Enquirer became more powerful and influential than either of these, and it outlived them both by more than fifty years.⁵

³Charles H. Ambler, Thomas Ritchie: A Study In Virginia Politics (Richmond: Bell Book and Stationary Co., 1913), pp. 18-19.

⁴Virginia Argus [Richmond], January 25, 1804; Virginia Gazette and General Advertiser [Richmond] (hereafter referred to as Virginia Gazette), January 21, 1804.

⁵Clarence S. Brigham, History and Bibliography of American Newspapers, 1690-1820 (Worcester: American Antiquarian Society, 1947), II, 1138, 1142, and 1146.

The editors of these papers deserve some attention before beginning our investigation of the attitudes expressed by them in their journals, for through an understanding of their individual personalities, creeds, and political opinions, we can better understand the basic reasoning and subtle implications of their editorials.

By far, the most noted of Richmond's editors during Jefferson's administration was Thomas Ritchie, an astute politician and former school teacher. Ritchie became well known through his ringing editorials, and his associates were the important, influential men of his day.⁶ Ritchie was a civic-minded citizen who served on the Republican General Committee of Virginia in 1800, 1804, and 1808. In this position of responsibility he helped to verify the credentials of those nominated as electors on the Virginia Republican ticket.⁷ He also served as a member of Madison's Corresponding Committee in 1808 and was elected in that same year by the Virginia General Assembly to the post of Public Printer, a post to which he was elected again in 1814.⁸ In 1807 Ritchie served as secretary to a mass meeting which was called to protest the actions of the British in regard to the Chesapeake Affair, and in this same year he held the rank of ensign in the Richmond Republican Blues, a home militia unit.⁹

⁶Allen Johnson (ed.), Dictionary of American Biography (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1928), XV, 628-629.

⁷Noble E. Cunningham, Jr., The Jeffersonian Republicans In Power (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1963), pp. 184-185.

⁸Harry Ammon, "James Monroe and the Election of 1808 in Virginia," The William and Mary Quarterly, Series Three, XX (January, 1963), p. 48

⁹Johnson, Dictionary of American Biography, XV, 628-629.

Thomas Ritchie was a constant champion of the weak and the maligned. Although this trait was probably inborn, it was surely reinforced by his constant defense of his father (Archibald Ritchie) who had been charged with disloyalty in 1776 for an alleged violation of the Association.¹⁰ "The Richmond Enquirer, over which Ritchie presided, was a power and its editor played his part in president-making and in the shaping of great issues. Ritchie himself was courted by the politicians of both parties."¹¹

Meriwether Jones, editor of the Richmond Examiner and a prominent citizen of Richmond, was also well known in Virginia. Like Ritchie, he was a staunch Republican and supporter of Jefferson and served as a member of the Republican General Committee in 1800 and 1804.¹² Jones was an active participant in Richmond's civic functions, and in 1801 he served on a committee to plan a celebration of Jefferson's presidential victory. His other civic responsibilities included his election to the post of Public Printer in 1801 and his appointment by the Governor of Virginia to membership on the Board of Inspectors for the Virginia State Prison.¹³ Jones was also active in the social gatherings of Richmond, but unlike Ritchie, he was hot tempered and impulsive, a fact which led him into many duels.

¹⁰William G. Stanard (ed.), "Papers From The Virginia State Auditor's Office, Now In The State Library," The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography, XXV (July, 1917), 278.

¹¹Charles H. Ambler, "Thomas Ritchie: A Study In Virginia Politics," The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography, XXII (January, 1914), 111.

¹²Cunningham, Republicans In Power, pp. 184-185.

¹³H. W. Flournoy (ed.), Calendar of Virginia State Papers (Richmond: E. Goode, Printer, 1890), IX, 295.

A further indication of Jones' character and personality is the fact that he once threatened to horsewhip a Federalist editor who had published a personal attack against him. Both Meriwether and his brother Skelton, who shared Meriwether's temperment and worked with him on the Examiner, were pistol experts, but both were to die later on the "field of honor".¹⁴

Samuel Pleasants, Jr., served the interests of the Republican party in Richmond as the editor of the Virginia Argus, a Republican journal which gave no space to opposing views.¹⁵ Pleasants was also active in Virginia politics and served on the Republican General Committee in 1800, 1804, and 1808.¹⁶ He served as Public Printer in 1805 and again in 1808 and was a member of the Board of Inspectors for the State Penitentiary at the same time as was Meriwether Jones.¹⁷

Augustine Davis, a staunch Federalist, became the editor of the Virginia Gazette and General Advertiser in 1794, fifteen years after moving to Richmond from Williamsburg.

¹⁴William G. Stanard (ed.), Letters From William and Mary College, 1798-1801, "The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography, XXIX (April, 1921), 175-178; Robert W. Hughes, "The Fighting Editors," The William and Mary Quarterly, Series Two, VII (January, 1927), 9.

¹⁵Ammon, "James Monroe and the Election of 1808 in Virginia," p. 48.

¹⁶Cunningham, Republicans In Power, pp. 184-185.

¹⁷Flournoy, Calendar of Virginia State Papers, IX, 295 and 391; Ammon, "James Monroe and the Election of 1808 in Virginia," pp. 33-56

As a dedicated Federalist, Davis served as the Richmond Postmaster under President John Adams, and as a civic-minded individual he served in 1807 as a member of the "Silver Greys", a local military association formed for the protection of Richmond when the regular militia had been ordered on some distant service.¹⁸

Three lesser papers appeared in Richmond during these election years, but they were all short lived. The Virginia Federalist was established by John Stewart, a member of the Virginia State Legislature, shortly after the stormy session of that body in 1798 which adopted the Virginia Resolutions in protest to the Sedition Act. Stewart "defended himself in his paper from charges of political inconsistency, but Jones of the Examiner, retorted that everybody in Richmond knew that he (Stewart) was the first man in the city to wear a tricolor cockade - the sign of friendship for France."¹⁹ William A. Rind became the editor of the Virginia Federalist in May 1799 and continued the publication of this Federalist organ in Richmond until August 2, 1800, at which time he moved the paper to Washington and continued it there under the title of the Washington Federalist.²⁰ Rind must also have been a hot tempered

¹⁸Isaiah Thomas, The History of Printing in America (Worcester: From the Press of Isaiah Thomas, Jr., 1810), p. 149; Lyon G. Tyler (ed.), "Old Virginia Editors," The William and Mary Quarterly, Series One, VII (July, 1898), 16; Flournoy, Calendar of Virginia State Papers, IX, 547.

¹⁹Stanard, "Letters From William and Mary College," pp. 175-178.

²⁰Brigham, History and Bibliography of American Newspapers, II, 1145.

partisan, for in April of 1800 he fought a duel in Richmond with Meriwether Jones over some alleged political insult. Rind was wounded in this skirmish, but according to the report given by Davis in the Virginia Gazette, his injury was not serious.²¹

The Virginian and the Spirit of '76 were both established in Richmond in 1808, and they were both staunch supporters of Monroe for President over Madison. Indeed, the Virginian seems to have been established for the sole purpose of campaigning for Monroe. This paper, which was owned by Gerard Banks and printed by Seaton Grantland, a local book publisher, began its life January 1, 1808, and published its last issue November 8, 1808, shortly after the state-wide contest for presidential electors.²²

Edward C. Stanard's Spirit of '76 was published in Richmond from September of 1808 to November of 1809, at which time Stanard moved his paper to Washington and continued its publication there under the same title.²³ Although an ardent supporter of Monroe, Stanard made a conscious effort to be fair and objective in his editorials and in his reporting of the news. In the first issue of the Spirit, Stanard lamented that "among those who subscribe for gazettes, the great majority

²¹Virginia Gazette, April 11, 1800.

²²Brigham, History and Bibliography of American Newspapers, II, 1153; Virginian /Richmond/, January 12, 1808.

²³Brigham, History and Bibliography of American Newspapers, II, 1142.

receive one only, and generally speaking, have so much knowledge of public affairs as the editor of that paper chooses to communicate."²⁴ Stanard declared that he did not consider his paper as a "political rostrum" from which he should seek to mold his readers' views and opinions. Instead, he expressed the wish for all readers to decide for themselves the merits of each issue after first receiving full information on both sides of the matter.²⁵

All the Richmond papers of this period were of semi-weekly publication with occasional runs of tri-weekly publication during elections and other important events. A large number of newspapers were established in Virginia during the last decade of the eighteenth century, but "none of these received the kind of support nor possessed the editorial direction to speak effectively for the Republican party as a whole. Unquestionably Jefferson recognized the importance of the press, but until 1804 when Thomas Ritchie established the Enquirer and when we enter the age when the party was subjected to some sort of central discipline through the Richmond Junto, there was no dominant organ of party opinion."²⁶

²⁴Spirit of '76 [Richmond], September 13, 1808.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Harry Ammon, "Jeffersonian Republicans in Virginia," The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography, LXXI (April, 1963), 160.

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CHAPTER ONE

ELECTION OF 1800

In Virginia the year 1800 was filled with political unrest and disquieting tension, for not only was this an election year, but the issues involved offered the voters a distinct choice between continued and increasing aristocratic rule or the reclamation of liberties for which the Revolution had been fought. The Federalists, who had tightened their grip on the government under the administration of John Adams, had succeeded in passing the Alien and Sedition Acts, the import of which was to prohibit criticism of the Federal government and its officials from any quarter. Thus it was, that this election year witnessed the trial, conviction, and incarceration of many Republican editors who had dared to speak out against the government. The judges at these Sedition trials were all Federalists, and in their determination to convict, they heaped insult upon injury with their packed juries, their unfair, arbitrary rulings, and their partisan speeches on politics given from the bench.

In May of this year Meriwether Jones solicited contributions through the columns of his Examiner for his fellow editors, Thomas Cooper and Charles Holt, both of whom had been sentenced to jail for their criticisms of the government. Because of Cooper's wife and family, Jones urged that he be given first consideration by those wishing to make contributions.¹

¹Virginia Argus [Richmond], May 9, 1800.

However, Jones himself was not safe from Federalist persecution, for in August of 1799 Timothy Pickering, Adams' Secretary of State had sought to silence the five largest and most strategically located Republican papers, including the Richmond Examiner. Pickering had written to the District Attorneys in each of the five states in which these papers were located and had ordered them to scrutinize the Republican paper in his area for anything which could be considered seditious or libelous. The timing of Pickering's directive was important, for this would allow the Federal prosecutors to bring the Republican editors to trail at the opening of the Court's fall session and obtain injunctions against them. Thus, Pickering hoped to silence the papers of the opposition for the duration of the presidential election in 1800.²

The most noted case of prosecution in the state of Virginia involved James T. Callender, a native of Scotland who had come to this country in 1793. Callender was an embittered individual who found in the press an outlet for his frustration and resentment of society. Between bouts of drinking Callender wrote violent attacks on the Federalists which were subsequently printed in various Republican papers. In late spring of 1800 Callender was tried and convicted in Richmond on charges of sedition by Judge Samuel Chase, a member of the United States Supreme Court. Callender continued writing his articles of criticism from the Richmond jail, and six months later on the eve of Virginia's first state-wide election under the General Ticket Law, he wrote a letter to one of the judges of the Virginia General Court, asking that he be

²James M. Smith, Freedom's Fetters (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1956), pp. 185-186.

released on a writ of habeas corpus. He reminded the judge of the statements made by several Virginia judges at the passage of the Sedition Act to the effect that they would release anyone convicted under the act in Virginia, and then he explained why he had not sought a redress of his grievance earlier. "This application would have been made upon the day of my commitment to prison," declared Callender, "but I was told that the measure, if successful, might afford an opportunity for misrepresenting the political sentiments of the state; and that by such means, it might produce a dangerous impression upon the Republican interest at the next election for President. From these considerations, I deferred this address until the election in this state had been decided."³ This letter and Callender's unselfish action were to become irony a few months later when Callender, not satisfied with Jefferson's personal reimbursement of his fine, demanded an appointment as Postmaster of Richmond. Failing to receive this appointment, Callender established a Federalist paper in Richmond and turned his talents for invective on Jefferson. Callender died unlamented the following year when, in a drunken stupor, he fell into Shoekoe Creek and drowned.⁴

So aroused were the American citizens at the high-handed, oligarchic measures of the Federalist-run government that Meriwether Jones reported confidently to his readers in October of 1800, "A change has taken place through the United States, favorable to the Republican cause, which will certainly secure the Election of Thomas Jefferson. Those who believed

³Examiner [Richmond], November 18, 1800.

⁴Charles A. Jellison, "That Scoundrel Calender," The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography, LXVII (July, 1959), 295-306.

the Sedition Law to be expedient, will now assuredly acknowledge their error; since the man, who above all others in public office has been abused the most, is now the most popular in America."⁵

However, in spite of the widespread dissatisfaction in Virginia occasioned by the Federalist oligarchy, Jefferson was faced with an immense obstacle in the veneration held by Virginians for the late George Washington who was closely associated with the Federalist party.⁶ Jefferson also faced stiff opposition from the well-organized Federalist press, which raised a plethora of issues in a desperate attempt to hold on to the reins of government, and which assailed Jefferson with charges of atheism, inefficiency, cowardice, and slander.⁷ This latter charge was based on a letter written by Jefferson in 1793 to his friend Philip Mazzei, criticising various inefficient practices and unprincipled officials of Washington's administration. Jefferson had also questioned Washington's judgement in his support of some radical Federalist policies, and William Rind revived the charge of slander in the third week of January when he denounced Jefferson for "traducing" Washington in his letter. Rind reprinted the text of the letter in full in order "that it may be recollected with the abhorrence which it deserves." "Let every American citizen read it," he enjoined, "and consider within himself, whether Thomas Jefferson is worthy of succeeding to the office of

⁵Examiner, October 21, 1800.

⁶Maude H. Woodfin, "Contemporary Opinion in Virginia of Thomas Jefferson," Essays in Honor of William E. Dodd, Avery Craven, editor (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1935), p. 44.

⁷Ibid., p. 53.

PRESIDENT of a free, affectionate and virtuous people."⁸

Yet, in spite of this well-organized Federalist opposition, the Republicans were even better organized. Also, Jefferson commanded wide support and admiration among the common people of Virginia who considered him as one of their own. Jefferson's simplicity of manners, unpretentious attitude, and love of nature and farming were characteristics in which the people easily identified themselves with the struggling Jefferson.⁹

EDITORIAL SUPPORT FOR JEFFERSON

In support of Jefferson's candidacy Meriwether Jones printed in chronological order a list of Jefferson's accomplishments, beginning with his authorship of the Declaration of Independence and going through his present position as Vice President of the United States. "No eulogism can add to the lustre [sic] of Mr. Jefferson's character," declared Jones.¹⁰ Later in the Spring Samuel Pleasants, in an obvious taunt directed at President Adams, reprinted in the Virginia Argus an editorial which had appeared earlier in the American Citizen asserting that the President of the United States should be a friend of peace instead of a promoter of war and should befriend and work for liberty instead of

⁸Virginia Federalist [Richmond], January 22, 1800.

⁹Woodfin, "Contemporary Opinion," p. 54.

¹⁰Examiner, March 14, 1800.

monarchy. "For these and many other reasons," it boldly declared, "we hold it to be clear that the fate of America, in a great measure, depends upon placing at the head of our Federal Government at the next ensuing election, the author of the celebrated declaration which secured to America her freedom and happiness.--THOMAS JEFFERSON is the enlightened citizen, the patriot, the philosopher, and the friend of man, to whom the republican attachments and affections of this country, ought to be directed."¹¹

With the approach of summer Pleasants again issued an appeal to the people in behalf of Jefferson. Presenting his devotion to democracy as a primary qualification for Jefferson's candidacy for the presidential office, he proclaimed in the Virginia Argus that Jefferson had always been devoted to liberty and had been a steady and unshaken advocate of the rights of the people. Furthermore, asserted Pleasants, Jefferson had never prostituted his talents by writing a book in favor of the British or any other monarchy, had never advocated standing armies or destructive navies, had never tried to convince the people that "a public debt is a public blessing," nor that the public debt was diminishing while actually increasing. "Mr. Jefferson has done none of these things," declared Pleasants, "but all of them have been done . . . by the federalist party. Mr. Adams and Mr. Pinckney, the present leaders of this party, are chargeable with an attachment to these destructive designs."¹²

¹¹Virginia Argus, May 9, 1800.

¹²Ibid., June 13, 1800.

As the months passed and the campaigning grew more intense, Meriwether Jones published a lengthy editorial early in October extolling the virtues of Jefferson. Jones reviewed Jefferson's career, pointing out the courageous stands which he had taken in the face of formidable opposition and the historic part which he had played in securing the colonies' independence. Then turning to his role as Secretary of State under Washington, the outspoken Jones supported the charges made by Jefferson against that administration in his letter to Mazzei and challenged the Federalists to show "their fellow citizens an example in the conduct of Mr. Adams, or of the federalist secretaries, of as impartial and independent measures to check and remove the offending ministers and agents of England as Mr. Jefferson manifested to check and remove the offending minister and agents of France, in 1793. No discreet Federalists," claimed Jones, "will risk the discussion."¹³

Reiterating his support for Jefferson, Jones expressed a confident belief that Jefferson was disposed to measures "which will check expenditure and taxation; give moderation and impartiality to our foreign intercourse; restore harmony and confidence upon the friends of representative Government of all parties; and preserve their candid piety, which flourishes beside religious liberty and the rights of conscience."¹⁴

Likening Thomas Jefferson to Alexander the Great several weeks before the state-wide election in November, Samuel Pleasants predicted,

¹³ Examiner, October 7, 1800.

¹⁴ Ibid.

"When a Jefferson shall shake the gordian knot, and loose the fibered connection which has assimilated us to despotism and venal corruption, - and shall form a coalition with the armed neutrality, then, and not till then, will the Lion cowl - and the blessings of peace and national equality be difused thro the Kingdoms and People of the Earth."¹⁵

The public's tense interest and sense of crisis tended to dissipate with a momentary abatement of international difficulties, and on the eve of the Virginia election in November, Samuel Pleasants reprinted from the New York American Citizen an editorial designed to dispel any complacency among American voters and which warned, "We are less in danger at this moment than at any other period since the conclusion of the war - but our evils will return upon us - public mischief and misfortune will accumulate unless popular and republican vigilance be kept alive to the true interests of the union, and the public mind be directed with unabating ardour to the election of Jefferson."¹⁶

A glimpse of the mood among Virginia voters and property owners of that day can be had in reading an advertisement which appeared in the Examiner a few days before Virginia held its election and which offered for sale a property in Northumberland county on the Potomac River. John Gordon, the owner of this plantation, stated in his specification of three equal payments that for the last installment, "property in the City of Washington will be received, provided Mr. Jefferson is elected

¹⁵ Virginia Argus, October 10, 1800.

¹⁶ Ibid., November 4, 1800.

President of the United States; but should miracles yet exist, and that should not be the case, then will I take land in Kentucky or Tennessee, in lieu thereof - ."¹⁷

In spite of the Sedition Law, Adams' administration was not considered sacrosanct by the Republican press which spared no effort in bringing to public attention the aristocratic policies and practices of the Federalist controlled government. Commenting on the Federalists' philosophy of government, the Examiner charged that many prominent Federalists had avowed "that this country cannot be happy, without an hereditary Chief Magistrate and a senate that is hereditary, or for life." Jones further charged in the same editorial that the principal Northern and Eastern Federalists, in power, are in favor of a Monarchy, a nobility, and a representative of the Commons."¹⁸

The Federalists denied that their party was monarchical, but Samuel Pleasants claimed that contrary proof was abundant. In an editorial borrowed from the American Citizen, the Virginia Argus declared indignantly, "The numerous proofs that are every day unfolding themselves of the existence of a monarchical party in the United States, ought to put an everlasting silence upon the traducers of Jefferson's character. They ought to see - they ought by this time to know with certainty that Mr. Jefferson, in declaring the existence of such a faction, spoke the language of truth, and was supported by fact."¹⁹

¹⁷ Examiner, October 31, 1800.

¹⁸ Ibid., October 7, 1800.

¹⁹ Virginia Argus, October 21, 1800.

Four days after the November primary, Meriwether Jones took issue with William A. Rind who had used the editorial columns of the Washington Federalist to make personal charges against Jones in the course of an editorial which he printed favoring Adams' administration.- Jones advised him to support his statements with specific citations and acidly retorted, "And when you speak of the evidences of Mr. Adams' superior claim to the Presidential chair, you ought to recollect that the majority is against you, and that you have very frequently said, that this is the very surest and best criterion of the truth, - Let me caution you too against calling Mr. Jefferson 'a jacobinical and frenchified President:' not for fear of SEDITION, but because you contradict the Majority. What Sir! will you oppose the Majority? Recollect how often you have sounded this in my Ears, and how frequently I have opposed the principle, as riveting the human mind to the most erroneous system. I shall always, my friend, contradict the majority when I think they err, but if you move an inch in that direction, out of thine own mouth will I condemn thee."²⁰ Jones had earlier counseled the Federalists to "concur" with Jefferson instead of vilifying him and had asserted, "The republicans do heartily concur with him, in a utter disapprobation of all foreign influence. . . . the Republicans exult in an attachment to our own Constitution, in preference to the regal, aristocratical, and hierarchial government of the one [England], or the sad anti-republican aberrations of the other [France]." ²¹

²⁰ Examiner, November 7, 1800.

²¹ Ibid., October 7, 1800.

The fiscal policy of Adams' administration also came under sharp attack by the Republican press which was seeking to place Jefferson in the Presidency. The Richmond Examiner in February of 1800 carried a letter written by James T. Callender in which he had quoted Albert Gallatin, a Republican Congressman and financial expert, as having stated that the current fiscal budget called for a deficit spending of five million dollars which would have to be raised by loans or new taxes. Gallatin was quoted further as having observed that although the Federalists were currently speaking of prosperity, the income of the United States for 1799 was less by seven hundred thousand dollars than for the two previous years and that although the revenue had been kept up by new taxes and stamp duties, the present five million dollar deficit debt would continue to increase. "The only chance for getting out of this scrape," proclaimed Callender, "is by voting for Mr. Jefferson, and the consequent desertion of the war measures."²²

This theme was further expounded in the early autumn when a letter written by four Republican citizens appeared in the Examiner. These citizens staunchly declared, "One of the circumstances, that induces the desire of Mr. Jefferson's Election, is the vast expenditure of public money." Pointing out that the Federal government had been in operation eleven years, they reported that as of "last July 4th," public expenditures had exceeded eighty-seven million dollars while the government during the same period of time had taken in only eighty-nine million

²²Ibid., February 25, 1800.

dollars. More economy had been expected of the "New England administration," declared these five correspondents.²³

The constitutionality of the assumption of state debts and of the establishment of the Bank of the United States was also severely impugned by Republicans, of whom at least one considered both acts as nothing short of treason. Meriwether Jones, in asserting that the assumption of individual state debts was a direct breach of the Constitution, declared emphatically, "The statute that adopts it, is a statute of infamy. The members who voted for that assumption should have been impeached, and punished, as perjured traitors." Announcing that the United States Bank came under that same description, he referred to it as "not merely a nuisance but a monster" which should be slowly strangled by a stamp tax on circulating notes.²⁴ In further condemnation of the Federalists and their policies Jones caustically declared, "The conduct and character of the Vice-President stand above the imputations of these miscreants, who purchased the certificates of the old continental army at half a Crown per pound, and who then funded them at twenty shillings. Mr. Jefferson was not the author of the partial assumption of state debts, by which eleven millions of dollars were discharged by an addition to the national debt of twenty-two millions of dollars. Mr. Jefferson was not the author of the infamous Bank of the United States, a Bank formed upon direct perjury, and which cuts its passage through the very vitals

²³Ibid., October 7, 1800.

²⁴Ibid., November 21, 1800.

of the federal constitution."²⁵ Four days later in late November, Jones again attacked the Federal Bank and vigorously proclaimed, "The constitution has a hundred other chasms, that call most loudly for amendment; and if Mr. Jefferson shall succeed to the presidency, there is reason to wish that he and his friends may endeavor to make them."²⁶

EDITORIAL ATTACK ON AND DEFENSE OF JEFFERSON

The Federalist press of Richmond was far from silent on these and other issues. The day after Callender's letter concerning the country's finances appeared in the Examiner, William Rind seized upon his paragraph calling for the election of Jefferson and ripped into Callender with sarcastic ridicule for his "effrontery". "Aye, aye, fellow citizens," mocked the Virginia Federalist, "vote for Mr. Jefferson -- he'll cure all our disorders -- he'll relieve us from taxes -- he'll make us rich as Croesus -- besides, he prefers the temptuous sea of liberty -- the furious storm of revolution -- aye, aye, vote for Mr. Jefferson -- he'll make us happy -- he'll turn your navy and army adrift -- all the federal officers, all the old patriots -- he'll play the devil with the damned banks, the funding system, the bane of democracy -- he'll put a stop to commerce -- he'll introduce a new order of things -- such as will make every demo perfectly happy, no doubt."²⁷

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Ibid., November 25, 1800.

²⁷Virginia Federalist, February 26, 1800.

To similar Federalist charges that Jefferson would rule for the interest of his party at the expense of his country, the Republican press issued constant denials. Jones again denied this charge two weeks before the convening of the Electoral College, but at the same time he asked, "What kind of a general he be, who, just after gaining a victory, deserts his fellow solders [sic] to put himself at the head of a vanquished army? By deserting or neglecting his friends, in the moment of his elevation, Mr. Jefferson would violate every feeling of nature, every principle of reason, every dictate of gratitude, and of justice."²⁸ Jones pointed out quite logically that Jefferson any other successful candidate for office would as a matter of course place himself at the head of that party which had supported his election.

Jefferson's humane views on slavery and his advocacy of eventual emancipation were well known, but the Federalists sought to make political capital by twisting his oft-expressed views. Playing on the public's horror at the recent massacre by the newly freed Negroes in Santo Domingo, they implied that Jefferson was somehow partly to blame for the tragedy and that the same calamity would repeat itself in America if Jefferson were allowed to become president. In defense of Jefferson a series of letters signed "Scots Correspondent" appeared in the autumn issues of the Examiner, and to this particular charge the writer retorted that Jefferson had never advocated "instant and total emancipation." To

²⁸ Examiner, November 18, 1800.

corroborate this assertion he quoted Jefferson as saying, "I can add with truth, that nobody wishes more ardently to see a good system commenced for raising the condition of both their body and mind, as fast as the imbecility of their present existence, and other circumstances which cannot be neglected, will admit."²⁹ This "Scotaman" commented that Jefferson's humane statement in no way suggested a desire for immediate and wholesale emancipation.

Another theme played upon frequently by the Federalist press was Jefferson's alleged cowardice while Governor of Virginia during the Revolutionary War. In early November, William Rind of the Washington Federalist accused Jefferson of "having abandoned his office and trust, at the most critical moment." The "Scots Correspondent", in a reply printed by the Examiner, remarked that this charge probably referred to the "old battered accusation that Mr. Jefferson, upon the approach of a body of British troops, retired from Richmond with unbecoming precipitancy." "This charge requires no answer," he contended, "because it has recently been extinguished by Captain Meriwether Jones." The Examiner has definite proof, continued Jefferson's defender, that "Mr. Jefferson acted with his habitual judgement [sic] and presence of mind. We believe that this story is now gasping on its death bed. We shall leave it there."³⁰

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰Ibid., November 11, 1800.

In this same letter the "Scots Correspondent" also answered Rind's charges that Virginia, under Jefferson's leadership in the Revolution, had contributed the least and suffered the most due to Jefferson's "misconduct". The immense sufferings of Virginia were not to be blamed on Jefferson, retorted this kilted correspondent who asserted that Jefferson also suffered severe losses and gave as an example the slaughter of his horses at Monticello by the British army. "If losses were sustained," commented the "Scotsman", the president of the 4th of March next had his full share of them, and over and above that, he has since discharged twice over, a mass of British debts, for which he had become security."³¹

This last statement was in answer to a charge raised by the Federalists who alleged that Jefferson had used Virginia's legal tender law during the Revolution to pay off in deflated currency a debt of a considerable amount which he owed to one Gabriel Jones.³² Meriwether Jones and Samuel Pleasants had both come to Jefferson's defense the previous March and had testified that although Gabriel Jones had returned both Jefferson's bond and paper money, Jefferson, who then had no legal obligation to pay the debt, had repaid the entire loan with solid currency after the Revolution, at which exorbitant interest charges were due.³³

The Federalists also charged Jefferson with heading a French party in the United States,³⁴ but by far their favorite charge against

³¹Ibid.

³²Woodfin, "Contemporary Opinion," p. 63.

³³Examiner, March 17, 1800; Virginia Argus, March 14, 1800.

³⁴American, November 7, 1800

him in the year 1800 was that of alleged "deism". This accusation was intensified with the publication of a pamphlet written by Reverend William Linn and entitled Serious Considerations on the Election of a President: Addressed to the Citizens of the United States.³⁵ To support his charge, this New York Dutch minister quoted heavily from Jefferson's Notes On Virginia in which Jefferson set forth a sound geological principle in stating that the discovery of seashells on mountain tops was no proof of Noah's famed and universal flood. This and other scientific, objective assertions made by the studious, inquisitive Jefferson were cited as further evidence of his disrespect for the Bible and God. In a characteristic statement of toleration Jefferson had declared that it did him no injury whether his neighbor believed in no god or in twenty gods. Seizing upon this, the less tolerant Linn cited it as further evidence of Jefferson's infidelism and warned that "the election of any man avowing the principles of Mr. Jefferson would . . . destroy religion, introduce immorality, and loosen the bonds of society."³⁶

This attack elicited a flood of response from Republicans who hastened to Jefferson's defense. The "Scots Correspondent" replied in the columns of the Examiner and labeled as "absurd" the Federalist accusation that Jefferson, as president, would begin a reign of persecution against the Christians similar to the reign of terror in France.

³⁵ Noble E. Cunningham, Jr., The Jeffersonian Republicans (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1957), p. 224.

³⁶ William Linn, Serious Considerations on the Election of a President (New York, 1800), quoted by Cunningham in The Jeffersonian Republicans, p. 224.

Further, remonstrated the "Scotsman", Jefferson did not say that it was of no consequence whether a man believed in one or twenty gods, but what he did say was that the personal beliefs of his neighbor did not infringe upon his (Jefferson's) personal liberty and conduct of business. Pointing out that Jefferson was the author and champion of Virginia's statute of religious liberty, Jefferson's plucky defender solemnly proclaimed, "We must either stand by Mr. Jefferson, or we must renounce the profession of our freedom, the enjoyment of our happiness and the exercise of our reason."³⁷

As the charge of deism became more intense, it also became more ridiculous. In setting the record straight, the Examiner cited as a higher evidence of Jefferson's piety, a statement made by him which declared in part, "Our duty to almighty God, and our duty towards our neighbor, are the sum of true religion. By performing these high duties, we may expect the esteem of good Men, and hope for the favor of Heaven."³⁸ Jones concluded his defense of Jefferson, saying, "It surely is, by this time, clearly seen, that to religious men, Mr. Jefferson has indisputably been the most useful character, since William Penn....."³⁹

Ever on the alert for decisive issues, the Federalist press challenged Jefferson's patriotism and conduct in office while extolling these same qualities in Adams. In this way, Jefferson's opponents

³⁷Examiner, November 21, 1800.

³⁸Ibid., October 7, 1800.

³⁹Ibid.

obviously hoped to form in the public's mind an image of Adams as a dignified, capable statesman who was dedicated to the task of efficiency in government, while portraying Jefferson as an uncouth, ill-advised opportunist and radical. However, the Republican press again ably defended Jefferson's character and conduct. In early August Samuel Pleasants, with tongue in cheek sarcasm, reprinted a derisive editorial which had appeared previously in the Baltimore American and which declared, "Mr. Jefferson's friends are no way unwilling to compare his conduct as a statesman and a patriot, with that of Mr. Adams. They are ready to admit, that he has never earned the praise of the tories or the British, nor has he exhibited any predilection for it. He never was found hardy enough to defend the British constitution, or to hold forth that heap of absurdity and source of oppression, as 'the most stupendous fabric of human invention'."⁴⁰

As was the custom of that day, most of those who wrote letters to editors for publication, signed their correspondence with pseudonyms. The plethora of anonymous, derogatory letters concerning Jefferson proved to be especially galling to Samuel Pleasants who was in obvious agreement with the Baltimore American whose editor had caustically asserted, "The traducers of Mr. Jefferson have not had sufficient address to conceal their ignorance; they have totally failed in endeavoring to injure

⁴⁰ Virginia Argus, August 8, 1800.

his fair name; but were they to give us their real signatures, instead of anonymous ones, they would succeed in rendering their characters notorious, not only for being insignificant, but wicked calumniators."⁴¹

The concerted efforts of the Federalists in their campaign of vilification against Jefferson began to concern the Republicans, and in consequence of this, several lengthy, well-written defenses of Jefferson began to appear in the Republican press. Among these was a defense written by John Beckley with the cumbersome title, An Address to the People of the United States with an Epitome and Vindication of the Public Life and Character of Thomas Jefferson. Samuel Pleasants used the entire front page and a part of the second page of the Virginia Argus early in September to print this vindication of Jefferson and added his own notation that the author of this tract had done an excellent job "in refuting the charges made against the moral, religious, and political character of Jefferson."⁴² Beckley, a staunch Jeffersonian, had had his Address printed in pamphlet form and had distributed five thousand copies of it in several states, where the convincing logic of his message undoubtedly reinforced the convictions of the Jeffersonian Republicans and made many converts among Jefferson's opponents. However, by Beckley's own admission, his pamphlet contained a few minor inaccuracies, and Jefferson felt compelled to correct them at the expense of some credit which the pamphlet had given him.⁴³

⁴¹Ibid.

⁴²Ibid., September 2, 1800.

⁴³Cunningham, Republicans In Power, p. 198; Dumas Malone, Ordeal of Liberty (Vol. III of Jefferson and His Time; Boston: Little, Brown, and Co., 1962), p. 484.

Until 1800 Virginia had chosen its presidential electors by district elections in which each district chose one elector, but in January of that year, the state legislature, which was controlled by Jeffersonian Republicans, changed this election procedure and provided instead for a state-wide election with one General Ticket.⁴⁴ The result of this new system was to elect each elector on the basis of the majority of state-wide votes, thus virtually assuring the Republicans of success in electing their entire slate of candidates. The Federalist press denounced this maneuver as dirty politics and made an issue of it in that year's election.⁴⁵ A month after the enactment of this legislation Augustine Davis urged all "real republicans" to abstain from voting under the General Ticket Law "which has robbed the people of true representation."⁴⁶ Six months later in the week preceding Virginia's first election under this law, Davis again attacked it most vehemently and reported that Governor Monroe had appointed three election commissioners for each county. However, of these more than two hundred and forty commissioners, he continued, "it is not known or believed a single commissioner has been appointed who is not on the side of Mr. Jefferson. In one county where it is said there are scarcely three persons in favor of Mr. Jefferson, even in that county all the commissioners are said to be on his side. A selection so strongly marked with partiality,

⁴⁴Cunningham, Republicans In Power, p. 145.

⁴⁵Examiner, January 31, 1800.

⁴⁶Virginia Gazette, February 25, 1800.

fills your plain well meaning countrymen with alarms."⁴⁷

Indeed, in spite of the Republican efforts to defend and justify the General Ticket Law, there was much truth in Federalist charges of political chicanery, for Republican motives in effecting this change in the procedure of the presidential election were glaringly obvious. Undoubtedly, the Republicans were determined to prevent the election of any Federalist on a local level by clearly identifying "the individual with the party."⁴⁸

ELECTION PREDICTIONS AND RESULTS

The groundswell of popular support for Jefferson in 1800 soon became apparent even to the Federalists. This trend was quickly seen in the states which provided for the election of presidential electors by their state legislatures, for these states held their elections for state government in the spring prior to the autumn presidential election. Commenting on the New York election, Augustine Davis stated editorially in May, "The Republican faction have carried every point at New York. . . This result gives a dead majority to the Republicans in the State Legislature; and ascertains the election of Mr. Jefferson to the Presidency."⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Ibid., October 31, 1800.

⁴⁸ Ammon, "Jeffersonian Republicans In Virginia," p. 162.

⁴⁹ Virginia Gazette, May 13, 1800.

In August Samuel Pleasants predicted that Jefferson would receive five or six of Maryland's electoral votes,⁵⁰ but with growing signs of strength, the Republican editors continued to caution their readers against over-confidence. In mid-October Meriwether Jones urged all Republicans to vote and exhorted, "It is hoped that the Freeholders will turn out to a Man upon this occasion: no election was ever so important to the United States as the present: the efforts which the Republicans have made, are about to be crowned with success, and the man who withholds his vote upon this occasion, will indeed lose his share of glory; THE VICTORY OF REASON AND TRUTH OVER ERROR."⁵¹ This advice was followed by a list of the electors who were pledged to Jefferson.

Four days later Samuel Pleasants agreed with the editor of the Aurora that Jefferson would receive two thirds of the "whole vote of the Union."⁵² but Meriwether Jones, in his determination to take nothing for granted, again issued a plea to his readers for the elevation of Jefferson to the Presidency three days before the state-wide primary and declared, "There are three characters held forth for your choice: Thomas Jefferson, Charles Cotesworth Pinckney, and John Adams. Thomas Jefferson, influenced by an enlightened estimate of the value of civil and religious liberty, continues with unceasing efforts to combat for universal freedom He is a philosopher and a patriot -- he must therefore be a Republican."⁵³ Jones asserted that Pinckney was not only a royalist,

⁵⁰ Virginia Argus, August 29, 1800.

⁵¹ Examiner, October 17, 1800.

⁵² Virginia Argus, October 21, 1800.

⁵³ Examiner, October 31, 1800.

but was actually under British influence, while Adams held ideas of liberty which were crude and erroneous with no confidence in the virtue and improvement of the human race. "You were the first to oppose British tyranny," Jones proclaimed to his fellow Virginians, "you have been the first to oppose federal usurpation -- Let it be said that as you have once saved America from a foreign yoke, you now save her from domestic tyranny by furnishing her with the man of the people for her chief magistrate."⁵⁴

Virginia's popular election for presidential electors was held the first Monday in November, which in the year 1800 was November 3, and the following day the Examiner reported, "On the close of the Poll for Electors of President and Vice-President the numbers stood as follows:

	Adams	Jefferson
City of Richmond	69	81
County of Henrico	<u>43</u>	<u>217</u>
	112	298
		<u>112</u>
Republican Majority		186 ⁵⁵

The results of Virginia's election continued to pour into the state's capital, but the final results from all districts was still unknown three weeks later. On November 21, the Examiner reported the nearly complete results of Virginia's primary with 6,024 votes for Adams and 21,311 votes

⁵⁴Ibid.

⁵⁵Ibid., November 4, 1800.

for Jefferson. The voting had been reported as light in almost every district, and Jones observed that the voting was still thin, "but it is believed that the freeholders upon this occasion, have turned out with more alacrity than at any former Presidential Election."⁵⁶ Jones ascribed the light vote to the huge number of slaves and "particularly to the contrasted right of suffrage in the commonwealth."

The Electoral College convened in each state December 3, the first Wednesday in the month, and the electors in Virginia cast their ballots unanimously for Jefferson and Burr.⁵⁷ With several states reporting, Samuel Pleasants declared December 12, "The Presidency is thus secured to Mr. Jefferson; and there is but little doubt, but that Mr. Burr will be Vice-President."⁵⁸ As the election results continued to come in, Republicans became jubilant and editor Jones triumphantly proclaimed, "For eight years, the administration of the government of the United States, has been retrograde to the genuine spirit of the Constitution; and for three years past, an unrelenting spirit of intolerance and persecution has been manifested by its adherents toward those who dared oppose them. . . . The reign of terror however, is over, and the dawn of liberty and Union gladdens the heart of every Democrat. . . ."⁵⁹

The huge preponderance of votes for Jefferson and Burr clearly indicated the peoples' resentment and dissatisfaction of the Federalist-

⁵⁶Ibid., November 21, 1800.

⁵⁷Examiner, December 5, 1800; Virginia Gazette, December 5, 1800.

⁵⁸Virginia Argus, December 12, 1800.

⁵⁹Examiner, December 16, 1800.

controlled government and their equal concern at the threat to their hard-earned liberty. Jefferson characterized this election as another revolution and declared, "The revolution of 1800 was a real revolution in the principles of our government as that of 1776 was in its form; not effected, indeed by the sword, as that, but by the rational peaceable instrument of reform, the suffrage of the people."⁶⁰

⁶⁰Paul L. Ford (ed.), The Writings of Thomas Jefferson (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1892-1899), VIII, 21.

CHAPTER TWO

ELECTION OF 1804

Less than three years after Jefferson's inauguration as the third president of the United States, active preparations and campaigning for the following election were launched by both the Federalists and the Republicans. The issues were many and feelings ran high. Controversy raged among the people and press of both parties over Jefferson's alteration of the federal judiciary system (referred to by the Federalists as an "attack on the courts"), the removal of several Federalist officeholders by President Jefferson, and the purchase of Louisiana.

Under Jefferson's administration the Alien and Sedition Acts had been discarded and the Judiciary Act of 1801 had been repealed, thus depriving the Federalists of the positions of influence which had been created by Adams and the Federalist-controlled Congress for the specific purpose of perpetuating Federalist control of government. Moreover, in order to check the haughty, arbitrary rulings and shameful political harassment directed against the people and the Republican party by the remaining Federalist judges, Jefferson had asked Congress to investigate the matter and to take such appropriate action as would be within their jurisdiction. Several incompetent judges were thus removed from the bench by the process of impeachment while the Federalist press screamed that they were being persecuted.¹ The most notable

¹Virginia Gazette, 1804 passim.

of these trials was conducted throughout the greater part of 1804 and involved Judge Samuel Chase whose undignified conduct and flagrant abuse of power had made him most despised among the Republicans and the common people. Although Judge Chase was eventually acquitted, he and the other Federalist judges who had prostituted their office for the sake of politics had been sufficiently chastised and were never again to degrade their positions with arrogant, political harangues from the bench.²

Another issue raised by the Federalist press during the election year concerned Jefferson's dismissal of several Federalist officials who were then replaced with Republicans. The Federalist press bitterly complained of wholesale persecution while the Republican press sneeringly accused the Federalists of hypocrisy.³

The most discussed issue of the day was the recent purchase of Louisiana which the Federalist press claimed was unconstitutional and to which it pointed as positive proof of Jefferson's desire to set himself up as a monarch over his "private kingdom".⁴ The Federalists realized that the purchase of this vast tract of land assured their continued loss of political power and prestige. So alarmed were the Federalists at this prospect that the leaders of this aristocratic party were secretly conspiring in 1804 to detach the New England states and those of the upper mid-Atlantic region from the rest of the Union and to establish their own form of government.⁵ This plan of secession may have

²Claude G. Bowers, Jefferson In Power (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1936), p. 292.

³Enquirer, November 17, 1804

⁴Virginia Gazette, August 5, 1800.

⁵Bowers, Jefferson In Power, p. 229.

succeeded if the Federalist leaders had been successful in their attempt later in the year to place Burr in the gubernatorial chair of New York.

Thus the election year of 1804 was ushered in with lively partisan debates and political discussions, but despite the dire alarms voiced by the Federalists, most Americans were well satisfied with the record of Jefferson's administration and were eager to re-elect him to the country's highest post of honor.

EDITORIAL SUPPORT FOR JEFFERSON

The year 1804 was still in its first week when Samuel Plessants printed in the Virginia Argus an article which called for the establishment of a national festival and holiday to celebrate the triumph of Republicanism over Federalism. This article, which was reprinted from the Alexandria Expositor, spoke glowingly of Jefferson and declared, "We conceive no day could be so proper for that purpose as the 4th of March, as it would give the citizens of America, at once an opportunity of exhibiting their detestation of the measures taken to prevent the elevation of our Chief magistrate, by a faction distinguished more by ambition than by probity." It was also asserted that such a national celebration would allow the people to demonstrate "their joy at the success of republican principles over that faction, in the elevation of Mr. Jefferson, and their triumphal exultation, at the measures which have been so successfully adopted by the man of their choice..."⁶

⁶Virginia Argus, January 7, 1804.

Although this proposal failed to receive national adoption, the Republicans in the individual states celebrated the anniversary of Jefferson's inauguration with parties, banquets, dinners, and balls. In Richmond a dinner in honor of Jefferson was held at the Bell Tavern, and among those who attended were Governor Page, Chancellor Wythe, and Doctor Foushee, a prominent Richmond citizen who was the president of the toasting committee. Of the several toasts which were proposed and drunk after the dinner, there was one to "The 4th of March -- The day on which the will of the people prevailed against the intrigues of party and the schemes of ambition", and one also to "Thomas Jefferson -- the patriot who merits public favor by promoting the public interest".⁷ The first of these toasts was followed by three guns, three cheers, and the tune of Hail Columbia, while the other was followed by five guns, three cheers, and Jefferson's March.⁸

Jefferson in 1804 was riding the crest of a huge wave of popularity and was held in such high esteem that many of his supporters confidently predicted that the time would soon come when he would have no opposition. The Virginia Argus voiced this high regard for Jefferson in an article printed shortly after the anniversary of Jefferson's inauguration. After reviewing the accomplishments of Jefferson's administration, the prediction was made that he would "inevitably convert his most inveterate enemies into friends and honest republicans."⁹

⁷Ibid., March 10, 1804.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Ibid.

A few days before the state-wide selection of presidential electors took place in November, Thomas Ritchie published an editorial in his Richmond Enquirer calling on the citizens of Virginia to choose the electors pledged to Jefferson and Clinton. Ritchie solemnly proclaimed that under Jefferson's administration "individuals have now gained, what the government has lost, in influence. . . . The Alien is subject now only to the superintendence of the law; and the press is now, as it was, and as it ought eternally to be, privileged to dispense its unsolicited criticisms on the measures of the government."¹⁰

The Electoral College was scheduled to meet the fifth of December in 1804, and during the weeks preceding this event the Republican papers of Richmond continued to extol Jefferson's virtues. Editor Ritchie informed his readers in the second week of November that Jefferson had proposed a "humane and most enlightened" policy toward the Indian tribes of Louisiana. As proof of Jefferson's adroit handling of the Indian problem, Ritchie reported that the Osage Indians had visited Washington and had established good relations with the government.¹¹

Ritchie proved to be one of President Jefferson's most vigorous defenders as is evidenced in his forceful charge:

The federalists have tried every method to weaken the confidence of the people in the administration of Mr. Jefferson. They have scrupulously sifted every public measure in the vain

¹⁰ Enquirer, October 31, 1804.

¹¹ Ibid., November 14, 1804.

hope of finding some dangerous oversight. They have descended into the recesses of his private conduct with the expectation of finding those faults in the man which they had attempted in vain to find in the public officer. But all their exertions have proved abortive. By attempting to detract from the merit of the President, they have only drawn forth more powerful friends to defend him. Their desire to shew [sic] him how much they have disliked his administration has ended only in shewing [sic] him how much he is beloved by his grateful countrymen. An experience of more than three years has evidently demonstrated how much he was worthy of the confidence which the people had reposed in him. Scarce a single friend has deserted his cause; while numbers of his former enemies have honorably acknowledged their mistake by enlisting under its banners.¹²

The Virginia Argus also reviewed the first three years of Jefferson's administration with praise and recalled with amusement the dire predictions of calamity which had been made by the Federalists upon Jefferson's taking of office. The Argus then enumerated the many achievements of Jefferson's administration among which were peace, prosperity, freedom of speech and press, relief from taxes, the payment of public debts, and the purchase of Louisiana.¹³

Two months later the Argus took issue with those who were dissatisfied with the present system but who still desired to be known as Republicans. "What would you change?" asked the Argus. "How could things be better? Do you want more taxes, more debts, less freedom of speech and press? Do you want war?"¹⁴ Editor Plessants asserted that the complaints of dissident Republicans were made ridiculous after examination, and then, in answer to his own question concerning the

¹²Enquirer, June 13, 1804.

¹³Virginia Argus, March 24, 1804.

¹⁴Ibid., May 19, 1804.

origin of the habit of complaining for nothing, he patiently explained, "You have been taught this tune of complaint by men who harbor principles far different from yours, principles truly opposed to republicanism, and therefore opposed to the present administration, in short, principles of Monarchy, These men hate equal rights, hate the liberty of the people, hate everything republican."¹⁵

Jefferson's supporters had logical, forceful arguments in their behalf, for his administration had confounded the Federalists' predictions of chaos and ruin. The Federalists had only thin and foolish arguments and no scruples.¹⁶

EDITORIAL ATTACK ON AND DEFENSE OF JEFFERSON

Although Jefferson was at the height of his popularity in 1804, there were those who did not share enthusiasm of his ardent supporters, The Federalist press had waged constant warfare on Jefferson since his taking of office in 1801, and the forthcoming presidential election afforded the Federalists an opportunity to intensify their campaign in an attempt to reoccupy the White House. In reference to the Federalists, the Virginia Argus in June of 1804 described the division of political sentiment in America as a separation of New England from the rest of the country and asserted that a geographic line set apart one area from which

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Bowers, Jefferson in Power, p. 265.

scurrilous abuse was vented upon public and private character of the other. In a pungent indictment of the country's Federalist press it declared, "The foul production of these presses, it is presumed, have never been equalled in any age, in any country, under any government since the art of printing was invented."¹⁷ The specific incident which had aroused the wrath of the Argus and which caused it in this June issue to label the newspapers of New England, and especially those of Connecticut, as the "worst trash ever printed" was an article printed in the Bridgeport (Connecticut) Telegraph entitled "A Sale At Auction of the President of the United States." Written in dialogue, this article purported to be an auction at which President Jefferson was offered for sale. The auctioneer described him variously as a Republican, a Democrat, and a Jacobin and stated that he thinks himself wiser than Washington, Adams, or King Solomon. Sarcastically stating that Jefferson was an expert on government, the auctioneer ridiculed the recent Louisiana Purchase and also ridiculed Jefferson's views on religion. When only two shillings was bid the auctioneer put Jefferson away to sell him another day when he had a better house. The Argus reprinted the article, declaring that its purpose for doing so was the same as that of the Greeks who had exposed their drunken Helots to the view of their children in order to make them "loathe crime and secure them in habits of temperence."¹⁸

¹⁷Virginia Argus, June 6, 1804.

¹⁸Ibid.

This satirical bit of propaganda was typical of the low esteem in which the Federalists held the common man who they believed to be incapable of intelligent government participation or administration. Echoing this fear that the elevation of the masses to political prominence and high government posts portended the destruction of the American Republic, the Virginia Gazette and General Advertiser somberly admonished in August of 1804, "No republic of the many which have existed have stood. All, have fallen in the very same way, and by the treacherous hand of the same hypocritical assassin. Democracy breeds demagogues; demagogues make and spread lies; these excite passions and kindle the bonfires which light the republican first consuls to the throne and the true patriot to martyrdom."¹⁹ The idea expressed in this quote was a real fear to many Federalists who cherished the belief that only the educated elite were capable of conducting the business of government. In a voice of concern and apprehension for the safety of the government the Gazette exhorted, "It becomes the federalists to be more than ever united and firm in order to save the country from ruin."²⁰

This apprehension for the safety of the government in Republican hands was reflected in Federalist charges of willful destruction of the Constitution by the Republicans. The Virginia Gazette reproachfully asserted in September of 1804 that the work of ruin was nearly completed

¹⁹Virginia Gazette, August 15, 1804.

²⁰Ibid., January 11, 1804.

at the end of the first Congress under President Jefferson. The army and navy, it stated, had been reduced to a name; the judicial column of the Constitution had been fatally levelled with the dust; the floodgates of vice and iniquity had been opened with the repeal of the strict naturalization laws; and the system of internal taxes had been destroyed so that the rich were no longer taxed.²¹ Ruefully the Gazette declared, "Jefferson has . . . caused the destruction of liberty and riveted the chains of despotism on us."²²

In a satirical advertisement which impugned Jefferson and his close association with Thomas Paine, the Virginia Gazette proclaimed, "New Constitutions Made -- Old Ones Repaired, Tinkered and Mended!" Describing republicanism as an "itch for popularity," this advertisement severely condemned Paine's godlessness and cautioned any potential customers that the high quality services offered here could be had only at the shop bearing the authorized sign on which was pictured a guillotine with the words "liberty and equality" inscribed below. The firm's name was given as "Paine, Tinker, and Co., one and indivisible."²³

Political jealousies were also a large factor in the consistent opposition taken by the Federalists, and of these jealousies, perhaps the longest standing and deepest rooted was the political rivalry between Massachusetts and Virginia. With Jefferson's victory in the election of 1800 the honors of the Presidency had reverted to Virginia and

²¹Ibid., September 19, 1804.

²²Ibid.

²³Ibid., August 25, 1804.

created for Massachusetts chauvinists an intolerable situation which steadily grew worse and chafed their wounded pride. The Richmond Enquirer reported in 1804 that the Federalists still resented Virginia's influence in national politics and were seeking to discredit Virginia by misinterpreting "every measure of Jefferson's administration to 'prove' the ambitions of Virginia."²⁴ Editor Ritchie charged that the Federalists wanted either a dissolution of or a change in the present government.²⁵

This prevailing spirit of Massachusetts' jealousy was sometimes used by the Federalists to mask their actual motives for their vehement opposition to Jefferson and the Republican Party. Samuel Pleasants emphasized this in the Virginia Argus two weeks before the convening of the Electoral College when he asserted that "under a pretense of a fear of Virginia, they [the Federalists] oppose the spirit of a representative government. The majority, according to them, never will decide upon the common interest."²⁶

The magnitude of President Jefferson's support by the common masses was indicated by his unofficial title "the man of the people." However, the Federalists in their constant campaign to discredit the Republican party, challenged this popular concept of Jefferson and charged that the Republican party would actually be a minority party if the Congressional representation based on slaves was removed. Referring

²⁴Enquirer, July 7 and October 13, 1804.

²⁵Ibid., July 7, 1804.

²⁶Virginia Argus, November 23, 1804.

to the proposed twelfth amendment about which the storms of controversy were currently raging, the paper in which this charge appeared sneeringly concluded, "If they are serious in wishing to amend the Constitution, let them advocate this amendment or give the slaves their freedom."²⁷

Samuel Pleasants, editor of the Virginia Argus, vigorously refuted this charge with indisputable logic and statistics. Pointing out that of the 141 members of the present Congress, 105 were Republicans while only 36 were Federalists, he asserted that only 14 of these representatives were based on America's 80,000 slaves, and that therefore, even without these 14 representatives, the Republicans would still command the Congressional majority by a vote of 91 to 36. "Yet," he stated, "we will hear of a 'negro president' from men who pretend that there are not sufficient republican freemen in the United States to place Mr. Jefferson in the chair without assistance of the black population."²⁸ Then in a countercharge, Pleasants declared that Jefferson would have won the Presidency in 1800 by a huge majority of votes if the Federalists, who were then in power, had allowed the decennial population census to be taken before the election. It reasoned that the large growth of Republican strength in the first ten years of the country's history would have drastically changed the composition of the Electoral College in Jefferson's favor.²⁹

²⁷ Ibid., July 11, 1804.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

The Federalists, who were quite experienced in the art of distorting the news concerning their Republican opponents, brazenly brought charges of similar behavior against the Republican papers early in 1804. In January of that year the Virginia Gazette and General Advertiser denounced the Republican press for mutilating the statements of various public proceedings and specifically charged a Republican printer in Lancaster who had said that he could not find room in his paper to print the Federalist objections to a bill which would extend the jurisdiction of the justices of the peace. "The same apology," it stated, "was made by some of the fraternity for not publishing the letter of Mr. Jones, explaining Mr. Jefferson's mode of paying debts."³⁰

The proposed Constitutional amendment of 1804 drew violent opposition from the Federalists who saw it as a device by which Jefferson hoped to perpetuate himself in power. This amendment was designed to prevent a recurrence of the fiasco which developed with the presidential election of 1800, at which time, although everyone knew the intent of the electoral college to assign the Presidency to Jefferson and the Vice-Presidency to Burr, the equality of votes for each in this august body threw the election into the House of Representatives where the Presidency became a pawn in the "dirtiest game of politics ever played."³¹ The Republicans had hoped for an early adoption of this amendment, but due to Federalist opposition and the slowness of

³⁰Virginia Gazette, January 4, 1804.

³¹Claude G. Bowers, Jefferson in Power, p. 254.

legislative proceedings, the Congressional vote was postponed a few months shortly after Congress convened in December of 1803. During this interim, bitter debate and controversy raged in Congress where Senator Uriah Tracy served as champion and spokesman for the Federalist camp.³² The Virginia Gazette in reporting Republican reaction to the postponement of Congressional consideration of the amendment stated in January of 1804 that after the Republican leaders had had time to regroup their forces and arrange their future plans they "will, no doubt, be busy and endeavor after greater secrecy. By threats, flattery and the prospect of office, they will, if possible, make the people subservient to their own ambitious views."³³

The twelfth amendment was adopted in September of 1804 and with its passage the Federalist press focused its criticism on Jefferson's motives for supporting this Constitutional change. The Gazette took the position that Jefferson may have outsmarted himself as the amendment could possibly work to the advantage of the Federalists. In a caustic editorial of October 13, Augustine Davis dipped his pen in venom and wrote "That Mr. Jefferson is extremely anxious to hold the office, nobody doubts; and that he may have had this in view, in the alteration of the Constitution, is probable; but his cunning, as is frequently the case, may defeat itself. The election will now be more fair, and the will of the citizens be clearly shown."³⁴ In explaining

³²Ibid., p. 255.

³³Virginia Gazette, January 4, 1804.

³⁴Ibid., October 13, 1804.

his optimism, Davis predicted that Mr. Clinton, the republican nominee for Vice-President, could possibly become President. "Even in the state of Virginia," he claimed, ". . . there may be some who will be guided by the love of country, rather than by local and selfish interests."³⁵

Jefferson was often portrayed by the Federalists as a selfish, ambitious politician whose inconsistencies reflected his determination for political advancement. The Virginia Gazette raised this allegation again four weeks before the Electoral College members cast their votes by reminding its readers that although Jefferson was running for re-election to the Presidency, he had written a letter from France in 1787 in which he had bitterly opposed the Constitution without a mandatory system of office rotation. He had particularly advocated such a mandatory rotation of the office of President and had expressed his belief that without such a safeguard, a man could be elected for life.³⁶ The Gazette acidly stated, "This 'feature of the constitution' which Mr. Jefferson in 1787, not only disliked but greatly disliked, we dare say, has now lost not merely all this deformity which it then had in his eyes, but has become so fascinating that he cannot atone by sufficient admiration for his former censure."³⁷ Asserting that the Republicans only wished to preserve the offices which they had won by fraud and stratagem, the Gazette mused that perhaps the reason for Jefferson's advocacy in 1787 of a mandatory rotation of office was due to Washington's popularity

³⁵Ibid.

³⁶Ibid., November 10, 1804.

³⁷Ibid.

which Jefferson feared might keep him in the Presidential office for the rest of his life, thereby preventing Jefferson from ever acceding to that honor.

The Virginia Gazette also attacked the inconsistency of Jefferson's nephew and son-in-law, John Wayles Eppes, and recalled that as a candidate for Congress, he had pledged to help amend the Constitution so as to limit all presidents to one four year term. Yet, it reported, he was one of the 110 members of Congress who had voted unanimously that Jefferson should be elected a second time. In sarcasm the Gazette exclaimed, "Oh, the loveliness of truth and consistency."³⁸

President Jefferson's increase of federal salaries in 1802 also met with sharp criticism of the Federalists who cited this as one more instance of Jefferson's inconsistency. The Virginia Gazette recalled that Jefferson and the Republican party had termed the increase of salaries by the Federalists in 1799 as an "unpardonable sin and the road to bankruptcy." However, it observed, at that time the war with France had forced an increase in prices, and therefore a wage increase was needed. Conversely, the Gazette maintained, in 1802 peace reigned and a pay raise was unjustified. This editorial concluded that although the pay raises of 1802 were praised by the Republicans, they were really raises for selfish reasons.³⁹

³⁸Ibid., October 27, 1804.

³⁹Ibid., October 24, 1804.

With Aaron Burr's fall from grace the Republican party in 1804 nominated for Vice-President George Clinton of New York, whose political ability had been proved in his seven terms of gubernatorial office in that state.⁴⁰ When Clinton's name first began being mentioned for the post, the Federalist press gleefully pounced upon this as another example of inconsistency among the Republicans and quoted Clinton as having said in the presidential campaign of 1800 that he had "long entertained an unfavorable opinion of Mr. Jefferson's talents as a statesman and his firmness as a republican."⁴¹ Developing its theme further, the Gazette reported Clinton as having also said that Jefferson was an "accommodating trimmer, who would change with the times and bend to circumstances for the purpose of personal promotion."

The Gazette asserted that as a result of his low opinion of Jefferson in 1800, Clinton had disavowed him and had declared that he could not with propriety "acquiesce in the elevation of a man destitute of the qualifications essential to the good administration of the government." On the other hand, he was said to have announced that if Burr were to be the candidate for the Presidency, then he [Clinton] would support him with "pleasure and vigor."⁴²

In another attack three days later the Virginia Gazette noted that Clinton's supporters had for years attacked the Federalists as "wicked calumniators." Editor Davis piously exclaimed that the Federalists

⁴⁰Bowers, Jefferson in Power, p. 257.

⁴¹Virginia Gazette, January 11, 1804.

⁴²Ibid.

had never spoken more harshly of Jefferson than had Clinton. In reference to Governor Clinton's statement of disavowal in 1800 Davis asked, 'Does it not indeed amount in plain language, to saying that he [Jefferson] was an unprincipled villain who would achieve his own personal aggrandizement at the price, if necessary, of his country's ruin? I think in all conscience this is speaking ill enough of anyone; it is not very easy to represent a man in much worse light than his excellency has Mr. J."⁴³

Concerning Jefferson later in the month of January, the Virginia Gazette reported that some democrats [Republicans] believe that Jefferson had agreed to leave Monticello and become President in order to save the country, but, contended the Gazette, nothing was further from the truth. "No man is more ambitious and vain," it charged. "It will be seen, that he and Governor Clinton, will be candidates for the next election for their respective offices, while they with great grimace, will profess to 'humble themselves before the magnitude of the undertaking.' Those who have their own designs to answer, secretly laugh at all this; but they continually cry in public, the man of the people."⁴⁴

In a spiteful "defense" of Jefferson's decision to run again, the Virginia Gazette suggested that after all, perhaps he had been solicited by the political leaders of Virginia in such a way that he couldn't refuse to run. And, the Gazette added, if this was the case, then Jeffer-

⁴³Ibid., January 14, 1804.

⁴⁴Ibid., January 21, 1804.

son had been a good choice, for "he is easy to control."⁴⁵ Other possible "reasons" given in this editorial for Jefferson's reversal of his former position included a probable desire to best Adams' record of only four years' occupancy of the White House and his determination to keep the state of New York from sharing in the presidential honors. "The pretensions of New York," the Gazette alleged, "are not to be tolerated," and in an obvious taunt at Jefferson's wide travels and versatile education it added, "Mr. Clinton may defend a hillock on the Hudson, but he would make a sorry figure at Perdido, on the river Mobile. He never saw, in all his life, a mountain of salt 180 miles long and 45 wide; nor does he know to what genus the frog with three horns belongs. . . Jefferson has no personal objection to Mr. Clinton, but thinks that a man who had been only up and down the North River, and conversant only with Dutch folks, would not duly 'humble himself before the magnitude of the understanding'."⁴⁶

Ironically, Jefferson had not wanted to seek re-election, but he felt honor bound to do so. Expressing his feelings in a letter to Phillip Mazzei, he wrote, "'The immense load of tory calumnies which have been manufactured respecting me, and have filled the European market' [have] made it necessary 'to appeal once more to my country for justification'."⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Ibid., October 20, 1804.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Bowers, Jefferson in Power, p. 257.

In a countercharge of inconsistency leveled against the Federalists, the Richmond Enquirer quoted the Public Ledger, a Federalist paper of Norfolk, as deploring the abolition of the districting system in Virginia and the introduction in 1800 of the General Ticket Law.⁴⁸ This law, which was severely condemned by the Federalists, changed the method of selecting presidential electors so as to base the selection of each elector on a state-wide rather than a local election. The Enquirer observed that Massachusetts had adopted a similar system, but that the Federalists criticized only Virginia. "Does Federalism sanctify whatever it touches?" asked the Enquirer. "Can that policy be perfectly republican in the Federal state of Massachusetts, which marks the records of the Virginia legislature with the most oppressive usurpation and tyranny?"⁴⁹

President Jefferson's personal honor and integrity were also regularly assailed by the Federalist press which constantly denounced him for alleged dishonesty in the election of 1800. The Virginia Gazette renewed this charge during the impeachment trial of Justice Samuel Chase, and called to its readers' attention that the President of the United States, as well as a judge, was subject to the "interposition of the Constitutional power of the House" and asserted that the same sort of evidence which required the House to inquire into the activities of Judge Chase should also cause an inquiry into those of Jefferson. "Ac-

⁴⁸ Enquirer, November 7, 1804.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

cusations of a most serious import, have long since been made against President Jefferson," declared the Gazette, "and public rumor has charged him with offenses, which, if true, ought not only to forfeit to him the confidence of the people, but subject him to the severest punishment which our laws inflict upon the most daring culprits."⁵⁰ Among the charges against Jefferson listed by the Gazette were that he had dismissed from office many devoted public servants and replaced them with "cringing sychophants"; that he had bought the presidency as if at auction; and that he had violated the Constitution in order to punish his enemies and reward his friends (this in reference to the recall of Adams' "midnight" appointments). This paper contended that Jefferson had been told of these charges but had remained silent. The Gazette proclaimed, "A glorious opportunity is now afforded to the King of our new citizen subjects, to prove the malignity of his enemies, and the falsehood of the charges, that have been made against him. . . . If Jefferson fails to demand an investigation of himself the world will suspect that he feels a conviction of his guilt."⁵¹

The Virginia Gazette also charged that Mr. Edmund Randolph in testifying before Congress on the proposed twelfth amendment had stated that he was indifferent as to whether intrigue played a part in the last election and had said that he did not want to be enlightened.

⁵⁰ Virginia Gazette, February 29, 1804.

⁵¹ Ibid.

"If Mr. Jefferson became President by the medium of intrigue, or was likely to have been deprived of that honor by the arts of a deeper intriguer," commented the Gazette, "the different actors in the presidential game ought all to be searched out, and to receive that punishment which their treachery merited."⁵² This, the paper maintained, would be better than making a patchwork of the Constitution by its constant amending as "seems to be the trend under the present ruling party."⁵³

Other specific charges made by the Gazette were that Jefferson in his inaugural speech had made brilliant but insincere promises; that he seemed determined to banish "the harmony of social intercourse" from society; that he had wasted public money in various unwise or dishonest enterprises; and that his Inaugural Speech formed a text "on which his conduct is a comment, as unbecoming an individual, and incompatible with goodness of heart, as unworthy a chief magistrate, and ruinous to the interests of the nation."⁵⁴

Many frivolous and transparent charges were brought against Jefferson by the press during this election year. The Richmond Enquirer reported in November that the Federalists had tried to smear Jefferson's name by claiming that he wrote an adulatory petition to King George III in 1775. The Enquirer retorted that the petition had actually been sent by Congress and had been drafted by John Dickinson. The unanimity of its approval, it said, was necessary to effect a last attempt at peace-

⁵² Ibid., February 1, 1804.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid., August 11, 1804.

ful conciliation with a good conscience. Disdainfully the Enquirer declared, "The licentiousness of the federal presses, has produced a development of his [Jefferson's] character, which as it unfolds, only exhibits more wisdom, more virtue, and more patriotism."⁵⁵

Also under Federalist attack was Jefferson's behavior at the Capitol when the bakers of Washington presented him with a mammoth loaf of bread and some casks of wine. The Virginia Argus quoted from the Boston Repertory, that Jefferson had "sneeringly compared the unhallowed bread and wine which were the subjects of his disgraceful entertainment, to the sacred symbol of our Redeemer's sacrifice."⁵⁶ This Boston paper termed the incident as "shocking" and stated, "we tremble when penning it." The Argus disgustedly refused to insult its readers' intelligence with a comment on this vile charge.

Jefferson's handling of the situation in Tripoli was also fair game for the Federalists whose eager zeal for fault finding led them to criticize even Jefferson's manners at official parties.⁵⁷

The Louisiana Purchase of 1803 was a major object of attack by the Federalist press in the pre-election campaign of 1804. The Federalists depicted this area as Jefferson's personal kingdom and offered it as an example of his personal aggrandizement at public expense. The Virginia Gazette acridly lamented, "The constitution has no longer an independent judiciary for a bulwark; the president, who alone dictates,

⁵⁵ Enquirer, November 3, 1804.

⁵⁶ Virginia Argus, May 2, 1804.

⁵⁷ Ibid., November 24, 1804; and Virginia Gazette, February 4, 1804.

and whose will is as little obstructed as that of Tiberius was by the cypher senate of Rome, has an empire of his own bought indeed with public money, but as much a province for an ambitious chief to gain strength in, as ancient Gaul was for Caesar."⁵⁸

The Federalists cleverly solicited support from the common people by alleging that the money for the purchase of this western adjunct was to be raised by duties on salt, brown sugar, bobea tea, and molasses, articles which were used mostly by the poor and middle classes of people.⁵⁹ Any pretext would serve as a ground for complaint as is seen in Federalist charges that the English language would be considered a "barbarous dialect" in Louisiana when that section was admitted to the Union and that this vast area would be impossible to control and administer.⁶⁰

President Jefferson was also ridiculed by the Federalists for his declaration of the existence of a mountain of salt in Louisiana which could be used for commercial purposes. In a campaign of ridicule the Federalists sought to discredit Jefferson through charges of credulity and naivete in the issuance of such a statement. The press, as usual, divided sharply along party lines in their ridicule and defense of Jefferson on this issue. In support of Jefferson's claim the Virginia Argus early in February printed an extract from a letter written to the Philadelphia Gazette by a "respectable gentleman" in

⁵⁸Virginia Gazette, August 15, 1804.

⁵⁹Ibid., September 29, 1804.

⁶⁰Ibid., June 6 and September 8, 1804.

New Orleans. The letter, which was dated January 1, 1804, stated in part, "The description of the salt mountain so precisely ascertained in its dimensions, I perceive, makes you smile. You may, however, be assured, that there is an immense tract of country, between the heads of the Arkanza and Osage rivers, abounding in rock salt and if we can credit the reports of Indians of that quarter, and the hunters, there are large hills of it. I am firmly persuaded, there must be great many miles of territory, if not a solid bed of salt, at least full mines of it."⁶¹

With the passage of each week the Federalists continued to laugh and jeer at "Jefferson's salt mountain," thereby prompting Republican partisans to write letters to the various editors of the press in defense of Jefferson. One such letter, signed "Republican Farmer" and printed in a March issue of the Virginia Argus, cleverly satirized the situation and subtly ridiculed the Federalists for their stand on this issue. "The account of Louisiana, communicated by the President, has for some weeks kept the Federalists grinning most facetiously," commented this correspondent. "The mountain of salt, described in that communication, has almost overpowered them with laughter; and the minor wits among our Connecticut Editors have devoted their papers almost exclusively to the burlesque of Mr. Jefferson's salt mountain. . . .

⁶¹Virginia Argus, February 8, 1804.

Thus, while the federalists laugh at wisdom, and are laughed at for their folly, we become a merry nation, and the inference is, a happy one."⁶² In refutation of Jefferson's claim of a salt mountain, the Virginia Gazette published an extract of a letter from an explorer in Kentucky who wrote that the only salt in Louisiana was a "lick" similar to those found in Kentucky. He reported that this lick has been formed by a salt spring at the bottom of a hill and that a layer of salt from eight to fourteen inches in thickness had been encrusted on the rocks. The largest piece of salt he had seen was a chunk weighing four hundred pounds which came down the Missouri River the previous year.⁶³

In answer to Federalist charges that the territory of Louisiana was a worthless, barren wasteland, Ritchie wrote an editorial which he published in the Richmond Enquirer and in which he expounded the economic advantages and benefits of this virgin territory.⁶⁴

The real reason for most of the Federalist opposition to the annexing of Louisiana was the well-grounded fear that this area would be settled by the common people who would thus increase the political strength of the Republicans while subsequently decreasing Federalist influence to a point from which it could never rally. However, the attitude of the average citizen toward this annexation was reflected by the Virginia Argus which praised Jefferson for its peaceful acquisition and exulted that all nations had previously used force to acquire

⁶² Ibid., March 10, 1804.

⁶³ Virginia Gazette, May 16, 1804.

⁶⁴ Enquirer, July 14, 1804.

new territory with a resultant loss of life and limb and the engendering of ill feelings. "But in this instance," it exclaimed, "the balance has been poised, and nothing has been found wanting."⁶⁵ Editor Pleasants believed that this was a joyous occasion which called for thanksgiving to God and a reconciliation of party differences. "Let not the moderate Federalists be led astray by a few interested men;" he exhorted, "let them not reject the cup when it is at their lip; but cheerfully drink with their fellow citizens the beverage of joy, and treat with contempt that man or set of men who would persuade them that Thomas Jefferson or that the administration is their enemy. Let the American people, in short, banish party spirit and become once more sociable and happy."⁶⁶

Jefferson, as has been noted earlier, drew severe criticism from the Federalists for his removal of several of their brethren from office upon his becoming President. The Virginia Gazette was especially outraged at the replacement of one Richard Harrison with Edward Livingston in the post of District Attorney of New York. Harrison, it stated, had served fourteen years in this post with the strictest integrity and had proved himself "most trustworthy." On the other hand, the Gazette indignantly charged, Livingston last November had "confessed judgment for ONE HUNDRED THOUSAND DOLLARS for public monies [sic] which came into his hands by virtue of his office, and have been applied to his own private use."⁶⁷

⁶⁵ Virginia Argus, February 8, 1804.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Virginia Gazette, January 11, 1804.

The Gazette asked if Livingston had repaid the money and asked who would if he could not -- the public or Jefferson? Then, in a pointed, embarrassing question directed at President Jefferson it asked if Jefferson would have replaced Harrison with Livingston if the management of his estate had been involved instead of the post of New York Attorney.⁶⁸

Referring to Livingston again a few months later, the Virginia Gazette reported that he not only had failed to make restitution for the stolen money, but that he had fled the country. The "Jacobin" press, the Gazette noted, were as silent as the grave, and it wondered at the certain uproar which would have been made by these same papers if Livingston had been a Federalist.⁶⁹

Tauntingly the Gazette recalled that Jefferson had justified his removal of Federalists from office with a declared necessity of filling these offices with better men, and that he had admonished that the same fate was in store for any Republicans who were found guilty of impropriety. Now, crowed the Gazette, addition to Livingston there was also Mr. Gallatin, who, as Secretary of the Treasury, had prostituted the influence of his high office to promote party elections. Yet, observed the Gazette in feigned wonderment, "Gallatin remains in office."⁷⁰

All of this would seem to indicate that Jefferson had enacted a policy of wholesale dismissal of Federalist officeholders. On the con-

⁶⁸Ibid.

⁶⁹Ibid., September 15, 1804.

⁷⁰Ibid., September 5, 1804.

trary, however, Jefferson had no concrete or definite policy on the matter, and instead he treated each case individually on a day to day basis as each case arose.⁷¹ In truth, Jefferson actually dismissed only a very few of the army of Federalist officials which he found upon his accession to the Presidency. However, even these few dismissals were too many for the Federalist press which immediately raised cries of "persecution". Jefferson noted this carping criticism in a letter which he wrote to his friend, du Pont de Nemours, almost a year after his taking of office and in which he expressed with some irritation that although he had dismissed only twenty-one of the thousands of Federalist office-holders who occupied government posts when he was inaugurated, "the whole herd have squealed out as if all their throats were cut."⁷²

The Richmond Enquirer sprang to Jefferson's defense and vindicated his policy of office removals. In an article reprinted from the Norfolk Ledger the Enquirer quoted the crux of Federalist arguments on the matter of personnel replacement. "As there is no part of Mr. Jefferson's conduct which is so much dreaded by his adherents," had charged the Norfolk paper, "they are anxious to conceal it from the public. The system he has pursued, so incompatible to his inaugural speech, deserves to be exposed. And as facts are the best mode of procuring conviction, we consider it as a duty of the Editors of Federal papers to enumerate

⁷¹Cunningham, Republicans In Power, pp. 69-70.

⁷²Ford, The Writings of Thomas Jefferson, VIII, 38.

all removals from office within their knowledge⁷³ There followed a list of removals and the charge that these had all been made before the occupants of office had been given a chance to show cooperation with Jefferson and his administration. The Enquirer answered that Jefferson's administration should be judged by three standards: first, by the policy and practice of the preceding administration; second, by the principles of Jefferson's inaugural speech; and third, by the abstract maxims of a Republican government. Editor Ritchie expressed the wish that the duty of vindicating Jefferson had fallen into more capable hands, but added, ". . . it is almost unnecessary to offer any apology. When truth fights under his banners, even the powers of a very feeble champion may sometimes command success."⁷⁴ Ritchie then charged that the previous administration had allowed no man in office who did not agree with the political principles of Adams. "But," he declared, "such is not the policy of the present administration. Mr. Jefferson does not appear desirous of confining every office to his political friends. His object seems to be, to give them not a complete but a proportionate share of official emolument and influence."⁷⁵

Jefferson had termed as reasonable the Federalists' desire for proportionate representation in official posts but rejoined that only a continuation of office monopoly would satisfy them.⁷⁶

⁷³ Richmond Enquirer, November 17, 1804.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Pollard, Presidents and the Press, p. 78.

The recall by Jefferson of several "midnight appointments" made by Adams was another cause for vituperation by the Federalist press. The Virginia Argus replied to these charges and asserted that candor would "decide that if Mr. Adams was so distrustful of his successor, Mr. Jefferson could not be much to blame for refusing to confirm acts prompted by such distrust; and if the former designed to throw obstacles in the way of the administration of the latter, it was no part of duty or propriety to suffer them all quietly to remain."⁷⁷ Even so, declared the Argus, Jefferson did allow some appointments to stand even though they were based on these motives.

ELECTION PREDICTIONS AND RESULTS

Less than a week before the state-wide selection of presidential electors was to take place November 5, the Richmond papers fervently exhorted and advised the voters of Virginia. The Richmond Enquirer in solemn tones reminded its readers that the electors were "destined to speak the voice of the Republic," and admonished that only the "most competent with pure integrity should be elected."⁷⁸ Stating that the choice was between the system developed under Washington and Adams and that developed under the present "illustrious" President, the Enquirer asked, "Which of these systems, then, are you willing to adopt? Is it that system which is modelled upon the policy of the ancient monarchies

⁷⁷ Virginia Argus, March 24, 1804.

⁷⁸ Richmond Enquirer, October 31, 1804.

of Europe, or rather upon the maxims of the British constitution? or will you have that system, which is more congenial to the physical condition of our country, and the spirit of our people?"⁷⁹

Two weeks later, the Virginia Gazette addressed those who had been selected to the Electoral College and admonished them on the importance of their forthcoming choice for President, but, as was expected, its advice was totally different from that given earlier by the Enquirer. Lamenting the obvious popular groundswell for Jefferson, the Gazette solemnly intoned, "Men of common honesty cannot but view the present crisis with painful anxiety." Resignedly Editor Davis conceded that Jefferson and Clinton were destined for office, but he hoped fervently that a majority of the electors, "regretting the sad and miserable effects of a weak administration, will declare for GOVERNOR CLINTON and by placing him in the chair of the Chief Magistry, give us a man possessing courage, integrity, and principle."⁸⁰

The day before the convening of the Electoral College, the Richmond Enquirer confidently predicted that the Republicans would win every state except Connecticut and Delaware with a total vote of twelve electors and also possibly two votes from the state of Maryland. It also reported a rumor that the Federalists may admit defeat and refuse to run any candidates.⁸¹

⁷⁹Ibid.

⁸⁰Virginia Gazette and General Advertiser, November 14, 1804.

⁸¹Richmond Enquirer, December 4, 1804.

Two days later the Richmond Enquirer reported that all the electors for the state of Virginia had convened the previous day in the Capitol at ten o'clock and had voted unanimously for "Thomas Jefferson, of Virginia, as President, and George Clinton, of New York, as Vice-President."⁸²

Due to the lack of rapid communications, the final vote was not known until January of 1805 when Kentucky's votes were finally received to make the total vote 162 for Jefferson and Clinton and 14 for Pinckney and King.⁸³ This overwhelming vote for Jefferson astounded even his most ardent supporters, for not only had he won the expected Republican districts, but also the Federalist strongholds of Massachusetts and Connecticut. The Virginia Argus joyously exclaimed that the Federalists could have no excuse whatsoever now for referring to Jefferson as a "Negro President" and tauntingly declared,

Had the all important choice been left to New England, the land of virtue and talents; nay, had even Massachusetts, the very "headquarters of sound principles," been intrusted [sic] with the sole power of appointing a President for the United States, the man on whom their undivided choice would fall, is Thomas Jefferson. "Those who have turned the world upside down," in the scriptural sense, have overrun "Old Massachusetts with her hundred hills." And Connecticut, too, must at last submit.⁸⁴

President Jefferson's second inauguration was celebrated by his supporters in Richmond at the Eagle and Washington Taverns where banquets were given in Jefferson's honor. Dr. William Foushee and Alexan-

⁸²Ibid., December 6, 1804.

⁸³Virginia Argus, January 19, 1804.

⁸⁴Ibid., January 30, 1805.

der McRae, Esq. presided as toastmasters. Among the seventeen toasts drunk in honor of the President was a toast to the "Day which gave us a Republican Administration, it deserves to be inscribed in the National Calendar of our Feasts." This was followed by three cheers and a march. A toast to "Thomas Jefferson -- How sink the unhallowed crown of Bonaparte and the Holy Oil of the Pope, before this tried and unanointed Man of the American People" drew nine cheers and was followed by Jefferson's march.⁸⁵

Thus, in spite of vicious, virulent opposition, Jefferson was re-elected in 1804 by an astonishing landslide amid which the humiliated Federalists made even more dire predictions of catastrophe and ruin for the country in the coming four years.

⁸⁵Ibid., March 6, 1805.

CHAPTER THREE

ELECTION OF 1808

In 1808 President Jefferson was no longer the untarnished idol that he had been in the election of 1804. He was not a candidate for re-election to the Presidency in 1808, but nonetheless, Jefferson and policies of his administration furnished the basis for many heated arguments and hotly contested issues in this election.

Due to British and French belligerence, Jefferson had been forced to adopt some unpopular but necessary measures which gave rise to severe criticism from both friends and foes alike. The most widely felt of these measures was the Embargo Act which prohibited American shippers from engaging in international trade, thereby causing much unemployment and depriving American citizens of many necessities and conveniences to which they had become accustomed. Aside from those critics who honestly questioned the necessity of such a drastic measure as the Embargo, were those who found that their patriotism was proportionate to their comfort.

Another matter of great public interest in 1808 was the investigation of James Wilkinson and his part in Burr's abortive conspiracy. At his trial in Richmond the previous year, Burr had been acquitted on a technicality. Nonetheless, John Randolph, who served as foreman of the jury at Burr's trial, was determined to bring to justice Burr's most prominent co-conspirator, James Wilkinson who had served as the Commander In Chief of the United State Army under Washington, Adams and Jefferson.

The subsequent investigation and trial was accompanied by a bitter, lively feud between Wilkinson and Randolph, during the course of which the latter refused a challenge to duel with the former on the grounds that Wilkinson was no gentleman.¹ Due to the publicity given by the press, this altercation ceased to be private and developed into an affair of national interest which the Federalists hopefully regarded as a possible source of embarrassment for President Jefferson.

The most dominant development in Virginia politics of 1808 was a temporary split in Virginia's Republican party, occasioned by the fervent supporters of Virginia's presidential hopefuls, Madison and Monroe. This split indicated the existence of deep, fundamental difference within the Republican Party of Virginia and was therefore much more serious than the factional split led by John Randolph two years previously. However, the Federalists of Virginia derived little comfort from this intra-party controversy, for although the bitterness formed at this time between Madison and Monroe was to last until 1810, the quarreling factions of their party were to become reconciled and reunited before the election in November of 1808.²

EDITORIAL SUPPORT FOR JEFFERSON

Although Jefferson was not a candidate for office in 1808, his Federalist opponents continued to attack him and his administration

¹Bowers, Jefferson In Power, p. 451.

²Ammon, "James Monroe and the Election of 1808 in Virginia," p. 40.

throughout the year with criticism which was widely divergent and often contradictory. Noting the inconsistency of their arguments, Samuel Pleasants commented editorially in late May that no national policy would please the opponents of Jefferson's administration, as some favored war while others were pacifists; some felt that the present administration was too assertive while others thought it too patient; and some favored France while others favored Britain. "Amidst these conflicting opinions of his enemies," Pleasants assured his readers, "the illustrious Jefferson calmly pursues the 'ever tenor of his way', and will soon, like the sun, when approaching to his setting, with a parting beam dispel the clouds which in vain attempt to obscure his splendor."³

Pleasant was admittedly partisan to Jefferson but strived conscientiously to avoid any appearance of adulation in his editorials. Expressing his hope that no one would mistake his approbation for fawning obeisance, Pleasants had declared earlier in the year, "Convinced, as we are, that the administration of Thomas Jefferson had always been upright and patriotic; that it has been conducted with the purest intentions of promoting the public welfare, on every occasion; and that, generally, if not always, its measures have been as wise as the imperfection of the human intellect would permit; we hope we are not guilty of the servile offense of flattery in vindicating and defending such an administration from unfounded abuse."⁴

³Virginia Argus, February 19, 1808.

⁴Ibid., May 20, 1808.

Republicans everywhere offered their explanations of the Federalists' true motives in their implacable opposition to Jefferson's administration and almost always attributed their criticism to selfish, ulterior motives. Seeking to analyze the Federalist criteria of criticism, Samuel Pleasants offered his own explanation and speculated on the future of Federalism in a June issue of the Virginia Argus when he commented, "Mr. JOHN Q. ADAMS is called a TURNCOAT by the Federalists, because he no longer disapproved of Mr. JEFFERSON'S administration, It would seem, from this, that Federalism consists in no settled principles, but only in a spirit of indiscriminate opposition to EVERYTHING THAT THOMAS JEFFERSON DOES. . . . What then will become of Federalism when THOMAS JEFFERSON will no longer be in offica?"⁵

Three days later the Virginia Argus declared its gratification that Jefferson had arrived in Washington in good health,⁶ and the following month Pleasants reported, as an indication of popular support for the President, a toast drunk to Jefferson on July fourth by a group celebrants in Manchester who honored him as "The President of the United States -- In his patriotism, discernment and discretion, may we find an effectual shield against domestic commotion, diplomatic skill or foreign violence."⁷

In their zealous search for issues the Federalists opposed Jefferson's every action, whether large or small, whether important or

⁵Ibid., June 14, 1803.

⁶Ibid., June 17, 1803.

⁷Ibid., July 12, 1803.

nonconsequential. Even Jefferson's choice of colors for his clothing was subjected to ridicule by the Federalist press. Samuel Pleasants mentioned this petty carping in reporting an interesting example of Federalist hypocrisy early in September of 1808. In the midst of the Embargo President Jefferson had granted to the owners of a certain ship, special permission to sail to China for the purpose of transporting a Chinese official to Canton. The cries of "favoritism" and "inconsistency" raised by the Federalist press resounded in the air, and Pleasants contemptuously remarked, "The curs of faction, from one end of the continent to the other, are making a prodigious barking against Mr. Jefferson's red breeches, because their wearer has granted the permission requested by the owners of the ship Beaver of this port, to convey a Chinese Mandarin to Canton." Then Pleasants noted with scorn that the owners of the Beaver who requested this special permission to sail were "all warm, zealous, and thorough-paced FEDERALISTS."⁸

A further note of Federalist inconsistency and irony was sounded by Pleasants in this same September issue of the Virginia Argus. Commenting on the Federalists' complaints of Jefferson's choice of ministers to Britain, this tireless editor observed that the Federalists had first grumbled at Monroe's appointment to Britain, charging that Monroe had no love for Britain, and then had denounced his replacement with a Federalist as an attempt by Jefferson to discredit Monroe. "Ought not

⁸ Ibid., September 6, 1808.

such people to be put in a dark room in a strait-jacket and undergo depletion?" asked Pleasants,⁹

In spite of the many petty and false charges raised by the Federalists, the Republican editors of Richmond's newspapers recognized the serious threat posed by the Federalists' bid to recapture the Presidency and realized that this was a very real possibility in view of the fact that much of the public seemed to be growing apathetic and overconfident. Because of this, editor Pleasants issued a warning to all Republicans in the spring of 1808 and admonished. "If ever there was a time when it behooved the friends of the present virtuous administration to be active in its defense, now is that time." Citing the recent gains in Federalist strength in New York, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island, he spoke against apathy and cautioned, "It is not impossible for them [the Federalists] to regain their former ascendancy, unless proper exertions are made to counteract their machinations."¹⁰

Three months later Samuel Pleasants again expressed concern and apprehension at growing signs that some Republicans were falling under the spell of Federalist persuasion and argument. "An enemy in disguise, is more apt to succeed in his efforts than an open foe," warned Pleasants, "and that they [the Federalists] are enemies in masque [sic] can no longer be doubted. Their unremitting exertion to bring the administration into disrepute, is a fact that speaks trumpet-tongued against the deep malignity of their measures. . . . [which stand as] opposeless testimony of

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid., May 20, 1808.

their Jeffersonian hatred, and revolutionary designs." Invoking the public's veneration for the Revolutionary heroes who opposed British tyranny, Pleasants cried out, "Voice of the days of old, let us hear you -- awake the soul of '76."¹¹

In a final exhortation of Virginians ten days before the November election, Pleasants urged the voters to be vigilant on November seventh and solemnly declared, "On that day the fate of republicanism, the honor of the nation, and the character of the state may perhaps, depend on your conduct. . . . The course which you have to pursue on the 7th of November is lighted up with the clearest reason and the purest patriotism. You will virtually decide on that day, whether you have been, and whether you are now friendly to the administration of Mr. Jefferson -- that administration which has beamed with so much virtue, which has been venerated with so much love, and which is now about to close with so much glory." Declaring that Virginia was famous for its firm support of Republicanism, Pleasants cited a current phrase of fidelity, "True as a Virginian," and urged all Virginians to vote Republican.¹²

EDITORIAL ATTACK ON AND DEFENSE OF JEFFERSON

Richmond's only Federalist newspaper of 1808 was also quite vocal on the issues of the day, especially on those concerning President

¹¹Ibid., August 16, 1808.

¹²Ibid., October 28, 1808.

Jefferson. In mid-March the Virginia Gazette and General Advertiser published a letter from a British citizen who felt that Jefferson's message to Congress had placed America in the camp of Britain's enemies. "The old world and the new are now against two tiny islands," declared this correspondent. "However, like Jason defeated the Hydra, so will Britain defeat her enemies."¹³

Three days later Augustine Davis printed a proposed "amendment" to the Constitution which had been submitted to him in bitter sarcasm by one of his readers. Capitalizing on the current Madison-Monroe controversy and seeking to discredit Jefferson's success in curbing Federalists power, this embittered partisan caustically offered as an amendment to the Constitution, "That the present written constitution of the United States be abrogated, vacated, disannulled, repealed and sent to old Davy's Locker, and . . . the will of the majority in both Houses in Congress shall from henceforth be declared to all intents and purposes, the constitution of the United States." The author of this proposal further declared that his amendment should take effect only "provided that a majority of Congress agree to be influenced implicitly by the President, that the Presidency be continued in control of the republicans, and that the President be allowed to choose his successor."¹⁴

Epithets of "Tory" and "Jacobin" flew thick and fast in the presidential election of 1808, a fact which caused much discomfort and consternation for editor Davis of the Virginia Gazette. Defiantly he pro-

¹³Virginia Gazette, March 11, 1808.

¹⁴Ibid., March 15, 1808.

claimed in mid-August, ". . . if every man who disapproves of the conduct of the present administration, and has the independence to avow it, is to be dubbed a Tory, there are many thousands in the United States that will come under that denomination."¹⁵

As if in answer to the oft-repeated charge that the Federalist party was a party of ruin, Davis issued a similar indictment against Jefferson and his party while at the same time making a sly allusion to the old charge of "deism" which had been such a prominent issue in the election of 1800. "Long before the adoption of the federal constitution," asserted Davis, "there was in this country, a powerful party, at the head of whom was Mr. Jefferson, zealously advocating the . . . prostration of national credit; and the continuance of that disjointed governmental connexion [sic] of the states, so strikingly emblematical of the chimeras which invariably hurry a nation into anarchy. . . . This well attested fact, like the ark of God, is never touched by a democrat."¹⁶

Jefferson's appointment of William Duane as a Lieutenant Colonel of the First Regiment of Riflemen in the United States Army also drew heavy severe criticism from the Federalist press. In an editorial of disgust and utter disbelief the Virginia Gazette labeled Duane as a "known poltroon" who had been horsewhipped at the head of his regiment, an opportunist who had tried to involve America in a war against Britain

¹⁵ Ibid., August 19, 1808.

¹⁶ Ibid., August 23, 1808.

on the side of France, and a timid weakling who had termed as "friendly and liberal" the infamous, threatening letter of Champagny, Napoleon's Minister of Foreign Affairs. "For which of the above particulars has Mr. Jefferson rewarded him with a commission," demanded Davis who then petulantly declared, "Mr. Jefferson has long been trying how far this insulted country would go in its humiliation before him, and he seems by this last step, to have hit upon an expedient to push its forbearance to the uttermost. . . . An infamous, French mercenary printer, appointed to command a regiment in the standing army of the United States!!" Davis then predicted an eventual triumph of the Federalist cause and defiantly rebuked the Republicans, saying, "But the day of vengeance is at hand. . . . let him Jefferson tremble at its approach it will arrive too surely for him, before he escapes from the Presidency."¹⁷ Two weeks later the Virginia Gazette reprinted an article from the Baltimore Federalist Republican which stated caustically that "Since Jefferson has made Duane a Lieutenant Colonel, it is rumored that Tom Paine is to be appointed Chaplain to the army. . . ."¹⁸

Two years prior to the election of 1808, a serious quarrel had erupted between the United States and Spain over the Spanish owned Floridas. Difficulties here were similar to those with France over Louisiana in 1803, and Jefferson sought to duplicate his peaceful settlement of this explosive issue by purchasing Florida from Spain. However,

¹⁷Ibid., July 22, 1808.

¹⁸Ibid., August 2, 1808.

Spain at this time was weak and was subject to control by Napoleon. Thus, it was almost certain that any money which America paid to Spain would quickly find its way to France to be used by Napoleon to help finance his war with Britain. However, as the alternative for America was certain war for which she was ill prepared and in which she would be hopelessly outclassed, Jefferson felt that a peaceful purchase was more advantageous than war, and accordingly he requested that Congress appropriate two million dollars for negotiations with Spain. After a bitter battle in Congress the money was finally appropriated, but not before the Federalists had deliberately wrecked the chances of a successful negotiation for the purchase of Florida. Hence, two years later the Federalist press in a further attempt to impugn Jefferson's character, began raising questions about the two million dollars which had been appropriated and implied that Jefferson may have been involved in some questionable transaction.¹⁹ The Virginia Gazette vigorously assailed Jefferson in May of 1808 and exclaimed that the people should demand that the President account for the two million dollars which had been withdrawn from the treasury two years previously. "If the purity of our principles have been stained by its expenditure in scenes of intrigue and corruption abroad; or if our honor has been tarnished and our independence prostrated by employing it in the payment of tribute," objected Davis strenuously, "it is time

¹⁹ Bowers, Jefferson In Power, p. 327.

the people should disavow the act, and the guilty suffer the punishment which their crimes have merited."²⁰

A few months later Augustine Davis revived the issue of this two-million dollar appropriation and charged that it had been given to France in a measure sponsored by both Madison and Jefferson. In bitter condemnation this Federalist editor asserted, "The bill was finally passed in secret, after a violent opposition, and it was well known that it was in the handwriting of the President himself . . . and introduced into the House by one of the back stair gentlemen, who found no difficulty in accommodating the views of Mr. Jefferson, Mr. Madison and Talleyrand."²¹

In a counterattack to the charge that the Federalist party was a party of Tories, the Federalist press charged Jefferson with submission to France and sneered that he would not dare to take steps of conciliation with Britain before consulting France. Answering this Federalist slur, Thomas Ritchie roundly declared that instead of soothing the French by submission, Jefferson had resisted all French demands. Claimed Ritchie, "We should not now be astonished to see these gentlemen [the Federalists] reversing their attacks, and instead of charging Mr. Jefferson with a submissive acquiescence in the mandates of the French emperor, reproaching him with the exhibition of a high and inflexible spirit." Nothing suits these men, declared Ritchie, "They lay Mr. Jefferson on their bed of Procrustes -- If too long, he is lopt -- if too short, he is stretched."²²

²⁰Virginia Gazette, May 31, 1808.

²¹Ibid., September 9, 1808.

²²Enquirer, September 16, 1808.

The charge of submission to France had been raised early in the year by the Federalists who sought to exploit this as a major issue of the presidential campaign. In late January Samuel Pleasants assailed the "tools and hirlings of Britain" who with no evidence at all had asserted that the Embargo was dictated by France. Pointing out that France was greatly and adversely affected by the Embargo, the editor of the Virginia Argus contended that "federal printers. . . . circulate the absurd story for party purposes."²³

A week later the Virginia Gazette announced that Jefferson had made an alliance with France and cited as evidence a banquet of celebration held on board the French ship, Le Cygne, in Cherbourg harbor. According to this report, the banquet was attended by Captain Franklin Read of the American schooner, Revenge, and the decorations included busts of Napoleon and Jefferson placed at opposite ends of the table. As further evidence of this alleged clandestine alliance, Augustine Davis quoted a toast offered by the French captain who proposed, "To Jefferson . . . May the wise President of the United States long cherish for the love of his country, the love of the French name," another toast by Captain Read who declared, "To his Majesty the Emperor and King. . . . May his happy genius soon avenge the liberty of the seas, and make all nations one single family."²⁴

²³ Virginia Argus, June 29, 1808.

²⁴ Virginia Gazette, February 5, 1808.

Presenting Jefferson as a man who had become a slave to his own policies, the Federalist press portrayed him as an ineffectual Chief Magistrate who had now become dependent on the fortunes of Napoleon. Seeking to reinforce this image of Jefferson, Augustine Davis reprinted an editorial from the Boston Repository which states, "What we wish we are prone to believe. It is notorious that it is the settled opinion of Mr. Jefferson that Bonaparte will triumph over the powers of Europe, that England is already sinking under his overwhelming strength; and that we have only to avoid being drawn in the vortex. Under this awful impression Mr. Jefferson's whole object seems to have been to conciliate the mercy of the conqueror by the humility of his submission. . . . What Mr. Jefferson commenced from love, he now pursues from fear; and both of these passions must be supposed to have become the absolute law of his conduct."²⁵

The Federalists had played upon this same theme eight years earlier when, in an effort to exploit the public's fear of war, they had charged Jefferson with a desire for an alliance with France and a war with Britain. In an editorial of exultation, Samuel Pleasants in September of 1808 reminded the citizens of Virginia of these gloomy prognostications and exclaimed, "Though Mr. Madison has been a very confidential friend, and Secretary under Mr. Jefferson during the whole time, in which Mr. Jefferson has thus refrained from alliance with

²⁵Ibid., May 25, 1808.

France, and from war with England, yet a clamorous plea, that Jefferson and Madison and the majority of Congress, are under French influence, are caused to make the Welkin ring throughout the Union."²⁶

Commenting further on this in a review of Jefferson's eight years in office, editor Pleasants declared almost two weeks later, "We have now enjoyed for almost eight years, an administration, whose installment has been annually admired with the loudest applause. It is now, however, said to have abandoned its first principles, and to be under the influence of an European tyrant." Pleasants maintained that a violation of the Constitution must be proved in order to substantiate this charge and commented, "It is upon this ground that the friends of Mr. Jefferson ought to meet his opponents with peculiar confidence. . . ."²⁷

By far the most dominant and controversial issue of the campaign for the Presidency in 1808 was Jefferson's Embargo Act. As has been noted, this act ceased the flow of products to foreign ports from American farmers and merchants and ceased also the import of foreign goods needed and desired by the American public. Thus, the Embargo worked many hardships and deprivations on American consumers and workers. In a letter to Judge Thomas Cooper in February of 1806, Jefferson had explained his reasoning for feeling that such a drastic measure was a necessity for the preservation of American sovereignty and stated, "The love of peace which we sincerely feel and profess, has begun to produce an opinion in

²⁶Virginia Argus, September 2, 1808.

²⁷Ibid., September 13, 1806.

Europe that our government is entirely in Quaker principles, and will turn the left cheek when the right one has been smitten. This opinion must be corrected when just occasion arises, or we shall become the plunder of all nations."²⁸

Drastic as this measure was, it did not prevent Americans from obtaining the absolute necessities of life. Jefferson provided for the licensing of specific merchants for the import of the necessary amounts of such basic staples as flour and provided also for specific American ships to sail for foreign ports occasionally. The official policy of the Embargo was explained in a letter written to the Philadelphia Chamber of Commerce on January 12, 1808, by Secretary of State Madison who declared, "The President of the United States authorizes me to inform you that it is in contemplation to dispatch to Europe, for public purposes, a vessel or vessels, from time to time, during the period of the embargo -- and that previous notice of the time and place of departure will be given, with a view to the accommodation of merchants, and others in their foreign correspondence."²⁹

As a steadfast opponent of Jefferson and his administration, the Virginia Gazette and General Advertiser continually denounced the Embargo and sought to arouse and unite the public against it. In February of 1808 editor Davis printed in the columns of his paper a letter from a farmer in Albemarle County who with deep bitterness declared, "In these insane times there is no conjecturing what is best to be done with

²⁸Adrienne Koch, Jefferson and Madison (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1950). p. 247.

²⁹Virginia Argus, January 22, 1808.

produce, at least by the Planter and Farmer -- they seem to be left afloat on Mr. Jefferson's 'Tempestuous sea of liberty', without a Compass or Rudder, depending on a pilot who has lost his reckoning, if ever he had any for the interest of the community. Yet, like the Lamb they lick the hand that produces their destruction -- for the destruction of property in our neighborhood is incalculable."³⁰

Exactly one month later the Virginia Gazette again assailed the Embargo with an editorial borrowed from the Washington Federalist which declared that since the publication of Jefferson's Proclamation, the farmers, merchants, and mechanics had been in a "tortuous state of suspense" with a small hope that some influential Republicans would attempt to persuade Jefferson and the Congress to adopt a "less faltering policy". "Certain it is," claimed this editor, "that the embargo, that 'strong measure', has been laid, and its effects have been felt and will continue to be felt, more especially by ourselves, for a long time to come -- The law is now operating with distinctive violence upon the farmer, who cannot dispose of his superfluous productions, upon the sailor whose steady efforts have been paralyzed [sic] and who now subsists upon a precarious bounty; upon the merchant who must soon close his doors and shutters; and upon the mechanic whose family was cheered by the sound of his hammer and the stroke of his axe. . . . The empty parade, and boasted forbearance of Mr. Jefferson will eventuate in

³⁰Virginia Gazette, February 23, 1808.

nothing beneficial to the country -- On the contrary, the friends to a long sighted policy must wish our rulers to make a decided stand against whatsoever may infringe upon our rights or curtail the privileges to which we are entitled."³¹

Diligently sowing seeds of dissension in its campaign against the Embargo, the Virginia Gazette appealed the following month to the debt ridden citizens of Virginia and asserted that Jefferson had cited as one of the act's most salient points, its potential influence in persuading the people to settle points, its potential influence in persuading the people to settle their accounts.³² However, the Virginian, Richmond's most recently established paper, while not enthusiastic about the Embargo, urged all citizens to obey it "until it is changed".³³

In support of Jefferson and the Embargo, Thomas Ritchie of the Enquirer printed a letter from a correspondent in London who reported that the British merchants were submitting petitions to Parliament, asking that a settlement of differences be made with America so as to end the Embargo. Ritchie's accompanying commentary also mentioned another letter from London whose writer avered that another six months of the Embargo would bring Britain to terms.³⁴

Chiding those who complained of the hardships wrought by the Embargo, the Enquirer reminded its readers in May that the Fathers of the Republic had willingly given up the comforts of life to resist British injustice with a similar embargo in 1774. "In 1808 our govern-

³¹Ibid., March 23, 1808.

³²Ibid., April 15, 1808.

³³Virginian, April 12, 1808.

³⁴Enquirer, May 10, 1808.

ment has made the same solemn appeal to the patriotism of our countrymen," proclaimed Ritchie. "To rescue our party from the hands of licenced pirates, to save our national honor from the reproach of the universe, and to preserve us from war, it has asked of us to bear for a time the evils of the embargo." "Is there a man, the least gifted with patriotic feeling, that will not cheeffully acquiesce in the inconvenience of a measure, so powerfully recommended by every consideration of honor, of interest, and of prudence?" demanded this dauntless editor. "If there be such a man, let him . . . candidly confess, that his bosom has not inherited the spirit of his fathers!!"³⁵

Augustine Davis of the Virginia Gazette not only saw no patriotic virtue in observing the Embargo, but firmly believed that Jefferson and the Republican Congress were violating the Constitution and destroying the rights of American citizens. Of similar political persuasion was William Rind of the Washington Federalist whose editorials Davis often borrowed for his paper in Richmond. Therefore, it was not surprising to find in the Virginia Gazette in mid-May a denunciatory editorial written by William Rind who once again was attacking the Embargo. "One would have thought that Congress, with their four embargo laws, had done enough towards the annihilation, without the aid of illegal executive influence;" declared this scathing editorial, "but it appears

³⁵Ibid., May 14, 1808.

Mr. Jefferson is not content with the crippled and embarrassed state in which No. 4 left the coasting trade, but has seized upon a pretext furnished him by an arbitrary disgraceful provision to the act, to destroy it altogether.³⁶ Rind concluded by stating that Jefferson's hatred of commerce had not yet been appeased.

In an effort to explain the necessity for the drastic embargo, the Enquirer reported in late May that more than seventy-five merchant ships had been seized and condemned by Britain in a two week period even before the Orders in Council were issued. "How many American ships have been saved from a similar fate by the Embargo?" asked Ritchie. "This one argument alone is sufficient to establish its advantages beyond the possibility of a doubt," he further asserted, and then added that Jefferson was not responsible for Britain's troubles in Europe and therefore could not be blamed for the present state of affairs.³⁷

In quite a different mood the Virginia Gazette assailed Jefferson in late May and charged him with violating the Constitution by giving preference to individual merchants in certain ports. Pointing out that the Constitution prohibited the federal government from treating with partiality the ports of one state over those of another, editor Davis charged that not only was Jefferson doing this, but that the merchants favored by Jefferson were charging whatever they could get for their scarce products.³⁸

³⁶Virginia Gazette, May 17, 1808.

³⁷Enquirer, May 21, 1808.

³⁸Virginia Gazette, May 27, 1808.

On the last day of May in 1808, Samuel Pleasants, in support of the Embargo, printed a letter written to a Richmond citizen by a merchant in London who substantiated the wisdom in the measure with his comment, "I perfectly agree with you respecting Mr. Jefferson; and I may say ALL here, who know America, agree that the Embargo was a wise measure to save her from hostility with either party--if it was not adopted from foreign influence."³⁹ However, the Virginia Gazette added strength to the opposite point of view three days later when it printed a letter written by another London merchant who declared, "I do not see that it [the Embargo] is likely to terminate from any concession from this quarter; as in our present situation everything is to be sacrificed to our security and existence as a nation."⁴⁰

On June 17, the Virginia Argus and the Virginia Gazette again defended and attacked the Embargo. Samuel Pleasants stressed its importance in keeping America out of war and commented, "The Embargo, it is said, is distressing-----Agreed---and so is the drawing of a tooth---but we all agree to laugh at the man who shrinks from the extraction of a torturing, decayed tooth, because the operation is painful."⁴¹ The Virginia Gazette reported that the Embargo was ruining many farmers, although Jefferson and his friends were insisting that the measure was for the public good. Referring to the faith of Saint Paul, Augustine

³⁹Virginia Argus, July 1, 1808.

⁴⁰Virginia Gazette, June 3, 1808.

⁴¹Virginia Argus, June 17, 1808.

Davis asked and answered his own rhetorical question: "' Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?'. . . God forbid! . . . Mr. Jefferson appears to reverse the doctrine of St. Paul by the Embargo. . . . his friends tell us it will be for our good . . . and is the salvation of our country . . . whilst we daily experience the fatal consequences of Mr. Jefferson's strong measure (as he terms it)."⁴²

Although supported by a large segment of American society, the Embargo found widespread opposition throughout the states. Lashing out at these dissident malcontents in mid-summer, Samuel Pleasants thundered in his columns of July 1, "It is almost impossible that any man capable of considering our foreign relations, to refuse his approbation of the Embargo, unless he is the dupe of party calculations, or animated with a spirit of opposition which would revel in his disunion, and gladly offer the horrors of civil commotion as incense at the shrine of departed federalism."⁴³ Expounding this view further almost three weeks later, Pleasants rebuked those who pretended friendship for Jefferson's administration but who furtively worked against it, trying to render it unpopular by making sly innuendos against it. In a sound reprimand Pleasants denounced the "little war-party in the United States who expect to excite distraction by their clamors for war, and who wish to revive the odious federal charge of timidity in Mr. Jefferson."⁴⁴

⁴²Virginia Gazette, June 17, 1808.

⁴³Virginia Argus, July 1, 1808.

⁴⁴Ibid., July 19, 1808.

Although a considerable number of British merchants were actively campaigning to have their government negotiate with the United States for the repeal of the Embargo, a large segment of the American population, notably in the New England states, flouted the law and actively undermined Jefferson's efforts to preserve America's neutrality. Even the courts of the New England region contributed to this sectional anarchy by interfering with the duties of the port collectors and issuing decrees of restraint against these public officials. Thus it was, that the Virginia Gazette reprinted in August a derisive editorial which it had borrowed from the Baltimore Federalist Republican and which scornfully stated, "It is that his Excellency [Jefferson] was so overjoyed at the late news of a tumultuous assembling in Yorkshire, that he has ordered a new pair of red breeches to be made upon the strength of it. He has directed another order to be issued to the Collectors in contravention of Judge Johnson's decision, with special direction to the little kings and tyrants of his own making commanding gun-boats, to disregard all process from the civil authority."⁴⁵

Some of the more radical New England Federalists were not content with open defiance of the Embargo and advocated in specially called meetings the separation of the New England states from the rest of the nation and their reunion with the British empire. Commenting on this state of affairs, Samuel Pleasants berated these instigators and contemptuously declared, "The measures which have recently been adopted by

⁴⁵Virginia Gazette, August 16, 1808.

some of the northern meetings, evince a temper of mind much to be lamented, but more to be despised. It may be true that they suffer extremely from the evils of commercial suspense, but they are certainly out of their wits, when they ascribe these evils entirely to the Embargo, and not to the blockading decrees of Europe."⁴⁶

The partisan papers of both sides continued to print letters from British citizens in order to support their own particular views of Jefferson and the Embargo. Such a letter was printed the last of August without comment by the Virginia Gazette which tacitly seemed to present it as absolute proof of the ineffectiveness of the Embargo. The correspondent, a gentleman in Liverpool, had written in part, "You would have been surprised to see what little effect is produced in this country by the embargo, any further than a little speculation in the articles which are imported from America; but nothing to make the country feel which I believe Mr. Jefferson thought, we should do when it was laid on, and that we could scarcely exist without trade with America."⁴⁷ As if in answer to this assertion, the Virginia Argus insisted two weeks later that the Embargo had accomplished its purpose and declared, "The embargo was intended to preserve peace. It has kept us thus far in peace and safety; a fact, the benefits of which are too much felt to be reasoned upon."⁴⁸

⁴⁶Virginia Argus, August 23, 1808.

⁴⁷Virginia Gazette, August 30, 1808.

⁴⁸Virginia Argus, September 16, 1808.

In further support of Jefferson and his foreign trade policy the Virginia Argus one week later compared the Embargo of 1776 with the present Embargo and deplored the lack of patriotism at present. "There never was a government since the formation of society, whether despotic, monarchical or republican, that was administered so as to please everybody, or that did not commit some act which would give plausibility to censure," declared Pleasants. "While we admit this, we can but ask if there ever was any administration which pleased so many as that of Mr. Jefferson's? If his course has not been in every particular, suited to the fancy of every individual, surely while they deny infallibility, they should make due allowance to this national frailty. We can but repeat, for it is a question which we delight to ask, where upon the annals of ancient or modern times will you find an administration more pure, more satisfactory, and more popular than that of Mr. Jefferson? It is even confessed by our enemies abroad -- the very people who feel the force of his policy."⁴⁹

With the approach of the opening session of Congress, Samuel Pleasants commented on the certain, upcoming Congressional debates which would center around the Embargo, and he flatly declared that the opponents of the Embargo were not patriots, but desired instead only to discredit Jefferson's administration.⁵⁰ Referring to the Embargo as a necessary measure of self preservation, Pleasants noted that it had been

⁴⁹Ibid., September 23, 1808.

⁵⁰Ibid., October 28, 1808.

assailed by every offensive weapon which the enemies of Jefferson could invent and firmly asserted, "Had it not been for British emissaries who have been fostered in our bosoms, for unprincipled renegades who have neither character nor country to lose, and for ambitious men among us who are thirsting for power, regardless of the means by which it may be acquired, we should ere this time have brought our enemies to our feet."⁵¹

As the situation grew more serious, President Jefferson felt constrained to order American troops to a state of readiness, a development which Augustine Davis seized upon as a convenient, ready-made issue for Federalist propaganda. With self-righteous indignation he exclaimed in early November, "It seems that orders from Washington City arrived here on Friday last, for the immediate raising and equipping upwards of Ten thousand Militia to be held in readiness to march at a moment's warning!! Conjecture is all alive as to the use intended by Emperor Thomas for this hasty call."⁵² Davis added caustically that even Bonaparte had always given a reason for calling out his militia, and he concluded by beseeching Washington to intercede with God for the safety of the country.

Later in November the Virginia Argus reported that the British were ready to make a treaty concerning the Embargo but would do so only if the Federalists were put back in office. "With men of their own stamp," charged Pleasants, "they would treat, and come to a settlement

⁵¹Ibid., November 8, 1808.

⁵²Virginia Gazette, November 8, 1808.

of differences, on their own terms; but with such stiff necked and obstinate enemies of slavery and tribute, as Jefferson and Madison, it is not practicable for them to make any bargain."⁵³

By the end of 1808, smuggling of goods had become a widespread, lucrative business among the seafaring populace of New England and Canada. In a taunting editorial reprinted from a New York paper, the Virginia Gazette and General Advertiser declared with scorn, "We understand from a respectable source, that the owners of vessels in Halifax and St. John's, have a valuable piece of plate in forwardness, which is to be presented to President Jefferson, as soon as his term is up, as an acknowledgement for the benefit they have received from the American Embargo."⁵⁴ The growing prevalency of smuggling had been alluded to earlier in the year by the Virginia Gazette which reported that a standing toast in Canada was "Long life to Jefferson and the Embargo".⁵⁵

The attitude of Richmond's Republican press toward the Federalists and their constant criticism of Jefferson's administration in 1808 was aptly summarized in October by Samuel Pleasants who disdainfully remarked that the Federalists "sketch off the unfortunate state of the times, with a great deal of readiness and vivacity, under a hope that everything will be ascribed to Mr. Jefferson and the administration. - - - They triumphantly exclaim to the republic, that you have brought us into this

⁵³Virginia Argus, November 18, 1808.

⁵⁴Virginia Gazette, December 20, 1808.

⁵⁵Ibid., July 15, 1808.

situation and you must get us out of it.' This is a poor and miserable subterfuge for argument."⁵⁶

JEFFERSON AND THE PRESIDENTIAL CONTESTANTS OF 1803

Long before the presidential election of 1803, Thomas Jefferson had decided against running for a third term in office. In a letter written to John Taylor of Caroline on January 6, 1805, Jefferson announced his rejection of serving again as President and stated that although he had previously favored one set term of seven years for any one President, he was now satisfied with a system which allowed for two terms of four years each.⁵⁷ Jefferson's decision to decline a third term as the occupant of the White House was made public by the Enquirer in May of 1805 and was received with regret by Republicans and with jeers from the Federalists.⁵⁸

The void left by Jefferson's withdrawal of his candidacy was filled by two capable Republican statesmen, Madison and Monroe, both of whom were loyal Virginians. The split in Virginia's Republican party, caused by the vehement supporters of both these candidates, was of a serious, fundamental nature and threatened to develop into an irreparable breach until Monroe ceased to press his campaign later in the year. Monroe's name had been placed in nomination by his friends and supporters

⁵⁶Virginia Argus, October 14, 1803.

⁵⁷Ford, The Writings of Thomas Jefferson, VIII, 339.

⁵⁸Woodfin, "Contemporary Opinion," pp. 70-71.

who felt that he had been treated unfairly by Jefferson's refusal to submit to the Senate the treaty negotiated by Monroe with Britain in the wake of the Chesapeake Affair. However, in truth the treaty was unacceptable as it made no provision for the cessation of British confiscation and impressment of American ships and crews. As such, it would surely have been rejected by the Senate. Knowing this, Jefferson withheld the treaty from the Senate in order to spare Monroe the embarrassment of a Congressional rebuff. However, Monroe construed Jefferson's action as an indication of a loss of confidence in him, and he was even more keenly disappointed by Jefferson's support of Madison. He therefore "lent himself to the opposition plans in a somewhat bewildered and vacillating fashion, feeling little pleasure in traveling a political road apart from Jefferson."⁵⁹ The Federalist press was quick to make political capital of this Republican schism, and the Virginia Gazette throughout the year supported Monroe over Madison, pleading that the former had been robbed of honor by Jefferson while the latter was a traitor to the Federalists.

The Virginia Argus, taking note of this Federalist trend, stated with sarcasm, "We are now given to understand that Messrs. Jefferson and Madison are chargeable with all the present distresses of our country, which would have been avoided, if the treaty negotiated by Colonel Monroe had not been rejected for the insidious purpose of preventing his

⁵⁹Koch, Jefferson and Madison, p. 252.

success, and promoting that of Madison in the approaching contest for the Presidential chair . . . "60 Editor Pleasants asserted that Jefferson and the Congress were not obligated to accept the treaty just because the terms therein were the best that Britain would give. He stressed that the treaty had not been rejected for election purposes and avowed that if Monroe had been a presidential candidate at the time he submitted the treaty to Jefferson, his popularity would not have been helped by the treaty. Observing that Jefferson and Madison had both always applauded Monroe's conduct, this tireless defender of Jefferson declared that Monroe had done his duty in sending the treaty to the United States, and Jefferson had done his in rejecting it.⁶¹

The Virginian took issue in March with a current rumor that Jefferson had lost confidence in Monroe and retorted that not only had Jefferson not withdrawn his confidence after the treaty, but had instead given new powers and instructions to Monroe.⁶² In further support of Jefferson in the matter of this rejected treaty the Virginia Argus printed a letter from a correspondent who signed himself as "An American of '76" and who stated, "Mr. Jefferson's refusal of the late British treaty, is precisely what Washington would have done. The embargo and preparations for war are also measures which, were he alive, would receive his warmest approbation."⁶³

⁶⁰Virginia Argus, February 16, 1803.

⁶¹Ibid.

⁶²Virginian, March 11, 1803.

⁶³Virginia Argus, March 11, 1803.

Samuel Pleasants, in an editorial designed to help heal the breach between the warring Republican factions, declared that Monroe, like Jefferson and Madison, preferred peace with all the world. He denounced the Federalists as "unprincipled intriguers" who were supporting Monroe for the sole purpose of destroying first Madison and then Monroe himself. In a stern rebuke to the Federalists Pleasants exclaimed, "How abominable it is in them to pretend that he Monroe will, if elected, desert his former principles, and carry on the government on some new plan, in opposition to that excellent one which Thomas Jefferson has marked out for the imitation of his successors!"⁶⁴

In its first month of publication the Spirit of '76 came out in staunch support of Monroe and printed a series of letters which had been a part of the personal correspondence between Monroe and Jefferson. The contents of these letters furnished irrefutable proof that Jefferson had always retained his affection and friendship for Monroe, and the Spirit of '76 pledged that although Monroe was no longer an active contestant in the current election, his friends would continue to fight for him.⁶⁵

As the election date of November seventh drew closer, the Virginia Gazette, having already resigned itself to another Republican victory, nonetheless appealed with bravado to Virginians and stated defiantly, "We declare it as our opinion, that if the federalists of Virginia would unite, and form a ticket for electors of President and Vice President of

⁶⁴Ibid., March 15, 1808.

⁶⁵Spirit of '76, September 18, 1808.

the U.S. that it would be handsomely supported by the People. . . . and although we may not undertake to say that the federalists would certainly succeed, yet, their vote would be so respected as to cause the new President, (whoever he may be) to know (which has not been the case for more than seven years) that the principles of Washington are not entirely abandoned in the Ancient Dominion, the declaration of many to the contrary notwithstanding.⁶⁶ Contrarily, the Republican press, assured of victory, had only to choose between its two front-running candidates. Thomas Ritchie urged all citizens to vote for the electors of Madison, stressing his eight years of experience under Jefferson and confidently declaring that he would continue Jefferson's policies.⁶⁷ However, even with the November election over and Madison assured of victory at the following month's meeting of the Electoral College, the Virginia Gazette and General Advertiser clung tenaciously to the charge that Jefferson had undermined Monroe's bid for the Presidency by purposely asking Britain for concessions which he knew it would not grant, in order to discredit Monroe.⁶⁸

As 1803 drew to a close, Thomas Jefferson, tired and weary of the Presidential responsibilities which he had shouldered for almost eight years and discouraged by an often hostile press, was looking forward to retirement in the peaceful, scenic surroundings of his beloved Monticello.

⁶⁶Virginia Gazette, October 11, 1803.

⁶⁷Enquirer, October 25, 1803.

⁶⁸Virginia Gazette, November 15, 1803.

SUMMARY

The attitude of Richmond's press toward Thomas Jefferson during his campaign for the presidency in 1800 and throughout his administration was consistently centered in one of two extremes. In their constant praise and defense of Jefferson, Republican editors Meriwether Jones, Thomas Ritchie, and Samuel Pleasants, Jr., seemed to take the position that Jefferson could do no wrong, whereas Richmond's Federalist editor, Augustine Davis, was just as consistent in his denunciation of Jefferson, thereby seeming to suggest that he could do nothing right. In all three elections of this first decade of the century, Jefferson was presented to the public by the Republican press of Richmond as the spokesman and champion of the common man who stood as a bulwark between the people's hard-won liberties and the Federalist forces of aristocratic rule. In these same elections Richmond's Federalist press presented to the public an entirely different Jefferson, one who as leader of the uncultured, uneducated masses was determined to destroy the Constitution of the United States and substitute mob rule in its stead.

Several continuous themes ran through all three elections. In each, the Republican papers of Richmond charged the Federalists with monarchical designs and an admiration of everything British, while the Richmond Federalists countered with the charge that Jefferson and the Republicans were subservient to France. Inconsistency was a favorite charge of both parties, especially of the Republicans in 1800 and of the Federalists in 1804. Jefferson's character, integrity, and conduct, both public and private, were bitterly assailed during this period by the Federalists and were praised with equal fervor by the Republicans.

Of those issues which were less constant in the Richmond press during the election years of 1800, 1804, and 1808 was that of Jefferson's religious views which were exploited unmercifully by the Richmond Federalists in 1800 but which received scant attention in the other two elections.

Each of these three elections had its own issues which were of great interest only in the given current campaign. Such an issue was the Sedition Law in the campaign of 1800. This law, by which the Federalists sought to stifle Republican criticism, was feebly defended by Augustine Davis and severely condemned by editors Jones and Pleasants who made it a major issue of the campaign.

In 1804 two issues of major importance were raised by Jefferson's purchase of the Louisiana territory and the current debate over the proposed amendment to the Constitution. Richmond's Federalist press denounced the former as an example of Jefferson's plans for a personal empire and denounced the latter as a Republican scheme for retaining office. Both of these measures were applauded by Richmond's Republican press which considered the Louisiana Purchase as a shrewd business venture and the proposed amendment as a much needed improvement of the Constitution.

The major issue of 1808 was the Embargo which Jefferson considered necessary although unpopular, and which cost Jefferson much of the popular support which he had enjoyed in the two previous elections. Even though Jefferson was not a candidate for re-election in this campaign, his administration was on trial, and Augustine Davis gleefully exploited public resentment of the Embargo in his derisive editorials. The Republican

papers of Richmond played upon Virginians' patriotism and reminded them that their fathers had made similar sacrifices in opposing British tyranny a generation earlier.

Although Jefferson was often attacked viciously and unfairly by the Federalist press of Richmond and other cities, Jefferson never used the powers of the presidency to muzzle the press as did his predecessor with the infamous sedition law of 1798. Instead, due to Jefferson's fundamental belief in the democratic right of free expression, he countered Federalist charges either with silence or the publication of the truth. Thus it can accurately be stated that "freedom of the press in America owes as much, if not more, to Thomas Jefferson than to any other public man. Certainly it owes more to him than to any other President."¹

¹Pollard, The Presidents and the Press, p.52.

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