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EARLY OPPOSITION TO
THOMAS HART BENTON

BY

C. H. MCCLURE

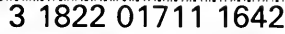
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EARLY OPPOSITION TO THOMAS HART BENTON

By C. H. McCLURE

Professor of History

Warrensburg (Mo.) State Normal School



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EARLY OPPOSITION TO THOMAS HART BENTON.

C. H. McCLURE.

In February, 1850, Thomas Hart Benton was defeated for reelection to the Senate of the United States. The contest in which Benton lost his seat in the Senate has several characteristics which make it stand out prominently in the history of the State and of the Nation. The passage of the Jackson resolutions marks a definite time at which the contest seemed to begin. Two questions which later became of great significance to the entire nation—the right of Congress to prohibit slavery in a territory, and disunion—were the issues. The struggle was marked by one of the most spectacular and vindictive speaking campaigns in our history. The apparent suddenness, the later significance of the issues involved, and the spectacular nature of the contest seem to have satisfied all investigators that the overthrow of Benton was to be attributed entirely to this contest and the issues involved in it. Thus Meigs, Rogers, and Roosevelt, the three biographers of Benton, agree that after his first election in 1820 he was elected practically without opposition until his defeat in 1850;¹ while Ray in his "*Repeal of the Missouri Compromise*" places the beginning of the contest in 1844,

¹Meigs, *Life of Benton*, p. 407f; Rogers, *Life of Benton*, p. 36; Roosevelt, *Life of Benton*, p. 351.

but assigns the annexation of Texas with special emphasis on slavery and disunion as the first cause of the Democratic schism in Missouri.²

The purpose of this study is to find the real beginnings of the opposition to Benton which culminated in his overthrow; also to find the beginnings of the factions in the Democratic party in the State and the issues upon which the division was made. The Missouri sources show that Benton did have trouble in being reelected in 1844 and that there was a serious effort to overthrow him; that the dominant party began to break into factions long before 1844 and that the break came upon the currency question which was later allied to certain constitutional problems; and finally that the Texas issue was seized upon by the already well organized opposition to Benton, and effectively used against him. This study attempts to present these developments as they arose; first the split upon the currency issue, then the constitutional problems which were injected into the contest, the alignment of factions in 1842 followed by the open assault upon Benton, the contest for the control of party machinery, and finally the campaign of 1844 which resulted in the election of Benton.

BANKING AND CURRENCY IN MISSOURI, 1837-1843.

The purpose of this study is to describe the opposition to Thomas H. Benton which attempted and almost succeeded in effecting his overthrow in 1844 on the occasion of his fifth and last election to the United States Senate. Banking and currency were the chief issues in this fight against Benton. Therefore, Benton's policy upon these questions, the local Missouri problems connected with them, and the legislation and public opinion concerning them must be explained before a discussion of the actual fight is attempted. Banking and currency were national questions as well as state questions and as Benton's chief work was in the United States Senate he looked upon these questions from the national viewpoint. Among those opposed to the second United States Bank

²Ray, *Repeal of the Missouri Compromise*, pp. 27-71.

probably Benton was the only leader who had a clear-cut, definite, constructive, currency policy. At any rate he had such a policy. Benton's plan was to divorce the government from all banks, to provide for the deposit of the government funds at the mints and in subtreasuries, and to encourage the use of hard money in every possible way. He believed that small notes banished silver and gold from circulation; that they were easily counterfeited and circulated among people not skilled in detecting counterfeit; and that they threw the burdens and losses of the paper money system occasioned by depreciation, upon the laboring and small dealing portion of the community, who had no share in the profits of banking and should not be made to share its losses.³

Benton failed to get his currency plans adopted by the United States government and turned to Missouri as a sort of experiment station where he could try out his theories of currency. His influence in the Missouri General Assembly was all powerful,⁴ and his political friends at Jefferson City wrote, at least, a part of his ideas concerning a bank into the charter of the Bank of Missouri. One clause prohibited the issue of notes of a less denomination than ten dollars. The capital stock was to be five million dollars, and one-half was to be reserved for the use of the State. The bank was to be managed by a president and twelve directors. The president and six of the directors were to be elected by the General Assembly every two years.⁵ The charter provided that the bank should furnish the governor a statement of all its affairs semi-annually; that the governor should, after the August election, appoint a committee of three newly elected members of the General Assembly, not stockholders in the bank, who should examine the bank and report its general condition to the General Assembly when it convened;⁶ and that either house of the General Assembly might appoint a committee to investigate the affairs of the bank.⁷ The charter also contained the following clause: "Whenever said bank shall

³*Thirty Years' View*, I. p. 158; Meigs, *Life of Benton*, p. 260.

⁴Darby, *Personal Recollections*, p. 181.

⁵Charter of the Bank, *Mo. Session Acts*, 1836-37, pp. 12-28.

⁶*Ibid.*, Sec. 43.

⁷*Ibid.*, Sec. 55.

stop specie payment, the charter shall cease and determine; and it shall be placed in the hands of trustees appointed by the governor to settle the affairs of the bank." From the above provisions of the charter of the bank two conclusions are evident; first, that the governor and General Assembly thru the power to elect officers, require statements and appoint investigating committees, could control the general policy of the bank; second, that the very existence of the bank required that it should not suspend specie payment.

On the 9th day of October, 1839, the banks of Philadelphia suspended specie payment. They were followed by all the banks of the South and West except the Bank of Missouri. On November 12th the directors of the Bank of Missouri met and passed a resolution "That the bank will in the future receive from and pay only to individuals her own notes and specie or the notes of specie paying banks."⁸ There was a general movement of specie to the East and the notes of the Bank of Missouri together with all the specie available were not sufficient to meet any considerable amount of the merchants' obligations daily falling due. The notes of banks of other states formed the greater part of the local currency. By this act of the Bank the notes of all suspended banks lost their character as money for the payment of debts. Great excitement was aroused among the merchantile and industrial classes. The emergency was so great that several of the wealthier citizens offered to bind themselves legally to indemnify the bank for any loss it might sustain by depreciation of the notes heretofore received, if it would rescind its action. The directors of the bank held a meeting but determined to adhere to their original action.⁹ When this became known an indignation meeting was called and the action of the Bank directors was severely condemned. Resolutions were adopted recommending that those doing business with the Bank withdraw their deposits. As a result many of the heaviest depositors withdrew their funds and deposited them with some of the insurance companies or other corporations. On the opposite side of the Mississippi River and in

⁸Scharf, *History of St. Louis*, p. 1373.

⁹*Ibid.*

territory commercially tributary to St. Louis were numerous banks, practically without restrictions and often disregarding those which were provided, issuing a great amount of paper currency of all denominations.¹⁰ The inevitable result followed. Small foreign bank notes came in in large quantities. Clearly, the commercial needs of St. Louis together with the legal restrictions imposed upon and by the Bank of Missouri created opportunities for lucrative illegal banking. These opportunities were made use of by the so-called insurance companies and other corporations of St. Louis, and great quantities of cheap fluctuating currency were forced into circulation by these institutions.¹¹ In the early forties heavy issues of shinplasters (warrants issued by an incorporated political body, usually a city or county) further complicated the currency questions.¹² There were now so many kinds of paper money subject to continual fluctuations that elaborate quotations of notes were required, and brokers had a rich harvest in negotiating them. The business of these insurance companies and brokers was very profitable. They became so strong that, it seems, they were enabled largely to control the political leaders as well as the press of both political parties in the city. In these companies and their following is to be found the most determined and deepseated opposition to the aggressive hard money legislative program, and especially to Benton who was recognized by all as the leader of the movement.

The exclusion from the State of this foreign paper currency became the chief object of Benton and his followers in Missouri politics. Benton wanted to test his hard money theory in Missouri but that was impossible as long as cheap paper money from other states could circulate freely. From 1838 to 1843 at each session of the General Assembly bills were introduced for this purpose. The first bill was introduced by Redman, of Howard county, in 1838. It made the passing or receiving of any bank note or paper currency of twenty dollars or less (Bank of Missouri notes excepted) a

¹⁰Knox, *History of Banking*, pp. 702-747.

¹¹*Jefferson Inquirer*, Dec. 17, 1840.

¹²*Ibid.*, Dec. 30, 1841, Feb. 24, 1842.

misdeemeanor with heavy penalties attached. It also required all money brokers or exchange dealers to pay a license of \$1,000 annually, and subjected them to a fine of \$10,000 for violation of the act. The bill failed to pass.¹³ In 1840 Governor Reynolds in his inaugural address urged the passage of such a measure.¹⁴ Following this recommendation Redman introduced another currency bill similar to his former one, but without such severe penalties. However, any citizen who passed paper currency was liable to the amount passed. This bill passed the House but in the Senate was postponed until the next Legislature by a majority of one vote.¹⁵ In 1842, Houston, of Lincoln County, introduced two bills for the purpose of correcting the currency troubles. These bills again prohibited the passing of paper currency, and any one asking a license for any trade or profession, or qualifying for public office was required to take an oath that he had not violated this law. These bills were buried in committee and in their place two bills were reported back by C. F. Jackson. These Jackson bills did not make the passing or receiving of paper currency by an ordinary citizen unlawful as the previous bills had sought to do. They confined their penalties to corporations, money lenders, and exchange brokers. These bills passed February 17th and 23rd, 1843.¹⁶

The authorship of or at least the responsibility for these bills which he never denied was brought home to Benton in the following manner. Edward Bates,¹⁷ of St. Louis, later Attorney General in Lincoln's Cabinet, in answer to a letter of inquiry from the *Palmyra Whig*, wrote that it was generally understood that Benton was the author of the Redman bill of 1838, but that he had no definite knowledge relative to the matter. However, he knew that Benton was the author of the Houston bills. Houston had told him that Benton had written the bills and that afterwards he (Bates) had seen the

¹³Redman bill; Printed in *The Missouri Register*, Apr. 9, 1844.

¹⁴Inaugural Address, *House Journal*, 1840, pp. 28-33.

¹⁵*Missouri Register*, Feb. 25, 1841.

¹⁶*Mo. Session Acts*, 1842-43.

¹⁷*Columbia Statesman*, Feb. 23, 1844. The letter of Bates is copied from the *Palmyra Whig*.

original copies in Benton's hand writing in Houston's office in Troy. After the appearance of Bates' letter, the *Missourian*, the Benton paper of St. Louis, made the following comment: "It is perfectly well known that Col. Benton wrote letters and sent drafts of his bills to his friends at Jefferson City, to let them see precisely what his ideas were. Those letter and bills were not secrets, but were frank and free communications, for the inspection of all who chose to see them. They were seen and read generally and with more or less alteration were adopted and presented by members." These bills were designated as "Bills of Pains and Penalties" by the Whig and Anti-Benton, or Soft Democratic, press. This expression and "test oathes," referring to the oaths required by the Houston bills, became the chief campaign slogans of the opposition to Benton.

CONSTITUTIONAL QUESTIONS.

The question of currency was the really vital political issue upon which the opposition to Benton arose in Missouri. Other questions were dragged in, but the real alignment came on the currency question. To Benton this was the all important question of state policy. His political friends in the state government took up his side of the question and fought it to a successful conclusion, so far as law was concerned, and Benton, no doubt, considered himself under obligation to them for doing so. On other questions in which he was not personally concerned Benton incurred bitter opposition for the sake of his political friends who had aided in securing his favorite currency laws.

These questions were the limitation of the term of judges, the reapportionment of representation in the lower house of the General Assembly, and the adoption of the district system in the election of congressmen. The first two questions caused a demand for a constitutional convention. The life term of the judiciary was contrary to the ideas of Jacksonian Democracy which demanded that the offices be passed around. The constitution created a Supreme Court and gave the General Assembly power to create circuit courts, as well as inferior courts. The constitution also provided that

all judges should be appointed by the governor and should hold office for life. The dissatisfaction was chiefly with the life term provision. As the judges were all Democrats the Whigs were naturally willing to see the life term abolished. This argument for a constitutional convention appealed with much force to many people. The Democrats tried, too late, to amend the constitution and thus remove the question of judicial term as a cause for calling a constitutional convention. The legislature passed an amendment in 1842 reducing the term of the supreme court judges to ten years and all others to six years. The amendment contained a clause vacating the offices of all judges on the first day of January 1845.¹⁸ Before the amendment could become a part of the constitution it had to be passed again by the legislature of 1844. As its passage would have given the governor the opportunity of immediately filling all judicial offices of the State, and thus would have given him a chance to reward his political friends, the Hards, the Whigs voted solidly against the amendment when it came up for second passage, and it failed to receive the necessary two thirds vote.¹⁹

A large and growing body of voters were demanding a constitutional convention for the purpose of securing a readjustment of representation in the General Assembly. The constitution of the State contained the following clause: "Each county shall have at least one representative but the whole number of representatives shall never exceed one hundred".²⁰ The result of this clause was a growing inequality in representation. In 1820 the fifteen counties were represented by forty-three members in the House of Representatives: in sixteen years (1836) the number of counties had increased to sixty and the number of representatives to ninety-eight. The legislature of 1840-41 increased the number of counties to seventy-seven and the number of representatives to one hundred, the constitutional limit. The Legislature of 1842-43 created nineteen new counties and as each county had to have one representative, the next legis-

¹⁸*Laws of Missouri*, 1843, p. 9.

¹⁹*Mo. House Journal*, 1844-45, pp. 296-297; *Senate Journal*, 1844-45, pp. 99f., 108.

lature in making the apportionment was compelled to reduce all counties to one representative except Platte, which was given two, and St. Louis, which was given four. The inequality of representation was now so great that Caldwell county with a total population of 1583 had one representative while Boone county with a total population of 14,290 had only one representative, and St. Louis county with a population of 47,668 had only four, or approximately one representative for each 12,000 persons. This inequality tended to become greater as the population of St. Louis increased much faster than that of the frontier counties.²¹ The older and more populous counties were usually Whig. The new counties were Democratic. The Whigs of the older counties soon saw what must happen to them as the number of counties were increased. Therefore, as early as 1832 the Whig members began to fight the creation of new counties.²² But the Democratic majorities in the Legislature together with the fact that the new counties were sure to be Democratic made their fight a hopeless one from the beginning.

Upon this question of reapportionment the interests of the older and more populous communities caused them to be very decidedly in favor of a constitutional convention. The frontier counties, however, were afraid a readjustment of representation might cause them to be grouped into legislative districts, and they did not care to lose their individual representation. Benton's political success was naturally favored by a large Democratic majority in the legislature, but there is no evidence that he objected to a constitutional convention on the question of reapportionment.

The constitutional questions had been of sufficient importance to cause the proposition of a constitutional convention to be submitted to the people in 1835. The act providing for this convention made the county the basis of representation in the convention. It was so evident that the Democratic frontier counties would be in control that the Whigs and more

²⁰*Constitution of 1820*, Art. III, Sec. 2.

²¹The *Census Report* of 1850, p. 655, gives the population of St. Louis county 104,978 and Caldwell county 2,176.

²²*Jefferson Inquirer*, Oct. 26, 1843.

populous counties defeated the proposition by a vote of two to one.²³ The question of a convention continued to be agitated until the Legislature of 1842-43 again submitted the proposition to be voted on at the August election of 1844. This act made the senatorial district the basis of representation in the convention. Many Democratic leaders who at heart were probably opposed to the convention soon saw that it would be impossible to defeat it and, therefore, came out for it. The friends of Benton were the last to come over and there is no evidence that Benton ever favored the convention. The vote stood 37,426 for, and 13,750 against the convention.²⁴ The convention met in the fall of 1845. A new constitution was drafted and submitted to the people at the general election in 1846. It corrected the problem of representation by creating legislative districts of the thinly populated counties, but the constitution was rejected by a majority of about 10,000. The question of districting the State for the purpose of electing members to Congress came to be, in its effect upon Benton's career, of equal if not greater importance than that of a constitutional convention. The Whig Congress had passed an act, 1842, regulating the election of congressmen. This act provided that in each state the legislature should divide the state into districts for the purpose of electing congressmen. Missouri had been electing by general ticket. The greater part of the State officers and congressmen had been residents of the central part of the State. This was the oldest and most thickly settled portion of the state (except St. Louis which was a Whig city in a Democratic state and did not get many of the state officials) and it would naturally be expected to furnish a large proportion of the officials. In the central counties the sentiment of the Democrats was very strong against the district system,²⁵ but in all the frontier sections every one emphatically favored districting the state. There had long been a feeling in the border counties that the central part of the state was controlling everything and getting all the

²³*Missouri Intelligencer*, Sept. 12, 1835.

²⁴*Statesman*, Nov. 29, 1844.

²⁵*Jefferson Inquirer*, Aug. 25, 1842.

offices. There was good reason for the feeling. The Democratic leaders of Howard, Saline, Cooper, and Cole counties had already been designated as the "Central Clique" and the district question brought the two sections in the Democratic party into open conflict.

These issues of a new constitution and of districting the State are of interest in this study because Benton was practically compelled to take the unpopular side of both questions. His sentiment against paper currency and state banks of issue was so strong that upon that question alone, so far as his speeches or letters show, he was opposed to calling a constitutional convention. No doubt his political theories as well as his sense of fairness would have caused him to favor a convention upon both the question of reapportionment and judicial tenure, but he was afraid a convention would do away with the constitutional restrictions on banking. In a letter to the Democratic Committee of Clay county, dated August 16, 1843, he said: "The constitution of the state of Missouri places some restrictions on the legislative power over the creation of banks; they are not sufficient, but few as they are, the *Paper Money Party* are looking to the contingency of a state convention to sweep them all away and lay the state open to the mad career of free and universal banking."²⁶ This statement indicates that he was opposed to a constitutional convention and gives his reasons, but there is no evidence that he actively aided the opposition to a convention. The question of districting the State for the purpose of electing members to Congress was of greater importance to the crowd of politicians who posed as Benton's friends, than the question of a constitutional convention. There is no evidence that, either from a standpoint of principle or direct personal interest, Benton opposed districting the State. In fact, the evidence points the other way. Districting as a political method was more democratic than the general ticket plan of electing congressmen. Benton was a typical western Democrat and from principle should have favored the district plan. His enemies claimed that he had favored that principle and

²⁶*Jefferson Inquirer*, Dec. 7, 1844.

had changed front. For proof they quoted Benton's report of 1826 in favor of choice of Presidential electors by districts.²⁷ Why, then, did Benton oppose the district system? The only reasonable explanation is that he opposed it not because of the principle involved or because of his direct personal interests (for he could have had none) but because of the personal interests of his political associates in Missouri. Prominent among these political friends were Minor, Edwards, and Price of Cole county; C. F. Jackson, Dr. Scott, Dr. Lowery, Redman, and Rawlins of Howard county; Marmaduke and Dr. Penn of Saline county; and Sterling Price of Chariton county. All these men lived in the central part of the state and if the state were districted would likely be thrown into one district and only one of them would have opportunity to go to Congress. They therefor opposed the district system because of their personal interests. Benton was not concerned personally except so far as his interests were bound up with those of his political associates, and as will be shown later did not come out on the district question until he was compelled to do so.

ORGANIZATION OF FORCES—HARDS AND SOFTS.

After this analysis of political conditions and issues it is possible to discuss the origin and development of the so-called "Soft" faction in the Democratic party; a faction at first opposing the rigorous restrictions on banking and small notes, later advocating constitutional changes, but soon developing into the open personal attack on Benton which is the subject of this study. After the action of the Bank of Missouri of November 12, 1839, refusing to receive or pay out the currency of suspended banks, the excitement ran high for several days and uncertainty prevailed everywhere. The Whig press was especially active in the agitation. The Democratic organ, *The Argus*, sustained the Bank in its action. The Bank was a partisan institution. Its president and the directors appointed by the State, who were in the majority, were all Democrats, elected by a Democratic legis-

²⁷*Thirty Years' View*, Vol. I, pp. 78-80.

lature, and naturally felt in some degree responsible to the body which elected them. One of these directors, A. R. Corbin, was proprietor of *The Argus*. A few days after the Bank passed its currency resolution, Corbin sold *The Argus* to A. J. Davis. The Argus continued its policy of defense of the Bank's action. Thus the action of the Bank and the problems growing out of it were considered by all to be political questions. The excitement, uncertainty, and business depression was used by the Whigs as political capital.

The city election in the spring of 1840 gave the first opportunity for the Whigs to turn the popular indignation against the Bank to political advantage. For two months preceding the election *The Republican* (Whig) attacked the Democratic party almost daily on some phase of the currency question. The Redman bill was declared to be the issue of the contest in the city election.²⁸ One editorial said, "Remember that Col. Benton is determined to pass his currency bill at the next session of the legislature" and then proceeded to advocate the election of a City Attorney who would not enforce its provisions. The Democrats conducted an active campaign in defense of the Bank and against depreciated currency. John Smith, President of the Bank, took a prominent part. It was during this campaign before the city election of 1840, that the first defection from the Democratic ranks was noticeable. Mr. B. Lawhead, a well known Democrat, addressed a Whig meeting. Discussing his defection *The Republican* said, "But a short time since he was the main pillar of the administration. He was the owner and chief support of *The Argus*, and has probably rendered the administration more service than any other individual citizen. He has come boldly out against the measures of his party." ²⁹

By May 1840 enough Democrats were dissatisfied with the currency policy of the party to form a faction and hold public meetings. At one of the meetings of the "Softs," the "Hards" turned out in force. Lawhead and Wm. P. Darnes spoke for the Softs, and Riley and Trotter for the

²⁸*St. Louis Republican*, March 13, 1840.

²⁹*St. Louis Republican*, Mar. 25, 1840.

Hards. Thos. B. Hudson, who had been the Democratic candidate for City Attorney, refused to respond. *The Argus* refused to publish the proceedings of the meeting, but made a personal attack on Darnes.³⁰ Darnes met Davis, the proprietor of *The Argus*, on the street and killed him. For the deed he was fined \$500. Soon after Davis' death, A. B. Corbin became proprietor of *The Argus* for the second time.

In the summer of 1840 when Benton returned from Washington he seems to have taken some part in the discussion of local political affairs. The *Republican* said, "The Colonel finds, 'city expenditure, additional courthouses, spurious banking, small notes' and last but not least 'recreant Democrats.' The burden of his song relates to city expenditures and unconstitutional, spurious banking which is carried on within the city."³¹ The above expressions appear to have been taken from a speech which Benton made just before his departure, according to the *Republican*, "for the upper country for the purpose of winding up the legislature for another year, should it not be incompatible with his other engagements."³² Benton arrived at Jefferson City in the early part of October and on the 8th addressed a large delegate convention, the great rally of the presidential campaign. This speech was chiefly upon the currency question and was one of Benton's greatest speeches upon that subject. Three years later when the conflict between the Softs and Hards had become well developed this speech was published by the *Jefferson Inquirer* for campaign purposes.³³ Benton said: "The currency question is the great question of the age." He stated that those who had struck down the second Bank of the United States had put in its place the constitutional currency, gold and silver; that in order to accomplish this a number of acts had been passed, namely: The repeal of the act of 1819 against the circulation of foreign silver, the act correcting the ratio between silver and gold, the act creating branch United States mints, the act which excludes small

³⁰Edwards, *Great West*, pp. 370f.

³¹*St. Louis Republican*, Sept. 30, 1840.

³²*Ibid.*

³³*Jefferson Inquirer*, Aug. 31, 1843.

notes—all under \$20 from the receipts and disbursements of the government, and the act creating a United States treasury. But yet other measures were necessary to complete the great object. One was to suppress all paper money under \$20. This had been attempted but had not yet been accomplished. He continued: "Let every state suppress within its own limits the circulation of all paper under twenty dollars.³⁴ I repeat it the currency question is the great question of the age, it absorbs and swallows up every other; the Democracy must purify and protect it; they must save labor, industry, and commerce from the depredations of depreciated paper; they must stop the banks from suspending when they please and resuming when they please; they must reduce corporations as well as individuals to the subordination of the law; they must maintain the specie circulation; they must do all these things or surrender the government both state and federal. They will lose all power if they do not and what is more they will deserve to lose it." This speech coming as it did just before the meeting of the General Assembly, which convened the third Monday in November, became the keynote to the policy of the legislature. Col. Benton remained in Jefferson City and vicinity until he had to start for Washington if he were to get there for the opening of Congress. His political opponents claimed that he was using undue influence with the legislature, outlining its work, and directing its leaders.³⁵

The legislative program upon the currency and related problems was quite ambitious. The course of the Bank in repudiating the notes of suspended banks was approved by resolution, and legislative sanction was also indicated by re-electing John Smith president of the Bank.³⁶ A resolution providing for a committee to investigate the business of the insurance companies was passed. A law was enacted taxing brokers and exchange dealers on all bills, notes, money or property handled or held in trust for citizens of other states.³⁷

³⁴Benton said that individually he preferred to make one hundred dollars the limit instead of twenty.

³⁵*St. Louis Republican*, Nov. 18, 1840.

³⁶*House Journal*, 1840, pp. 116-118.

³⁷*Jefferson Inquirer*, Dec. 24, 1840.

The Redman currency bill was passed in the House and lacked only one vote of passing the Senate. But probably the most important of all these measures in its immediate effect was the act amending the act of incorporation for St. Louis.³⁸ This act was introduced by Redman, of Howard county, and pushed thru over the protest of the delegation from St. Louis. This act changed the ward boundary lines of the city to favor the Democrats and removed all property qualifications for suffrage in city elections. The correspondent of the *St. Louis Republican* was expelled from the privilege of going within the bar of the House because he had condemned the act in strong language.³⁹ The other city papers allowed the *Republican* to use their correspondence and all the papers of the city, Democratic as well as Whig, condemned the action of the legislature.⁴⁰ Thus the antagonism between St. Louis and the State government was intensified and public opinion tended to become unified concerning all subjects upon which there was a difference of opinion between the city interests and the central government. The changes in ward boundaries and the enlarged city electorate gave the Democrats a chance in the city election of 1841. Corbin, Democrat and editor of *The Argus*, was elected to the city council. *The Republican*, Whig, commenting on Corbin's election, said, "Other circumstances than mere party strength elected him and we hope that other than mere party considerations will govern his action."⁴¹ The Jefferson City *Inquirer* quoted the above comment and said, "Other circumstances had reference to the currency problems."⁴²

In December, 1840, *The Argus* began to change front on the currency question and was attacked for its desertion of Democracy by *The Inquirer* and the *Boonslick Democrat*.⁴³ In the editorial discussion which followed it was made clear that the St. Louis paper was shifting its position on the

³⁸*Laws of Missouri, 1840-41*, pp. 129-141.

³⁹*St. Louis Republican*, Jan. 11, 1841.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, Jan. 12, 1841.

⁴¹*St. Louis Republican*, Apr. 7, 1841.

⁴²*Jefferson Inquirer*, Apr. 15, 1841.

⁴³*Jefferson Inquirer*, Dec. 17, 1840.

currency and banking problem in general. *The Argus* was not alone among St. Louis Democrats in this movement. Early in 1841 the directors of the Bank of Missouri rescinded the order of November 12, 1839, and from that time on the Bank dealt in the paper currency of other banks.⁴⁴ The attitude of many Democrats in St. Louis was probably like that of General Miller, the Democratic postmaster, evidently not a man unfriendly to Benton else he could not have held that position. When he was removed by the Tyler administration in 1841, *The Inquirer* commented thus, "We are not afraid to say that a respectable number of Democrats (not oil and water men) were ready to sanction the removal of General Miller, not that he was either a drunkard or a gambler, but that among other reasons he was suspected of being neither a Whig nor a Democrat."⁴⁵ As early as April, 1841, *The Inquirer* had suggested the need of another Democratic paper in St. Louis, in the following language: "Our candid and deliberate opinion is that the Democracy of St. Louis and the whole state, owe it to themselves, to establish another press in the city."⁴⁶ This suggestion was approved by most of the Democratic press of the state. On August 26, 1841, *The Inquirer* said, "Altho *The Argus* hangs on the name of Col. Benton, our friends will ere long find, what we last winter proclaimed, that he is an enemy in disguise." On the other hand *The Argus* attacked Governor Reynolds, Dr. Lowery, *The Inquirer*, the *Boonslick Democrat*, and others of the "Central Clique." In the fall of 1841 Corbin sold *The Argus* to Shadrick Penn, Jr., who changed its name to the *Missouri Reporter*. Penn was an editor of long experience who had moved from Louisville, Kentucky. The *Reporter* was welcomed by the Democratic press of the state, and for a time appeared to try to cultivate friendly relations with the up-State Democracy and carefully avoided any reference to the Central Clique. Penn even went so far as to publicly repudiate Corbin who was a candidate for Congress.⁴⁷ The

⁴⁴*St. Louis Republican*, Mar. 13, 1841.

⁴⁵*Jefferson Inquirer*, Jan. 24, 1841.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*, Apr. 8, 1841.

⁴⁷*Jefferson Inquirer*, Jan. 20, 1842.

currency question seemed to drop out of politics so far as St. Louis was concerned. Nativism sprang up there. The Whig party became hopelessly divided. The Democrats carried the city in April 1842, and in August they elected one senator and five out of seven representatives to the State legislature. Such a victory could be won only by selecting men who could be trusted to reflect the popular sentiment toward the most vital public question of the day—that of banking. In St. Louis that was the side of liberal construction of the banking and corporation laws. Evidence that these men were liberal in their views on banking and corporations is found in the fact that both the men and the issues upon which they were elected were displeasing to Col. Benton.⁴⁸

A Democratic delegation with liberal views on the currency could be of greater service to St. Louis in a Democratic legislature than could a Whig delegation. The opportunity for this service came on the election of the president and directors of the Bank. As noted above, soon after the legislature adjourned in 1841, the Bank by vote of its directors decided to receive deposits of depreciated currency. The Hard money Democrats of the State were opposed to that policy of the Bank and decided to elect to the presidency Dr. Penn, of Howard county, a Hard money Democrat whom they were sure they could trust. The St. Louis Democrats were much averse to a Hard money man from the country and determined to elect Kenneth, one of the directors who had voted to receive the depreciated currency. C. F. Jackson, of Howard county, led the fight for the Hards and Thos. B. Hudson led the St. Louis delegation. Hudson forced the issue and Jackson played for delay. The test vote came on a resolution of Jackson's which provided for an investigating committee and put off the election until the committee would have time to report. This resolution was defeated by a vote of 42 ayes to 86 nays.⁴⁹

This was the first definite conflict between the Hards led by a group of men dubbed by their opponents the "Cen-

⁴⁸Penn's Letters, *Missouri Register*, Nov. 14, 1843.

⁴⁹*House Journal*, 1840, pp. 100-102.

tral Clique" and the Softs led by Hudson of St. Louis, English of Cape Girardeau, Ex-Governor Boggs of Jackson county, Ellis of Clinton county, and Wells of Lincoln county. Conspicuous among the leaders of the Central Clique were C. F. Jackson, J. J. Lowery, Dr. Scott, Redman, and Governor Reynolds, all of Howard county; and in addition to these, sometimes called the Fayette Clique, Dr. Penn, Marmaduke, and Sterling Price should be mentioned. The *Jefferson Inquirer* became the champion of the Hards, and the *Missouri Reporter* of St. Louis was the leading newspaper of the Softs.

Until the fight over the election of the president of the Bank, the *Inquirer* and The *Reporter* had maintained friendly relations, but the *Reporter* now came out openly and condemned the Central Clique in even stronger terms than *The Argus* had used. The *Inquirer* replied editorially: "War has been declared by the press of St. Louis both Whig and Democratic, and it is a war in favor of small notes, against hard money; in favor of shinplasters and swindling shops, against half eagles and Benton mint drops; and every member of the legislature who does not bow in submission to the coalition will be marked for proscription at the next election. Their hate extends from Benton to every member who does not obey implicitly the commands of their St. Louis masters. We say to the Democracy of the state every man to his post."⁵⁰ The fight was now on in dead earnest. The *Reporter* struck a popular chord in advocating districting and a constitutional convention. The blows of Penn began to tell. Something had to be done or the Hards would be overthrown. Col. Switzler, editor of the *Statesman* (Whig), in commenting upon a Democratic mass meeting in Clinton county which had proposed David R. Atchison for governor said: "This will prove serious and annoying to the Central Clique," and referring to Penn, "He will either whip them into open advocacy of his doctrine or he will guillotine every mother's son of them from his excellency down."⁵¹

After the Bank election the factional contest opened up as a newspaper fight. The Democratic press of the state

⁵⁰*Jefferson Inquirer*, Jan. 5, 1843.

⁵¹*Statesman*, Apr. 21, 1843.

began to take sides either with the *Reporter* or the *Inquirer*. New papers were started at strategic points by both factions and efforts were made by each to overthrow the presses of the other. Penn by pushing the constitutional questions and districting to the front secured the support of several papers in the border of the State. The Soft press of the state included, in addition to the *Reporter*, the *Ozark Eagle*, at Springfield, the *Liberty Banner*, in Clay county, the *Grand River Chronicle*, at Chillicothe, the *Osage Yeoman*, at Warsaw, and the *Missouri Register*, at Boonville. The unquestioned Hard papers were the *Jefferson Inquirer*, the *Boonslick Democrat*, in Howard county, the *Fayette Democrat*, in Howard county, the *Paris Sentinel*, the *Western Missourian*, in Jackson county, the *Boonville Argus*, and the *Missouri Standard* (later the *Missourian*), in St. Louis. The *Liberty Banner* and the *Osage Yeoman* (Soft) and the *Missouri Standard* and the *Boonville Argus* (Hard) were established during the year 1843.

Such was the political condition in Missouri when Col. Benton arrived from Washington in the summer of 1843, and threw the great weight of his influence into the contest on the side of the Hards. During the summer Benton made his usual trip to the central part of the state. After his visit to Warsaw the *Osage Yeoman* (Soft) announced in an editorial that Benton was in favor of the districting system. Benton, as soon as he saw the editorial, made the following announcement over his signature dated August 23, 1843, which was published and copied in practically all the papers of the state: "Justice to my political friends (against whom my imputed opinions are quoted) requires me to notice a statement in the *Osage Yeoman* in which opinions are attributed to me which I never expressed, as that I was in favor of the district system—that Col. Johnson would take the western states, etc. The editor of the *Yeoman* has been misinformed and I deem it my duty to say so as an act of justice to my political friends, seeing the use which is made of this erroneous statement against them."⁵² This is all the part that Benton took in the contest on the district question so far as the records

⁵²*Statesman*, Sept. 1, 1843.

show, but from this time on the Softs had a great deal to say about his opposition to districting.

On Benton's return to St. Louis he wrote a number of letters in which he made suggestions concerning the factional fight within the Democratic ranks. These could leave no doubt in the minds of Penn and his followers as to Benton's attitude toward them. For instance in his Palmyra letter of September 16, declining an invitation to visit the city, he said: "Your allusions to insidious and disguised enemies of the party are just and true. I have long seen their designs such as you describe them; and time will soon verify all that you have said. But no matter. Underhanded enemies cannot flourish in Missouri. The spirit of the country is high, and requires an open foe and a manly contest. To make war upon a party while professing to belong to it,—to undermine public men while professing to support them—to foment division while preaching union, to kiss Tylerites and Whigs while biting Democrats, is a specie of warfare of recent importation among us, and which can have but a brief existence in our generous clime." Also under date of September 16, Benton wrote his letter to the Clay county committee (quoted above) in which he took a position against a constitutional convention because of the danger of sweeping away the restrictions on banking.

A Hard Democratic paper, the *Missouri Standard*, which had been started in St. Louis in the spring of 1843, had never attained sufficient circulation to make it effective. Benton and the Hard faction started a new paper in its stead, the *Missourian*, under the management of Van Antwerp, an editor from Iowa. Benton wrote a strong letter of recommendation for Van Antwerp and urged Democrats in all parts of the State to support the new paper. This letter was published and widely copied by the press both Whig and Democratic. The *Missouri Register* (Soft) and the *Statesman* (Whig) claimed that it was scattered over the State under Benton's frank.⁵³ These letters, together with Benton's statement in answer to the *Osage Yeoman* (quoted above)

⁵³*Missouri Register*, Oct. 3, Dec. 18, 1843; *Statesman*, Sept. 29, 1843.

declaring that the *Yeoman* was mistaken in quoting him as having favored districting, put him at the head of the contest against the Softs, put new vigor into the Hards, caused a closer alignment, and brought Penn out in the open against Benton.

CONTEST FOR PARTY CONTROL.

Benton's emphatic support of the Hards and the Central Clique left the Softs no choice except submission or open opposition to Benton. The Softs at heart had probably been opposed to Benton for sometime, but had dreaded the effect upon the public of an open breach with him. A few of the bolder ones among them had declared openly against him, and it was no doubt true that some adhered to the Soft faction not because of their views upon the currency but because of their feeling of hatred to Benton whose speeches and well known views upon the money question made him the logical leader of the Hards. The position of *The Ozark Eagle*, it seems, is to be explained in this way. A deep seated antagonism to the Central Clique and to Benton in particular appears to have existed at Springfield as early as 1840.⁵⁴

In addition to Col. Benton's strong and open support of the Hards there was one other event, which occurred in November, 1843, which probably exercised a determining influence upon the contest. Dr. Linn, United States Senator from Missouri and colleague of Col. Benton, died and Governor Reynolds thus suddenly found at his disposal the office of United States Senator. The Northwest was at that time one of the most rapidly growing sections of the State and a strong anti-Central Clique and Soft sentiment existed there. David R. Atchison, of Clinton county, the most popular man of that section, from all the evidence as will be shown later, a Soft and no doubt at heart an anti-Benton man, was appointed United States Senator to fill the vacancy caused by the death of Senator Linn. In this appointment Governor Reynolds who was accused by the Softs of being the head of the Central Clique made it appear that there was

⁵⁴*Jefferson Inquirer*, Jan. 27, 1842.

no such organization by going to the border of the State and selecting a leader of the opposing faction for the highest position within the gift of the people of Missouri. More important than the general effect and appearance was the fact that in this appointment Governor Reynolds spiked the guns of Atchinson and his friends and if he did not make them supporters of Benton, he at least put them in a position where they could not afford to openly oppose him.

On October 24, 1843, Penn, the editor of *The Missouri Reporter*, began the publication of a series of open daily letters to Benton.⁵⁵ In these letters, eight in number and each four or five columns in length, Penn came out openly against Benton; reviewed his own and Benton's positions on public questions in the past, the St. Louis situation, the work of the Central Clique, and the issues of the contest. Much attention was given to the Central Clique and Benton's connection with it, and his obligation to it was clearly shown. The constitutional questions, the districting question and the currency question were given much space and were well handled from the Soft point of view. The chief feature of the letters, however, was a direct personal attack upon Benton. He was compared to Louis XIV of France, denounced as a political dictator and a tyrant of the worst sort, and accused of being responsible for the schemes and slates of the Central Clique. On questions of national policy, especially the currency, Benton was accused of having borrowed all his ideas from Calhoun.

In conclusion Penn intimated that Benton's wonted decision of character had deserted him, that should his clique friends advise him to back straight out of State politics and cease to play the dictator, he would prove discreet and tame enough to do so. They would long since have tendered such advice to him but for their selfish desire to use his power to enable them to monopolize the offices of the State. This had been the secret of their past devotion to Benton and it was the cause of the fervor of their faith in him. If they had sung hozannas they were inspired by ambition and not by love, and as the prospect of aggrandizing themselves by the

⁵⁵Copied in the *Missouri Register*, weekly, November and December, 1843.

use of Benton's name might diminish, their songs of praise would gradually die away. Penn advised Benton to look to those whom he had regarded as faithful to the cause in Morgan and Howard counties and closed his characterization of Benton's Clique friends as follows: "Finally, when rode down by the charlatans in whom you confide they will be the first to forget the good that you have done, and the most active and malevolent in exposing and condemning your errors and transgressions. Like your special friend of *The Globe* they regard all minorities as anti-democratic, and whenever you cease to command a majority of the state, their peculiar principles will compel them to denounce you right or wrong, as a recreant and a traitor. Mark this prediction. It may be verified sooner than you expect."

The publication of Penn's letters gave a renewed impetus to the factional fight and turned the emphasis from the currency and other issues to the personality of Benton. The two factions still called each other Hards and Softs but in reality they became Benton and Anti-Benton factions.

There are four principal lines of evidence which throw some light on the factional struggle during the winter of 1843-44.

First, the press of the State, especially the Democratic press, was full of editorials. These were partisan in varying degrees, but usually quite bitter. The Whig press, although it professed to stand aloof, was certainly characterized by a strong Anti-Benton tone. In February, 1864, there were twenty-four political papers published in the State. Fourteen of these were Democratic.⁵⁶ Of these fourteen, five were certainly anti-Benton, six were undoubtedly Benton papers. Strenuous efforts were made by each side to support its own press and if opportunity offered to overthrow the opposition papers. With the publication of the Penn letters the Democratic press took a more definite position. The Benton papers had insisted for nearly a year before Penn's letters were published that the real issue was "Benton or no Benton."⁵⁷

⁵⁶*Statesman*, Feb. 2, 1844.

⁵⁷*Jefferson Inquirer*, Sept. 21, 1843.

Second, since 1840 there had been a gradual and fairly rapid growth of political organization. But this was accompanied by considerable opposition, sometimes violent, from those known as independents, who did not believe in political machinery and organization. This growth of political machinery took place in both parties but was more rapid and popular in the Democratic than in the Whig party. Neither side seemed to understand the real value of the machinery of the party organization that had been built up. In 1840 there were no permanent committees. Campaigns had to be started by the newspapers. Usually one paper suggested a meeting or convention. If the suggestion met with the approval of the other editors in the territory concerned they copied and recommended the meeting. The press then got behind the convention and pushed it, and urged county or township meetings, to organize and to elect delegates. This condition probably accounts for the great importance attached to the press by all the politicians of the period. Committees of correspondence were appointed after the newspapers had started the movement, but their duty ended with the election as did the State Central Committee, which was simply a committee appointed from a few counties in the central part of the State, usually Howard, Cooper, Boone, Cole and Callaway.⁵⁸ In 1841 a movement was begun, probably by the Central Clique, having for its purpose the organization of the democracy along the lines of the party organization in New York. This movement grew rapidly and by the spring of 1844 the Democratic party had a permanent organization in nearly all the counties of the state with standing committees very similar to those of political parties of today.

Third, the sentiment of the rank and file of the democracy of the State may be found by examining the reports of the county meetings held in the winter of 1843-44 for the purpose of electing delegates to the State Convention. As soon as "Benton or no Benton" had come to be acknowledged by all as the real issue, the Hard papers began to refer to the constitutional convention, districting, and even the details

⁵⁸*Missouri Register*, Oct. 22, 1840.

of the currency bills, meaning the penalties, as mere matters upon which Democrats might honestly differ. The real question at issue was the election of the United States Senator. Missouri must stand by her distinguished statesman. To be disloyal to Benton, according to these papers, was to be a traitor to the party. This change of emphasis gave the Hards a great advantage. There was a real contest in nearly all the counties of the State, so that the resolutions passed meant something. The Central Clique undoubtedly had their lieutenants in most of these counties and probably half a dozen men attempted to call the meeting, get themselves elected as officers and committeemen, adopt a cut and dried set of resolutions, and have themselves sent as delegates to the State Convention at Jefferson City, but the fight became too hot for that sort of thing to work well. Both sides played at the same game and then it became a question of getting out the vote. Each man in most instances had an opportunity to vote for the kind of resolution that he wanted on the question at issue. While one side usually elected the chairman and controlled the committee on resolutions, the other side was always ready with substitute resolutions on the important questions. The real contest for the control and party name was fought out in these meetings. Forty sets of these county resolutions have been examined. Out of the forty only five were radically Soft, while eleven were radically Hard; but seventeen showed Soft tendencies, while only seven, not radically Hard, showed Hard tendencies. The counties which adopted Soft resolutions were St. Louis, Cape Girardeau, Clinton, Clay and Lafayette. The Hard counties were Howard, Saline, Pettis, Cole, Morgan, Miller, Boone, Callaway, Randolph, Macon and Washington. A glance at the map shows that there was good reason for the charges of the existence of a Central Clique. All the radically Hard counties except Washington were compactly grouped in the center, and in this central territory all the counties were Hard except Cooper where *The Missouri Register* was published. There were three Soft strongholds. One was in St. Louis where the movement had begun. Another was in the South-

east, the home of English, a prominent Soft leader and later a candidate against Benton for the United States Senate. The third was in the Northwest, the home of Senator Atchison and A. A. King, a prominent Soft, a Circuit Judge and later Governor of the State.

In the Northwest the Anti-Clique feeling seemed to be stronger than in any other part of the State outside of St. Louis. Three of the five counties from which radically Soft resolutions were reported were in that section of the State. Two of the Soft papers, *The Liberty Banner* and *The Grand River Chronicle*, were located there. General Atchison, without doubt the most prominent man among the Softs, lived in Clinton county. Atchison's later prominence makes it advisable to examine the evidence of his Soft tendencies. The evidence is largely indirect as there is no statement of his position made by himself at this time. There is enough indirect evidence, however, to settle beyond any reasonable doubt his position. Penn in an editorial asked the editor of *The Inquirer* if he would support any one of a number of men, including Atchison, for governor, the men named being Softs. The *Statesman*, a Whig paper, gave an account of a meeting held in Clinton county, a radically Anti-Benton county, which proposed Atchison for governor; Switzler, the editor, in his comments on this meeting said that this would prove embarrassing to the Central Clique. In an editorial quoted from the *Missourian* on the districting question, the editor said: "We will inform the Banner that if the views of that paper accord with those of its favorite Senator we have reason to believe there will be no material difference between us in regard to districting." The fact that Atchison was the favorite Senator of the *Banner*, an open opponent of Benton, was significant as was also the evidence of his position on the districting question. The *New Era*,⁵⁹ a Whig paper published in St. Louis, said that Atchison was a Johnson man; this also is significant though not conclusive; not all Johnson men were anti-Benton but most of them were. The *Inquirer* said: "General Atchison who has lately been appointed to a seat in the United States Senate prefers that the legislature

⁵⁹Quoted in *Jefferson Inquirer*, Nov. 16, 1843.

should at the next session district the state." And again: "General Atchison believes Col. Johnson to be the most available man for President." The *Missouri Register*, the leading Anti-Benton paper outside of St. Louis, said editorially: "Hon. David R. Atchison has been appointed to fill the vacancy caused by the death of Linn. It is a good appointment. The judge, unlike Col. Benton, is in favor of districting the state for the election of members to Congress, is a true and liberal Democrat. We have heard it intimated that he was recommended to the governor by Col. Benton as a suitable man to be his colleague; if so, the Colonel is deceived, for the judge is a Johnson man, goes for the district system and against the proscription of any portion of the Democratic party, which is more than we can say for Col. Benton".⁶⁰ Finally, good evidence is found in the manner in which the appointment of Atchison was received in the Northwest. A correspondent writing in the *Liberty Banner* after describing the joy in that section over the appointment of Atchison said: "Governor Reynolds in this act has gone far to secure the gratitude of the whole upper Missouri, he has acted justly, wisely, and well. He has done more by this act, to put down the rising indignation of the people, against the so-called Central Clique—he has done more to prove that there is no such thing, or that it exists no longer, than a thousand semi-official bulletins of The Inquirer. We of the upper country hail this as an omen of peace and good will."⁶¹

Fourth, the final contest for the control of the Party machinery was fought in the State Convention assembled at Jefferson City the first Monday in April, 1844. It is impossible to get the details of the conflict there. They were purposely concealed. In the published report of the convention no resolution, motion, or measure of any kind that failed to obtain a majority vote was mentioned. This action was in accordance with a resolution of instruction to the secretary of the convention. No record of division on any resolution or other question, except the vote on the can-

⁶⁰*Missouri Register*, Oct. 17, 1843.

⁶¹*Liberty Banner*, quoted in *Jefferson Inquirer*, Nov. 16, 1843.

didates for governor, involving the relative strength of the two factions has been found. All that is certain is that the Hards obtained control of the Convention and tabled all resolutions relating to districting, constitutional convention, currency, etc., and then forbade the secretary to publish the record of the vote by which these measures were tabled.⁶² The strength of the two factions seems to have been nearly equal in the Convention. If the Soft delegations from St. Louis and Benton county had not been unseated it is probable the Softs would have controlled the Convention instead of the Hards. As it was, a compromise candidate, Edwards of Cole county, a strong supporter of Benton but in accord with the Softs on all the State issues, was nominated for Governor. The Hards compelled their candidate, Marmaduke, of Saline, to withdraw and supported Edwards and nominated him over King, Soft candidate from the Northwest, by a vote of sixty-six to forty-two. The Convention refused to take any position on the State questions. So far as issues were concerned its resolutions mentioned national questions only. The resolutions contained a brief endorsement of Atchison and the Congressional delegation, which Loughborough, a member of the Convention from Clay county, said (in an article in the *Liberty Banner*)⁶³ was not in the original draft. The principal resolution was the one endorsing Benton. It read as follows: "Resolved, that the public course of Thomas H. Benton, as United States Senator from Missouri; his patriotic measures to increase the supply of constitutional currency—to establish the subtreasury—to graduate the price of public land—to extend and make permanent the right of pre-emption—to abolish bounties on exports and duties on salt, and to provide for taking possession of Oregon—his stern opposition to the increase or extension of chartered monopolies—to the fraudulent bankrupt law—his war to the knife on the Bank of the United States—his gallant defense and successful vindication of President Jackson from the recorded slanders of the Federal parties, slanders which on his motion the people of the United

⁶²*Missouri Register*, Apr. 16, 1844.

⁶³*Missouri Register*, copied, Apr. 30, 1844.

States ordered to be expunged, entitle him to the unreserved respect, esteem, and confidence of the Democratic party of Missouri."⁶⁴ There was also a clause in the Atchison resolution, "that we recommend to the Democracy of Missouri *not to vote for any candidate for the legislature* who will not *pledge himself*, if elected, to vote for the election of Thomas H. Benton and David R. Atchison as United States Senators from Missouri."

The proceedings, resolutions, and nominees of the convention make it clear that the fight was preeminently a "Benton or no Benton" fight. On a platform that did not mention state issues, the Benton men gave the Softs candidates for governor and lieutenant governor who had publicly advocated districting, a constitutional convention, and had publicly expressed themselves against the penalties of the currency bills, and only demanded in return party loyalty, close organization and strong support for Benton. But the Hards had secured possession of the party name, the title to party regularity; and in doing so had obtained an engine of political warfare whose power was to receive its first demonstration in Missouri in the ensuing campaign.

CAMPAIGN AND ELECTION, 1843-1844.

The Democratic state convention adjourned April 4, and soon the delegates had carried the story of the convention to their home counties. The suppressing in the official proceedings of all resolutions and motions which did not carry seemed to make little difference so far as the spreading of the news of these things was concerned. The Softs who called themselves "Liberal Democrats" immediately began publishing caustic criticisms of the convention proceedings. Special emphasis was placed upon "Gag law" and the use of the previous question. The convention was severely criticised for not taking a position upon State issues. It was referred to as a "mum" convention and much was made of its *mum* policy. A third general line of criticism was directed against the convention's attitude toward Benton.

⁶⁴*Missouri Register*, Apr. 16, 1844.

While there seems to have been a great deal of dissatisfaction among the Democrats concerning the convention's action, yet there was no organized effort to hold a convention of the Anti-Benton men. Probably the failure to make any effort to hold a convention was due to the fact that the convention as a method of placing candidates before the people was comparatively new and a great many doubted the wisdom of it.⁶⁵ Many people considered it similar to the much discredited caucus, and very likely the Democrats who were disgruntled would be appealed to more easily by a ticket presented by the personal initiative of the candidates than by one put in the field by a hastily called convention.

Judge C. H. Allen, a strong anti-Central Clique man, had announced himself as an independent candidate for governor, at least three months before the convention.⁶⁶ Candidates began to announce for the various offices in rapid succession as the news of the convention's action spread over the State. So many announced that it became necessary to have an understanding among them to prevent more than one man from running for the same office. This was accomplished by correspondence and conferences among the leading Softs. To arrange the ticket was a very difficult task. Sometimes the real leaders were compelled to withdraw in order to prevent a multiplicity of candidates. Thus Carty Wells, later president of the Constitutional Convention, who had announced for Congress from the Northeast, had to withdraw for Ratcliff Boon.⁶⁷ By the end of May the ticket had been arranged. The *Missouri Register*, the first paper to place the ticket at the head of its editorial column as the Liberal Democratic ticket, came out, May 22, with a full ticket as follows: Governor, C. H. Allen; Lieutenant Governor, Wm. B. Almond; for Congress, Leonard H. Simms, of Greene county; Thomas B. Hudson, of St. Louis; Ratcliff Boon, of Pike county; John Thornton, of Clay county; and Augustus Jones, of Washington county. The *Missouri Register* said, "We place at the head of our column this week

"*St. Louis Republican*, Dec. 23, 1843.

"*Ibid.*

"*Jefferson Inquirer*, Apr. 18, 1844.

the Independent Democratic ticket as it appears to have been settled upon by the Liberal Democratic party of the state." Other candidates soon withdrew and the lines became definitely drawn between the two Democratic tickets.

The Whigs had early decided not to run a State or Congressional ticket, but to concentrate their efforts upon the legislative ticket and attempt to carry the legislature and beat Benton.⁶⁸ The Whig press assumed the attitude of disinterested spectators and repeatedly urged their followers not to participate in the contest between the two Democratic tickets.⁶⁹ However, the Whigs generally supported the Soft Democratic ticket with the connivance and through the direction of the Democratic leaders.

The Hard Democrats emphatically denied the assertion of the Whig and Soft press that the convention was against a constitutional convention, against the district system, and in favor of currency bills. They declared that the convention had not gone on record for or against these questions, but had simply refused to consider them as vital issues or tests of Democratic principles, that the candidates had been selected without regard to these questions; but, as a matter of fact, both Mr. Edwards and Mr. Young, candidates for Governor and Lieutenant Governor, were in favor of a constitutional convention and districting, and against the penalties and test oaths of the currency bills.⁷⁰

This position practically took away from the Independents their issues, and confined them to opposition to Benton, the only issue upon which the Regulars would disagree with them. The chief arguments of the Regulars were those of party loyalty. Treachery, traitor candidates, traitor papers, and traitor party were common expressions.⁷¹ These professions and charges were met by the Independents with charges of egotism, dictation, and tyranny against Benton; with editorials upon "pains and penalties, test oaths, and proscription;" with charges of insincerity and hypocrisy against the

⁶⁸*Statesman*, Sept. 1, 1843.

⁶⁹*Ibid.*, Apr. 5, 1844.

⁷⁰*Jefferson Inquirer*, Apr. 11, 1844.

⁷¹*Missouri Register*, June 11, 25, 1844.

Hards in their attitude of districting, a constitutional convention, and currency bills.

Party organization was used effectively and some remarkable changes began to take place. *The Grand River Chronicle*, published at Chillicothe, had all along been with Penn, but after the convention it came out for the regular nominees and said the Independents would get little encouragement in that section.⁷² Even in St. Louis a meeting called by the Penn faction adopted resolutions declaring allegiance to the nominees of the Democratic state convention.

The Anti-Benton men claimed that Benton, secretly, was not loyal to the national Democratic ticket for which they professed great enthusiasm. Benton's strong preference for Van Buren was well known in Missouri. Soon after Polk's nomination Benton wrote a letter to the *Missourian*, intending it to be published for the benefit of Polk and Dallas, in which he said: "Neither Mr. Polk nor Mr. Dallas have had anything to do with the intrigue which has nullified the choice of the people * * * * and neither of them should be injured or prejudiced by it. * * * The people now as twenty years ago will teach the Congress intriguers to attend to law making and let president making and unmaking alone in the future."⁷³ "The Texas treaty which consummated their intrigue was nothing but the final act in a long conspiracy in which the sacrifice of Mr. Van Buren had been previously agreed upon." The Softs attacked Benton's letter dwelling especially upon the words "intrigue" and "Congress intriguers." In an editorial in *The Missouri Register* Benton was made to say that Polk and Dallas were nominated by Congress intriguers. The editor then said: "If they are the tools of intriguers neither Benton nor anybody else can conscientiously support them. The receiver of stolen goods is as bad as the thief."

⁷²*Jefferson Inquirer*, May 2, 1844.

⁷³*Missouri Register*, June 25, 1844.

BENTON AND TEXAS.

But the chief attacks upon Benton in the latter part of the campaign and the ones which seemed to have the greatest effect were those directed against his attitude upon the annexation of Texas. Benton had that western spirit of expansion which caused him to resent the loss of a single foot of territory and made him always ready to see any territory acquired that could be obtained with honor. He had opposed the treaty of 1819, in a series of articles signed *Americanus* and published in the *St. Louis Inquirer*, because it gave Texas to Spain. In another series published in the *St. Louis Beacon* in 1829, signed *La Salle*, he advocated the acquisition of Texas and he always favored the annexation of Texas at any time that it could be brought about without compromising the honor of the Country.

In 1844 the Tyler administration negotiated a treaty with the republic of Texas which provided for its annexation to the United States. The prospect of getting Texas was hailed with delight in Missouri, but to the surprise of every one, friends and enemies alike, Benton came out against the ratification of the treaty. Why he took such a position immediately became a matter of controversy. His enemies claimed that he was actuated by contemptible motives of jealousy of Calhoun, and that his arguments against the treaty were without a basis of fact. His friends said that the treaty was really bad and that Benton had not only the knowledge of conditions and the foresight to enable him to see the bad features and the motives back of them, but that he also had the courage and the manhood to expose them.⁷⁴ Benton certainly displayed courage in taking the position that he did against annexation at that time. Everyone knew that annexation was exceedingly popular in Missouri, and no one knew it better than did Benton. He knew also that he had a tremendous conflict on his hands in Missouri in which his very political existence was at stake.

Benton said that the treaty was "a scheme, on the part of some of its movers, to dissolve the union—on the part of

⁷⁴*Jefferson Inquirer*, July 4, 1844.

some others, an intrigue for the presidency—and on the part of others a land speculation and a job in script." He declared that to ratify the treaty meant war with Mexico. He was very much averse to war with Mexico and was especially anxious to cultivate friendly trade relations. Probably his jealousy of and opposition to Calhoun tended to cause him to oppose the treaty; certainly, his knowledge of the Spanish land grants and the claims based upon them enabled him to see the defects of the treaty in this respect; and his ardent devotion to the Union caused him to oppose what he thought was a scheme to dissolve it; but no doubt his chief reason for opposing the treaty was that it would bring on a war with Mexico. In this last objection, at least, later events proved that his judgment was correct. The treaty, largely thru Benton's efforts, failed of ratification in the Senate of the United States. He then introduced a bill providing for the annexation of Texas by a method which he said would avoid war with Mexico.⁷⁵

But why should Benton be so averse to a war with Mexico? He did not ordinarily avoid a fight. No true westerner did, and probably the one ambition of his life was to become a military hero. His peculiar aversion to war with Mexico at this time can only be understood when we view the situation from the viewpoint of Benton's fundamental public policy. There can be no doubt but that Benton's dominant interest in public questions was centered around the currency problem. Soon after the failure of the Territorial Bank of Missouri, of which he had been a director, Benton had taken a strong position in favor of gold and silver as the constitutional currency of the country; ⁷⁶ he had been the real moving spirit behind Jackson in the beginning as well as thruout the fight against the second Bank of the United States.⁷⁷ He had secured the change of ratio between gold and silver that had caused gold to circulate.⁷⁸ He had suggested and always worked diligently for the sub-treasury.⁷⁹ He had proposed

⁷⁵*Congressional Globe*, Vol. 13, (Session 1843 and 44) p. 474.

⁷⁶*Statesman*, Jan. 19, 1844.

⁷⁷*Thirty Years' View*, Vol. I, pp. 158ff.

⁷⁸*Laughlin's Principles of Money*, pp. 427ff.

⁷⁹*Thirty Years' View*, Vol. I, pp. 158ff.

to tax the currency of the state banks out of existence.⁸⁰ In a speech, in 1840, which was reprinted in *The Inquirer* in 1843, just after he had visited Jefferson City, Benton said, "The currency question is the greatest question of the age," and later in the same speech, "I repeat it, the currency question is the great question of the age; it absorbs and swallows up every other." And it was his attempt to put into practice his currency ideas in the State of Missouri that had involved him in a fight to the bitter end for his political existence. Benton's position on the Texas treaty and his aversion to the war which he believed would follow its ratification becomes clear when it is viewed from the standpoint of its effect upon the currency situation in the United States and especially in the West.

The great obstacle to Benton's currency schemes was the lack of sufficient hard money for circulation. He had always claimed that the hard money would come if the small notes were not allowed to circulate. Hence, his effort to have the legislature of Missouri prohibit under heavy penalties the circulation of small notes in Missouri. But if small notes were not to circulate gold and silver must be obtained to circulate in the place of them. Where was it to come from? Benton looked to Mexico for much of it.

In a speech in the Senate on his bill for the admission of Texas he urged as the chief claim for the superiority of his bill over the treaty that it would avoid the war with Mexico, which the treaty would have caused. After showing that such a war would be unjust and dishonorable he said, "Policy and interest if not justice and honor, should make us refrain from this war. We have, or rather had, a great commerce with Mexico, which deserves protection instead of destruction. Our trade with this country commenced with the first year of her independence—1821—and we received from her that year \$80,000 in specie. It increased annually and vastly and in the year 1835, the year before the revolution, this import increased to \$8,343,181 on the custom house books beside the amounts not entered.⁸¹ Our sympathy and

⁸⁰*Congressional Globe*, Vol. 10, (1841-42) 27th Congress, pp. 81ff.

⁸¹*Congressional Globe*, Vol. 13, (1843-44) pp. 474-497.

supposed aid to the Texans lost us the favor of the Mexicans, and the imports ran down in seven years to \$1,342,817. New Orleans, and thru her, the great West, was the greatest gainer by this import while it flourished—and of course the greatest loser when it declined; and instead of destroying the remainder of it, and all commerce with our nearest neighbor, by an unjust assumption of war against her, we should rather choose to restore this specie import to its former maximum and increase it. We should rather choose to cherish and improve a valuable trade with a neighbor that has mines, and whose staple is silver. Atlantic politicians hot in the pursuit of Texas may have no sympathy for this Mexican trade, but I have; and it has been my policy to reconcile these two objects—acquisition of Texas and the preservation of Mexican trade—and, therefore, to eschew unjust war with Mexico as not only wicked but foolish.” Benton in his letter to the Texas Congress dated May 2, 1844, in which he urged the desirability of annexation without war, used the same arguments and stressed the import of gold and silver into the United States.

But these as well as all other arguments appeared to fall upon deaf ears so far as Missouri Democrats were concerned. Even *The Jefferson Inquirer*, probably the strongest Benton paper in the state, in the same issue in which it published Benton's letter to the Texan Congress had an editorial a column in length advocating the immediate annexation of Texas. The *Missouri Register's* columns were full of attacks upon Benton because of his position on the Texas treaty, for three months before the election. He was accused of being a traitor to his country and to the West in particular, of being in alliance with the British, and of going over to the Whigs. The letters of Clay, Van Buren, and Benton, all opposing immediate annexation, were compared and attacked bitterly, especially that of Benton.⁸²

Public meetings were held in many places, and resolutions were passed demanding immediate annexation. C. F. Jackson and Judge Rawlins of Howard county, candidates, one for the House and the other for the State Senate, and

⁸²*Missouri Register*, May 14, 1844.

both old political friends and supporters of Benton, and leaders in the Fayette Clique, declared publicly in their campaign that they "would not vote for Benton or any other man for the United States Senate who was opposed to the immediate annexation of Texas."⁸³ The Whigs approved of Benton's course on the Texan treaty, but this Whig endorsement served only as a further handicap to Benton in the eyes of all good Democrats.

In the face of all this opposition Benton did not flinch or waver on his position. He came to Missouri as soon as Congress adjourned and made a speaking tour in which he spoke at St. Louis, Jefferson City, Boonville, and other points and always explained the Texas question and why he opposed the treaty. The speech at Boonville delivered at a great Democratic campaign rally July 17, 1844, is typical of his campaign speeches during this summer. He first declared his personal disinterestedness in the election. He said that it was more becoming of him to thank the people of Missouri for having elected him four times to the Senate of the United States, than to ask for a fifth election, that he was not a candidate but that he left his interest in the hands of his friends, the Hards. He then proceeded to discuss the Texas question and called on all present who had lived in Missouri in 1819 to witness that he had been the first to write and speak against giving Texas away and the first to suggest annexation. He then proceeded in great detail to give an account of the making of the treaty of 1819, and fastened upon Calhoun the responsibility for giving Texas away. He next made an extensive argument against the treaty for annexation negotiated by Calhoun, denouncing it as "a carefully and artfully contrived plan to dissolve the Union." He followed this with an elaborate argument in favor of his bill and the importance of getting Texas without war with Mexico, which he said would be accomplished by his measure.

Benton's stand on the Texas treaty must have lost him a good deal of support. It gave those politicians who were getting tired of his leadership, or who were secretly opposed to him a chance to come out in opposition to him on a popular

⁸³*Missouri Register*, June 11, 1844.

question. Probably C. F. Jackson represented one of these types and Atchison the other. Jackson openly came out against Benton on annexation and declared that he would not vote for him if elected to the legislature, but there is no evidence that Atchison opposed the reelection of Benton. He seems to have stood aloof from the fight after his appointment to the United States Senate, but he boldly took a position against Benton on the treaty when it was being considered in the Senate.

At this time the election for State officers and Congressmen was held early in August. At this election the regular Democratic candidate for Governor, Edwards, was elected by a majority of 5621 over the independent candidate, Allen. The Whigs elected forty-four members in the House as against twenty-six in the previous house. The General Assembly now stood fifty-three Whigs and eighty Democrats, a total of one hundred and thirty-three members. Sixty-seven votes were required to elect a senator. The Democrats had a clear majority of thirteen but no one knew how many Democrats were Anti-Benton. The Whigs made considerable inroads upon the Democratic strongholds especially in the contests for members of the legislature. They even secured two of the three representatives from Howard county, the home of the Central Clique, and it may have been that Jackson's opposition to Benton on the Texas question was what saved him. The *Missouri Register* claimed an Anti-Benton majority of four votes.⁸⁴ The *Reporter* claimed Benton was beaten by eight votes.⁸⁵ On the other hand The *Inquirer* claimed Benton's election by from sixteen to twenty votes.⁸⁶ Thus the August election did not determine the contest.

The anti-Benton Democrats redoubled their efforts after the election. Every issue of their press was full of attacks upon Benton. With the State campaign over, the editorials turned more on national issues. All kinds of efforts were made to cast reflection on Benton and bring him into disrepute. The charge that Benton was really against the national

⁸⁴*Missouri Register*, Aug. 27, 1844.

⁸⁵*Missouri Reporter*, quoted in the *Statesman*, Sept. 6, 1844.

⁸⁶*Jefferson Inquirer*, Aug. 16, 1844.

ticket was renewed. The *Reporter* quoted Benton as replying to a compromise proposition that was made to him at the National Democratic Convention at Baltimore to the effect that Mr. Van Buren withdraw, by saying, "I will see the Democratic party sink fifty fathoms deep into the middle of hell-fire before I will give one inch with Mr. Van Buren. If we cannot obtain victory with Mr. Van Buren we do not want victory and will not have it."⁸⁷

Benton was assailed for not living in the State. "Missouri," it was said, "has long been a kind of political principality for him, while his residence has been in Virginia and Kentucky."⁸⁸ The violence of the contest was shown by personal attacks made on Benton. His vote was challenged in St. Louis by a Whig who asserted that Benton did not live in the State, and he was compelled to swear that St. Louis was his residence. Col. Benton had been a director in the old Territorial Bank of Missouri, which had failed in 1819. Some one got a judgment against the Bank and after having failed to get the money had Benton arrested for debt. He was compelled to plead privilege from arrest as a member of Congress. This was done in 1843 and repeated in September 1844. The *Missouri Register* without any explanation of the nature of the debt said, "Col. Benton arrived in St. Louis the first of the week and the sheriff served a writ for debt on him the next day after he arrived. Is it not strange that Col. Benton should be thus used? Certainly it is no credit to him, much less to the state of Missouri after it has fattened him for a quarter of a century."⁸⁹ Such was the character of the attacks made on Benton between August first, the date of the election of the legislature, and its assembly in the latter part of November.

Petitions were quietly circulated in some counties addressed to the legislator asking him to vote for some good Democrat instead of Benton.⁹⁰ One of these was circulated in Osage county. A correspondent of *The Inquirer* said that

⁸⁷*Reporter*, quoted in the *Missouri Register*, Aug. 27, 1844.

⁸⁸*Missouri Register*, Sept. 10, 1844.

⁸⁹*Missouri Register*, Oct. 1, 1844.

⁹⁰*Jefferson Inquirer*, Sept. 26, 1844.

what the Softs could not effect by open warfare, he feared some more insidious, was endeavoring to effect by strategy, which was only Softism in a new form. The former was an undisguised attack upon Col. Benton for the avowed object of his political destruction; the latter was slyly and subtly spreading the poison of disaffection. He said the annexation of Texas was the avowed object of the opposition but in reality their purpose was the elevation of political intriguers. When the above statements are considered in connection with C. F. Jackson's active opposition to Benton on the Texas question, and the fact that Osage county was a Hard county and had always adhered to the Central Clique it would seem that there was not only good grounds for questioning Jackson's loyalty to Benton but also strong reasons for condemning his motives for and methods of opposition, if the inference that he was the political intriguer in whose behalf the papers of instruction were being circulated was true.

In Benton's speeches on Texas he had always declared himself in favor of annexation at the earliest practicable moment. Texas meetings where Benton's friends prevailed adopted resolutions using the expression "earliest practicable moment," while those meetings where Benton's friends were in a minority used the word "immediate" in their resolutions. C. F. Jackson addressed a Texas meeting in Randolph county (one of the extreme Hard counties that had always lined up with the Central Clique), which declared for the immediate annexation of Texas, and also organized a league (patterned after the organization of a political party) for the purpose of pushing the immediate annexation without the consent of Mexico.⁹¹ A great Democratic rally was held at Hannibal in October. Benton was there and spoke upon the annexation of Texas. He emphasized the necessity of acquiring Texas, but also emphasized the desirability of keeping peace and building up our commerce with Mexico. Later in the day his speech was answered by C. F. Jackson,

"Ibid.

who advocated the immediate annexation of Texas without the consent of Mexico.⁹²

Benton in his Hannibal speech referred to his position as being that of a supposed candidate for the United States Senate. He mentioned the fact that he had spoken of it once before and had said that having been in the Senate for twenty-five years he did not ask a fifth election, that he was passive and neutral in the question and left the decision to his political friends, the Hards.⁹³ He now repeated what he to be said at Boonville and said further that it now became him to be more explicit, and to say that he should withdraw his name from the canvass if he found any dissention or division among his friends. He would not be the cause or subject of any dissention among them. No such dissention could take place without injury to the party—without impairing its harmony and unity—without, perhaps, leading to incurable division; and this was a consequence he was irrevocably determined should never take place on his account. He repeated, he would take care to have his name withdrawn if there was any division among his friends, the Hards, to whose decision, in all other respects he committed his fate.⁹⁴

THE STRUGGLE IN THE MISSOURI LEGISLATURE.

The Senatorial contest was hanging in the balance. No one knew what the result would be. The date for the assembling of the Legislature was the third Monday in November. Neither side was very confident of success. Both were on the alert and ready to take advantage of the slightest opportunity to secure the defeat of the other. As the date of the meeting of the Legislature drew near the political tension increased. There were reports that Jackson would become a candidate against Benton for the Senatorship.⁹⁵ The politicians gathered early, not only the members of the Legislature but it appears that the Benton men had as many as possible of their influential leaders come to Jefferson City

⁹²*St. Louis Republican*, Oct. 5, 1844.

⁹³Benton's Boonville Speech, published in *The Inquirer*, July 25, 1844.

⁹⁴Benton's Speech at Hannibal Oct. 1, *Inquirer*, Oct. 17, 1844.

⁹⁵*St. Louis Republican*, Nov. 21, 1844.

on one pretext or another and then work for Benton on the side. The correspondent of *The Republican* said that there were nearly one hundred men there seeking to be selected as messenger to Washington, D. C., to carry the official electoral vote, all of them active Bentonians.⁹⁶ There were many conferences and much caucusing and at this kind of work the Benton men proved themselves superior to their opponents. What was accomplished by them is best told in the words of the correspondent of *The Republican*. Writing before the meeting of the Legislature he said: "Jackson is to be elected Speaker. In this there is a double operation. In the first place, the election of Mr. Jackson to the office of Speaker will buy him off from contending against Col. Benton for the Senatorship,—a fear which has been pretty widely entertained, and in the next place, it once more manifests the influence of the Colonel's favorite measures in the House.⁹⁷ The chief clerkship is to be given to Mr. Houston as a reward for the part he played in support of the Colonel's currency measures." Later he said: "The caucus held this morning was not harmonious but the offices of speaker, chief clerk, etc., were settled. All applicants were required to give a pledge to support Col. Benton,—Jackson whose reported split with Benton on the Texas question has been so rife goes the whole figure."⁹⁸

The Legislature met on November 18th. Jackson was elected Speaker and Houston chief clerk. Thus the Hards controlled the organization. After the organization was effected a caucus was held in the Senate chamber. According to the correspondent of *The Republican*, "the object was to whip the few Softs into the traces and to obtain their pledge to support Col. Benton. The meeting was by no means harmonious and two or three withdrew refusing to pledge themselves. The caucus determined to bring on the election at an early day this week. If they can succeed the election will probably take place Wednesday or Thursday. The opponents of Col. Benton will attempt to procrasti-

⁹⁶*Ibid.*, Nov. 22, 1844.

⁹⁷*St. Louis Republican*, Nov. 21, 1844.

⁹⁸*Ibid.*, Nov. 22, 1844.

nate, and if they succeed the Colonel's election may be regarded as doubtful." ⁹⁹

On the afternoon of the 19th, Senator Fort submitted a joint resolution "to go into the election of Senator of the United States to supply the vacancy occasioned by the death of Senator Linn, and also the election of a Senator to supply the place of Hon. Thomas H. Benton, whose term of service expires on the 4th of March, 1845, on tomorrow at 2 o'clock P. M." Mr. Ellis, Democrat from the senatorial district in which Atchison lived, moved to lay on the table, which motion was lost, yeas fourteen, nays nineteen. As there were twenty-four Democrats and only nine Whigs in the Senate, five Democrats must have voted for the Ellis motion to table the resolutions. Ellis then submitted as a substitute for Fort's resolution a resolution favoring the immediate annexation of Texas. The president decided the substitute was out of order. Ellis then moved to amend Fort's resolution by striking out all that portion after the word "also." The effect of the amendment would have been to elect Atchison at the joint meeting and postpone the election of Benton. The amendment was lost, yeas fourteen, nays nineteen. The resolution was then passed, yeas twenty, nays thirteen.¹⁰⁰

When the resolution came up in the House, Hough, a democrat from Scott county in Southeast Missouri, introduced a series of resolutions, the purport of which was to approve the course of Atchison and to condemn that of Benton upon the Texas question. This was an effort to delay the action of the House upon the Senate resolution until after the time named for the joint meeting, but the Speaker decided that as they were concurrent they should lay on the table one day before being considered. Mr. McHenry, of Bates county, offered the following resolution: "That the Senate be informed that the House will be ready this day at 2 o'clock P. M. to proceed to the election of two Senators to the Congress of the United States for the State of Mis-

⁹⁹*Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰*Senate Journal*, 1844-45, pp. 42f.

souri.”¹⁰¹ Mr. Davis, a Whig from Howard county, objected to the consideration of the resolution as being out of order. The Speaker decided the consideration of the resolution to be in order, whereupon, Davis appealed from the decision of the Speaker to the House and demanded the yeas and nays. The Speaker was sustained by a vote of seventy-eight to sixteen. Mr. Perryman, Whig from Washington county, then moved to adjourn, but the motion was lost by a vote of sixty to thirty-seven. Mr. Hough then moved to postpone the consideration of Mr. McHenry’s resolution, until tomorrow at 2 o’clock P. M., but his motion was voted down fifty-five to forty-one and McHenry’s resolution was adopted by the same vote. There were forty-four Whig members in the House. It will be noted that in no instance during the fight to delay the election of Benton did the Whigs cast their full vote against the Benton men.

When the two houses met in joint session Atchison was nominated for the short term by Mr. Fort, leader of the Benton men in the Senate, and received 101 votes, thirty-four more than was necessary. For the long term, Mr. Monroe, Senator from the central part of the State, nominated Col. Benton; and Senator Anderson, Soft Democrat from St. Louis, nominated Thos. B. English, a Soft from Cape Girardeau county. Benton received seventy-four votes, English thirty-two, and the other votes were scattered.¹⁰² Benton had a margin of only eight votes which in itself is significant when it is remembered that the Democrats had eighty members in the legislature, and that Atchison’s margin was thirty-four. An analysis of the vote shows that two Whigs voted for Benton and eight Democrats failed to vote for him, that most of the Anti-Benton Democratic vote was in the Senate and came from the holdover Senators and further that it came from the Northwest and the Southeast.

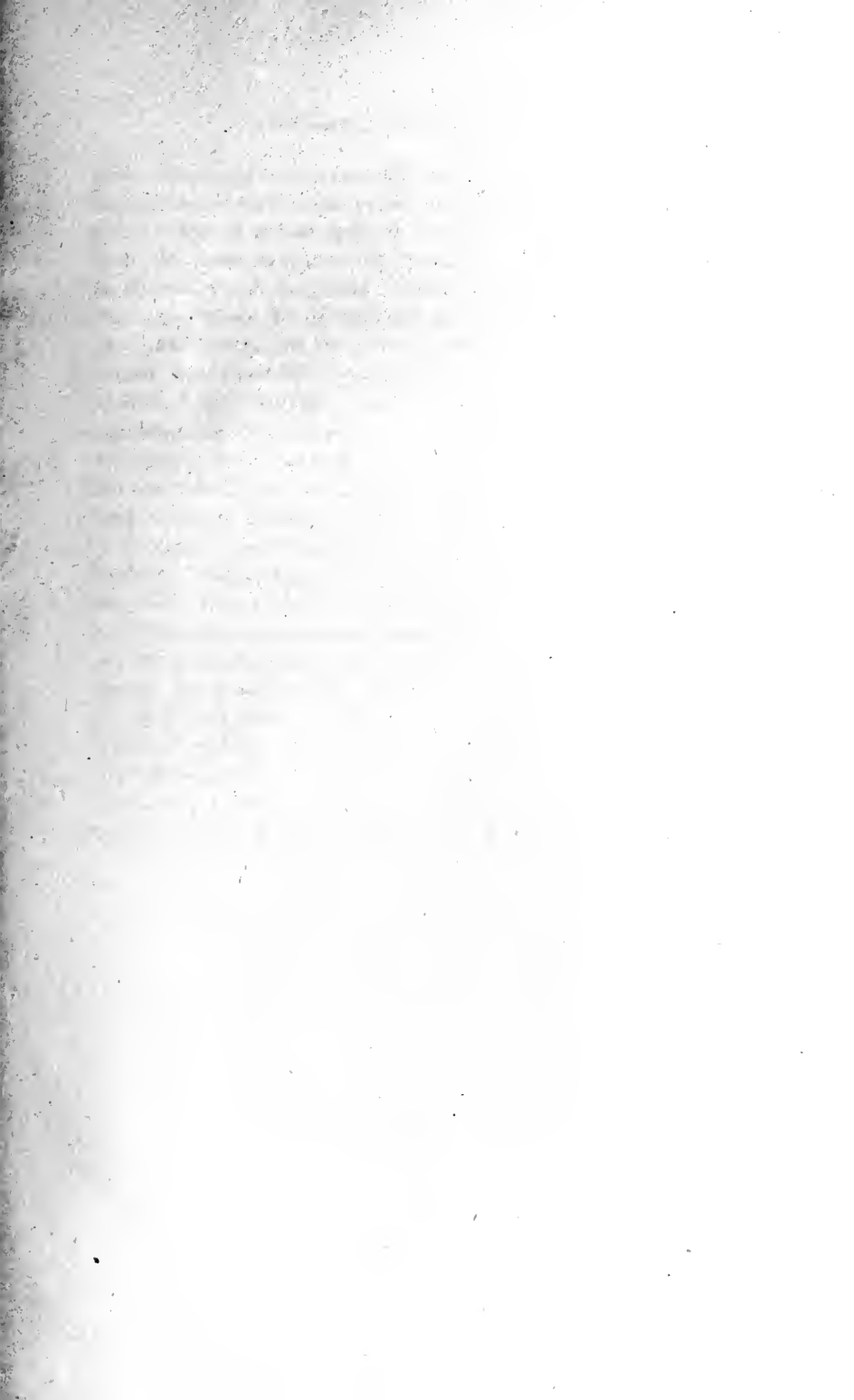
The Anti-Benton forces, clearly, had failed to perfect any coalition whereby they could cast their entire vote for one man, and their tactics was to secure time for organiza-

¹⁰¹*House Journal*, 1844-45, pp. 38-40.

¹⁰²*Ibid.*

tion. On the other hand the Democratic organization had succeeded in controlling all the newly elected members except three. The correspondent of *The Republican* enumerated a number who cast their votes for Benton, but who, he said, should have voted against him. Boas, of Ste. Genevieve, had instructions from his constituents in his pocket to vote against Benton when he voted for him; Buford of Madison, French of Dade, McClure of Warren, McHenry of Bates, Salmon of Davis, Smith of Clinton, Warren of Camden, and Wilson of Van Buren (Bates) were either elected on pledges to vote against Benton or as anti-Benton men. Some of them, it was alleged, pledged themselves repeatedly on the stump to oppose Benton's reelection.¹⁰³ Here are nine men most of whom, at least, had been brought to the support of Col. Benton thru the pressure of the organization. Indeed the power of the party organization was so great that it not only whipped the Soft members of the Legislature into line, but it prevented any Soft leader of prominence from becoming an active candidate against Benton or even openly allowing the use of his name for such a purpose. Thus it appears that the party organization saved Benton in 1844. The Hard press was jubilant. The papers praised Benton very highly. All open opposition seemed to melt away and while Benton's victory was by a very narrow margin it appeared to be complete.

¹⁰³*St. Louis Republican*, Nov. 25, 1844.







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