

FRONTIER DEMOCRATS
A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE OFFICIAL RECORDS
OF THE
SIXTEENTH AND FIFTY-FIRST CONGRESSES

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by

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PREFACE

This study is the result of two statements by Frederick Jackson Turner concerning the connection between the frontier and democracy. The first maintained that the frontier regions "...have exercised a steady influence toward democracy."^{*} In other words, frontiers tend to produce "frontier democrats." Turner had already stated in a previous essay that during the "Era of Good Feeling" the men of the "West" began "...to stand as a new national type."^{**} With this as a foundation, the result was an attempt to discover if it would be possible to generalize concerning the philosophy and political theory of the "frontier democrat" in the Sixteenth Congress and the Fifty-first Congress.

*Frederick Jackson Turner, The Frontier in American History (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1962), 247.

**Ibid., 216.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to utilize the information obtained from an analysis of the voting records and recorded speeches of representatives from selected frontier states in the Sixteenth and Fifty-first Congresses. Comparative generalizations will be formulated which might prove methodologically useful in assessing the effect of the frontier on domestic politics on a national level. This analysis profits from the work of both Frederick Jackson Turner and Walter Prescott Webb, but from the standpoint of theoretical foundation rather than detailed criticism. Criticism of the work of Turner or Webb has been ruled outside the scope of this study, due to the fact that the period under consideration is not of sufficient duration to warrant such assumptions. This study proposes rather to cast tentative generalizations and establish a methodological framework which might lead to more exhaustive research at a later date.¹

A total of six states were selected for consideration in the manner referred to above: Ohio, Indiana, and Kentucky for the Sixteenth Congress (1819-1821); and Kansas, Nebraska, and South Dakota for the Fifty-first Congress (1889-1891). The states were selected from that group of states which could be considered as near the frontier line during each period in order that a high degree of validity might be obtained with respect to possible generalizations. It must be noted, however, that a strictly arbitrary selection was not

¹It must be noted that the evidence presented in this paper does fall into general agreement with Turner and Webb. Nevertheless, the intention was not to prove or disprove said hypotheses because the limitations of the study precluded such action.

made from the group of states which met the above qualifications.

Southern frontier states were avoided because the effects of "that peculiar institution" would possibly tend to compound on otherwise complicated situation still further. States of the so-called Far West were not examined due to the additional factors of mining, irrigation, ranching; and the concurrent difficulty of finding three states which bordered one another. The study was, in consequence, restricted to frontier states which were primarily agricultural in nature during the period under consideration. This was done so that the number of influential factors might be reduced to the minimum. Despite the seventy-year gap, an effort was made thus to deal with similar situations with respect to proximity to the frontier line and economic base.

The areas selected for study with respect to the Sixteenth Congress entered the Union between 1792 (Kentucky) and 1816 (Indiana) and had consequently been removed from territorial status for an average of seventeen years. The states under examination in the Fifty-first Congress were removed from territorial status for an average of nineteen years, Kansas entering the Union in 1861, and South Dakota in 1889.

SIXTEENTH CONGRESS

The idea of drawing generalizations from two congressional assemblies separated by a gap of seventy years is not quite as difficult as it might appear. Both periods were characterized by what are now referred to in more modern terminology as "depressions." The Panic of 1819, was the first economic disorder to disrupt life in the United States after George Washington took office,² while the farmer of 1890 found himself steadily approaching a situation analogous to the serfdom of Europe's Middle Ages.³ In both cases the bulk of the population of the "West" was involved in agriculture, and the interests of their legislative representatives were oriented toward agrarian measures in one form or another.

In 1820 public lands were sold at auction and thus the "frontier democrats" were primarily interested in the relatively easy acquisition of land. For many years previous to the Sixteenth Congress, land-seekers had been able to purchase claims on credit with the promise to pay the bulk of the price at a future date. Many believed that the farmer would be able to make a profit from his land so as to pay the debt to the Treasury when it came due. In this manner, the land could be settled more rapidly than would have been the case with allowing only cash purchases of land. The purchase prices were extremely high in some areas, however, due largely to speculation; whereas fortunes, as a rule, were not readily amassed by the newly settled pioneers. Sufficient

²Thomas A. Bailey, The American Pageant: A History of the Republic (Boston: D. C. Heath and Company, 1956), 227.

³Ibid., 581.

funds could not be accumulated, in many cases, in time to meet the payment dates. Congress, responsive to voter interest, several times suspended the forfeiture provisions of the public land laws in hopes that the situation would improve. Thus, although the settlement of the frontier continued, the obligations from land purchases grew larger by the year and in 1820 amounted to "some \$22,000,000.00."⁴

In consequence of this obviously unfortunate situation, Senator Walter Leake (Mississippi) introduced a bill which would provide for purchase of larger blocks of land, as well as the repeal of the laws pertaining to credit purchase and their replacement by a system of cash purchase. When one considers that the western states were settled as the result of the existing laws and that they were composed of a population that was largely agricultural, it is to be expected that they would oppose such legislation. The legislation was opposed by a number of western representatives, but not by all of them, either in the Senate or the House of Representatives.

The debate over the public land bill took the same course in both houses of Congress. Within both bodies the controversy was over the problem of settling the land as quickly as possible. One group insisted that this would be next to impossible without credit for land purchases, and another maintained that such was far from being the case. The "credit purchase" forces were defeated, although they did manage to pass a bill introduced by Senator

⁴Annals of Congress, 16th Cong., 1st Sess., 1820, XXXV, 445. Cf. Benjamin H. Hibbard, A History of the Public Land Policies (New York: Macmillan Company, 1924) for a more detailed discussion of the problem of public lands. Mr. Hibbard states that the amount owed for nonpayment with respect to the sale of public land was \$21,000,000.00. The estimate of \$22 million is verified by American State Papers: Documents, legislative and executive of the Congress of the United States, Public Lands (Washington, D. C.: Gales & Seaton, 1821), III, 460.

James Noble (Indiana) on 21 December 1819, which suspended the laws pertaining to forfeiture for another two years.⁵

Undoubtedly the congressional exercise of "log-rolling" had become an accustomed part of the legislative process by 1820. Was the vote of the "frontier democrats" concerning the public land bill a manifestation of this process of quid pro quo in the national assembly? It appears not; as the delegates were rather evenly split on this issue of cash purchases.

The split within the voting bloc of the West over the public land bill in the first session of the Sixteenth Congress may be explained in the following manner. An extension of credit payments for land purchases would have benefited the more isolated areas of the frontier states to a greater degree than the populous ones. The fact that there is a correlation between the residences of congressmen and their votes on the public land bill serves to demonstrate that on occasion certain "frontier democrats" found greater affinity with the older settled areas than their compatriots. Nevertheless, the majority of the western congressmen who supported the Leake bill lived near arteries of transportation. Most of those in opposition, on the other hand, were found to live in more isolated areas in terms of transportation facilities.

Examination of the voting patterns among the "frontier democrats" concerning the "Leake bill" illustrates that the frontier of 1820 cannot be considered as an absolute entity. Other factors may have had an influence on individual decisions with respect to voting, but the issue of "isolated vs. populous" seems to have had a rather uniform effect.

⁵Annals of Congress, 16th Cong., 1st Sess., 1820, XXXV, 489.

Nonetheless, the "frontier democrats" did tend to vote as a bloc against the representatives of the older, settled areas of the country in Congress. In situations in which the question at issue was one of "West" against "East" it is more difficult to explain why some western congressmen appear to have voted against their own best interest. The bill to introduce a uniform system of bankruptcy is a case in point. A bill governing bankruptcy was introduced during the first session of the Sixteenth Congress, but did not pass to the third reading. On 21 January 1821, Senator Nicholas Van Dyke (Delaware) reintroduced the bill, which passed the Senate but failed to do so in the House and "died" with the end of the session. Conflict was not the rule within the Western bloc during the debate on this bill in the two houses of Congress, it was rather one of "West" vs. "East."

Another example of "bloc voting" can be seen in the record concerning the public land bill introduced by Senator Richard M. Johnson (Kentucky) during the second session of Congress. This bill would allow the forfeiture of portions of a land claim in order to avoid loss of the entire claim for non-payment as required by law. Under the provisions of this legislation, a landowner could forfeit a portion of his claim sufficient to pay the remaining portion of his debt, with the amount of land forfeited to be determined by the original price per acre. Johnson's bill did not favor any one section of the West over any other, and thus was supported by the entire group of "frontier democrats."

Two conclusions can be drawn concerning the role of the frontier in national politics at this point. First, the frontier was not always a unified bloc in 1820, and consequently, one finds the division between populous and less populated areas being carried into the frontier states themselves. Second,

in the public land controversy of the 1820's it is possible to detect, in the minds of a portion of the "frontier democrats" at least, the idea of the government as a public trust, existing to serve the people.⁶ The representatives opposed to the idea of cash payment for public lands were thus supporting the theory that a public debt was not reprehensible in and of itself if the public interest was served. Opposition to a uniform system of bankruptcy, can be viewed as expressing the idea that such a system was not in the public interest. Nonetheless, one must not attach too much significance to statements concerning public interest when the speech in question is relative to internal improvements. Such legislation was many times in the interest of the West per se. One should not automatically disregard such statements, however, as the voting record presents evidence of a concern with public interest.

The manifestation of "public interest" can be observed more clearly in statements from both houses of Congress concerning the United States Bank. Senator William A. Trimble, (Ohio) in a speech on 11 December 1820, commented that "... banks, as established in the U. S., are anti-republican institutions, which tend inevitably to aristocracy."⁷ Representative Thomas Metcalfe, (Kentucky) on 10 April 1820, affirmed that the Bank was "... the darkest speck ... on the escutcheon of American liberty,"⁸ and Representative Benjamin

⁶Representative Johnson, speaking in reference to a internal improvement measure, maintained that every "... measure which will cherish our Union, operate as powerful cement, [or prove beneficial to] a common interest should be taken into the most serious consideration, at a time when longitude and latitude have been the basis for merit instead of public spirit and public service." Ibid., 440-442. (Italics mine)

⁷Annals of Congress, 16th Cong., 2nd Sess., 1820, XXXVII, 102.

⁸Ibid., 1st Sess., 1820, XXXVI, 1815.

Hardin (Kentucky) predicted that the Bank would "...trample under foot the liberties of the country."⁹

An additional generalization may be drawn from the study of the Sixteenth Congress; namely, a belief among the "frontier democrats," of a free or liberal interpretation of the Constitution of the United States. This can be seen by the fact that the western representatives strongly endorsed vast internal improvements in the transportation system of the country, which would be largely financed by government funds. It was a westerner, Senator Trimble, in fact, who first submitted a resolution to establish a standing committee on Roads and Canals in the first session of the Sixteenth Congress.¹⁰ The "American System" of Henry Clay, Speaker of the House until October 1820, and a "frontier democrat" from Kentucky, called for, among other things, the establishment of a network of roads and canals.¹¹

The system of roads and canals called for under the "American System" had particular relevance to the economic well-being of the West. It also required the "frontier democrats" to support a free interpretation of the Constitution in order to expand the powers of the Federal Government into this area. Arguments against the internal improvements supported by the western representatives may possibly have been motivated by sectional interests as well. It

⁹Ibid., 1827.

¹⁰Ibid., 1st Sess., 1820, XXXV, 366.

¹¹Michael Martin and Leonard Gelber, Dictionary of American History (Student ed.; Paterson, J. N.: Littlefield, Adams and Company, 1959), 20. The origin of Clay's American System appears to lie in a report submitted by Secretary of Treasury Albert Gallatin to the Senate in 1808. William O. Lynch, Fifty Years of Party Warfare: 1789-1837 (Indianapolis, Indiana: Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1951), 255.

is nevertheless significant that one line of reasoning used by opponents of the "American System" was based on the power of Congress to indulge in such activities. In short, a constitutional question was involved.¹²

¹²Annals of Congress, 16th Cong., 2nd Sess., 1821, XXXVII, 155. Cf. Sen. David L. Morrill (New Hampshire).

FIFTY-FIRST CONGRESS

The "frontier democrat" of 1820 was primarily involved in legislation designed to allow relatively easy access to new land. A secondary consideration was that of insuring that the pioneer might remain on the land. This can be observed with respect to the legislation relative to the uniform system of bankruptcy and the various bills dealing with internal improvements. In 1890, the problem was not so much that of enabling people to acquire land, the Homestead Act of 1862 having accomplished this with some success, as it was one of enabling them to remain there. Low prices for agricultural products, deflated currency, and the dual effect of high protective tariffs and manufacturing/transportation trusts served to keep many farmers either in, or on the verge of, debt. The discontent of the West found its outlet in movements to revise the protective tariff, to reform the currency, to control, if not abolish, trusts, and ultimately to establish a new political party.

Currency reform was probably the most important item as far as the "frontier democrats" were concerned. Revision of the tariff and control of the trusts would be for naught unless the supply of currency was increased. Although business and industrial activity had increased a great deal in the twenty-year period from 1870 to 1890, the amount of currency per capita had only increased from \$19.42 in 1870, to \$22.67 in 1890.¹³

The Westerners found their panacea in the demand for the "free and unlimited coinage of silver." The depression which was affecting much of the

¹³Bailey, op. cit., 581.

country, especially the agricultural areas, was attributed to insufficient quantities of currency, and most particularly to the demonetization of silver in 1873.¹⁴ Although the "frontier democrats" had managed to pass the Bland-Allison Act of 1878, over a Presidential Veto, the Secretary of the Treasury had been given the option of coining as much silver currency as he wished, and the West did not feel that enough had been coined.¹⁵

Early in the first session of the House of Representatives the debate began on H.R. 5381, the Silver Bill. The "frontier democrats" found themselves faced with two alternatives in the face of the opposition of the more settled areas of the country. They could vote against a bill which they felt was not sufficient for the problem at issue, except they would then have nothing to show for their efforts.¹⁶ The other alternative was to vote for passage to the other House and hope that the Senate would amend it sufficiently to be acceptable.¹⁷ The majority of the western congressmen chose the latter course of action, and the Senate managed to oblige them with an amended piece of legislation which became the Sherman Silver Purchase Act of 1890.

The voting upon the silver bill in the first session of the Fifty-first Congress is not the only example of the "frontier democrats" being forced to choose between legislative realities and frontier interests. When Senate Bill 2781 (dealing with the forfeiture of land grants by railroads who had not

¹⁴Congressional Record, 51st Cong., 1st Sess., 1890, XXI, Part 6, 5806-5807. Cf. Rep. W. J. Connell.

¹⁵Ibid., Part 2, 354-356. Cf. Rep. George W. E. Dorsey (Nebraska).

¹⁶Ibid., 374-375. Cf. Rep. Harrison Kelley (Kansas).

¹⁷Ibid., Part 6, 5804. Cf. Rep. B. W. Perkins (Kansas).

finished their proposed construction within a specified time) was first presented to the House of Representatives in 1890, a motion was made to recommit the bill to committee to draft a stronger one.¹⁸ This motion was defeated, with a majority of westerners voting in the negative. This may have been the result of a belief that even were such a bill to pass the House of Representatives, it would more than likely be defeated by the "railroad Senators" in the other house.

The democratizing element of the "frontier democrats" of the Fifty-first Congress may be best expressed by the speeches concerning the McKinley Tariff of 1890. This tariff taxed dutiable goods to an average of 48.4%.¹⁹ Although not the highest tariff in the United States' history, those of 1830 and 1865 being of almost equal percentages, it was excessively high considering the financial situation in the country at the time. During the debate in Congress, many western congressmen were vocal in condemning an excessive protective tariff in their speeches on the floor of Congress.²⁰ The West did not oppose protective tariffs for "infant industry," but was opposed to protection for industries which were large enough to survive competition from abroad. There were numerous references to "tariff trusts," and the hardship which the lack of competition was working on the country, particularly their own constituencies.²¹ Despite such sentiments, however, the "frontier democrats," as a

¹⁸Ibid., Part 8, 7388.

¹⁹Bailey, op. cit., 589.

²⁰Congressional Record, 51st Cong., 1st Sess., 1890, XXI, Part 10, 9456. Cf. Sen. A. S. Paddock; Ibid., Part 8, 8019. Cf. Sen. P. B. Plumb, and Ibid., Part 5, 5046. Cf. Rep. John A. Anderson (Kansas).

²¹Ibid., Part 8, 8019. Cf. Sen. Plumb, and Ibid., 4569-4570. Cf. Rep. Anderson.

rule, voted for enactment of the McKinley Tariff.

Many students of American History are of the opinion that the apparent hypocrisy may be explained by assuming the votes of the western congressmen were "purchased" by the Sherman Silver Purchase Bill.²² This may very well have been the case, but it cannot be denied that the "frontier democrats" were worthy of the name, if one can consider the speeches which were made concerning the bill as illustrating their personal beliefs.

One must not acquire the impression that the "frontier democrats" were always faced with some type of legislative quandry which forced them to compromise. During the discussion of S. 1 (which became the Sherman Anti-Trust Act) it appears that party politics or log-rolling were not as influential as in the consideration of the silver bill.

With legislation such as the Sherman Anti-Trust Act, it is possible to detect a further elaboration of the concept of government as a public trust, and a free interpretation of the Constitution. Senator John J. Ingalls (Kansas) articulated the idea very clearly in a speech on 26 March 1890, when he remarked that:

A constitution is a growth, and not a manufacture, and the Constitution of 1890, ...is a vastly different instrument from the Constitution of 1789. Its authors would not know it. They made it for specific purposes, not for the object of enabling country lawyers to devise definitions, not for the purpose of interposing obstacles and barriers to the will of the people ...whenever the elasticity, the capacity to carry out the wishes and the will of the people is not sufficient there will always be found a way to amend it.²³

That the "frontier democrats" tended toward broad governmental powers may be seen by the Blair Education Bill (S. 185), which proposed "To aid in the

²²Bailey, op. cit., 588.

²³Congressional Record, 51st Cong., 1st Sess., 1890, XXI, Part 3, 2649. (Italics mine)

establishment and temporary support of common schools."²⁴ Although this bill failed to pass to a "third reading" in the Senate, it was supported by four of the six Senators with which this paper is concerned in the Fifty-first Congress.²⁵

It is rather difficult at times to be positive that a vote for or against a particular bill was cast in conformance with a liberal interpretation of the Constitution, or in response to a problem of an essentially localized nature. The debate over the expenditure of funds for an irrigation survey in the arid regions of the West may be viewed as a clear example of the latter.²⁶

Although bills such as those relative to silver, railroad land grant forfeiture, and trusts may have received support from the "frontier democrats" because of regional interests, it must be noted that they did involve widening the powers of the federal government. More importantly, "frontier democrats" were capable of supporting legislation of a liberal nature which did not directly affect their own regions.²⁷ An example of this tendency is to be found in H.R. 9791, which proposed an eight-hour day for laborers employed by the United States government. Representative William J. Connell (Nebraska) supported this legislation because he felt that it would serve to assist

²⁴Ibid., Part 1, 100.

²⁵Ibid., Part 3, 2337-2338. Senators Ingalls and Plumb voted against the motion "to engross and request a third reading."

²⁶Ibid., Part 9, 8742-8743. Cf. Sen. G. C. Moody; Ibid., Part 8, 770. Cf. Rep. Perkins; Ibid., Part 6, 6056. Cf. Rep. Samuel R. Peters (Kansas) and Ibid., 6049. Cf. Rep. John A. Pickler (South Dakota).

²⁷"Liberal" in this context refers to a broad interpretation of the Constitution.

organized labor, and was necessary to avoid an increase in crippling strikes.²⁸ During the period from 1881 to 1900, there were over 23,000 such industrial disorders.²⁹ Such support is of particular importance when one realizes that the West could not be considered as being an industrial area during this period. The concept of government as a public trust was apparently not unknown to the "frontier democrats" of the Fifty-first Congress.

Although the evidence appears to point toward the existence of a free or liberal interpretation of the Constitution and a consequent broadening of governmental powers in both the Sixteenth and Fifty-first Congresses, the myth of self-reliance was also present in both assemblies. The term "myth" is used to refer to the tradition of frontier individualism in that many times western exponents of an individualistic philosophy appeared to "cuss the government giveaway while herding crowds of subsidized Cadillacs."³⁰ Despite

²⁸ Congressional Record, 51st Cong., 1st Sess., 1890, XXI, Part 10, 9289-9291.

²⁹ Bailey, op. cit., 540.

³⁰ Charles Nickles, "Kansas: a Centennial Tribute." Unpublished poem, (Hays, Kansas, 1961). Although the frontier democrat might possess certain individualistic tenets, e.g., he might resent any interference--by government or society--with his unrestrained exploitation of natural resources; rebel against social controls from the "East;" as well as insist on the absence of personal limitation on his conduct, he cannot be said to have been an individualist as that term is usually translated. In other words, the westerner never allowed his "individualism" to interfere with his economic well-being. Thus, the westerner had no unwavering faith in individual freedom, no unreasoning abhorrence of governmental controls, and no theoretical dislike of central authority. In short, the frontier democrat was an individualist when it was advantageous to his socio-economic progress. Frontiersmen constantly besieged the national government with requests for roads, canals, regulation of land sales in the interest of the settler, improvement of rivers and harbors, creation of credit facilities, and punishment of industrial monopolies. Ray Allen Billington, Westward Expansion: A History of the American Frontier (New York: Macmillan Co., 1949), 247. Cf. Howard R. Lamar, Dakota Territory, 1861-1889: a study in frontier politics (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1956), 283-284 for a

the appearance of hypocrisy, references to a philosophy of individualism may be noted. Representative John Sloane (Ohio) in the first session of the Sixteenth Congress, speaking concerning the cash purchase provision of the land purchase bill, (although he felt that it was not really necessary in that the debt had arisen due to peculiar circumstances which would not recur), was inclined to vote for the bill in order that the eastern states would be convinced that the West did not depend on the federal government, but "...their own industry."³¹ Senator Gideon C. Moody (South Dakota) on 17 July 1890, declared that the "...average Westerner is usually able to take care of himself. He wants, so far as he is individually concerned, very little of the paternal care of the Government. What he wants is to be left alone..."³²

The legislative debate over a "uniform system of bankruptcy" in both assemblies reveals that the "frontier democrats" in both cases were opposed not so much to the principle of bankruptcy, as they were to "involuntary bankruptcy." Statements by representatives to the Sixteenth Congress are, unfortunately, not available due to the habit of not printing all speeches made on the floor of either house.³³ Nevertheless, an examination of the voting

similar evaluation. Curtis Martin. "The Impact of the West on American Government and Politics," The Colorado Quarterly, XIII (Summer, 1964), 51-69, concurs with Billington and Lamer with regard to Western individualism, and goes on to state that "empirical collectivism, practical cooperation, and anti-monopoly sentiments were as native to the West as were tendencies toward individualism and equality." Ibid., 59.

³¹ Annals of Congress, 16th Cong., 1st Sess., 1820, XXXVI, 1893.

³² Congressional Record, 51st Cong., 1st Sess., 1890, XXI, Part 8, 7343.

³³ Annals of Congress, 16th Cong., 2nd Sess., 1820, XXXVII, 339.

record reveals that a majority of the western Representatives opposed the principle of involuntary bankruptcy. Senator Algernon S. Paddock (Nebraska) referred on 19 September 1890, to the "...possible, the probable, ...the certain disasters to follow the enactment of a bankruptcy law having an involuntary provision therein."³⁴ The foregoing statement paralleled that of Senator Preston B. Plumb (Kansas) earlier the same day. Mr. Bishop Walden Perkins proclaimed on the floor of the House of Representatives that the bankruptcy bill under consideration was "...right and equitable, right in principle..."³⁵ only so long as at least a portion of the populace could not be forced into bankruptcy, in this case farmers and wage-earners.

In short, it seems apparent that the "frontier democrats" opposed involuntary bankruptcy for two reasons: They believed individuals did not require governmental supervision with respect to their indebtedness, and they did not feel such a provision was in the public interest. Thus, the "frontier democrats," in both the Sixteenth and Fifty-first Congresses, may be said to have possessed a concept of government as a public trust, a rather free or liberal interpretation of the Constitution, and, concurrently and somewhat hypocritically at times, a dual belief in a broadening of governmental powers and a philosophy of individualism. (While the "frontier democrats" may have made a virtue of self-reliance, they did not oppose projects which were obviously too large for an individual to undertake, such as the irrigation survey. Senator Moody's statement, on the Westerner's ability to provide his own needs, for example, made reference to the individual--not governmental projects per se.)

³⁴Congressional Record, 51st Cong., 1st Sess., 1890, XXI, Part 10, 10210.

³⁵Ibid., Part 8, 7619.

CONTRASTS

That the frontier as a phenomena does not have the same effect in every case goes without saying. Civilization advances, times change, and the social composition of the pioneer changes as well. The "frontier democrat" of 1820, had much in common with the "frontier democrat" of 1890, but the time and the place were different. This difference is quite obvious with respect to the problem of legislating "private morality," particularly the regulation and/or prohibition of liquor. The "frontier democrats" of 1890 were far more interested in legislation of this type than those of 1820.

That the West in 1890, was more involved in legislation of private morality can be observed by the number of petitions relative to the regulation of tobacco and liquor, as well as the existence of a bill to establish a commission on social vice.³⁶ Such matters do not appear to have come to the attention of the Sixteenth Congress, and the conclusion may be drawn that they were not concerned with this type of legislation.

That such legislation did not come to the floor of Congress in 1820, may be attributed to the fact that the socio-moral problem of slavery occupied the minds of the representatives of that assembly to the exclusion of almost any other issue. The "frontier democrats" were, in the main, vocal opponents of the extension of slavery into the territories, the point at issue being the admission of Missouri to the Union, and thus did not have time to worry about

³⁶ *Ibid.*, Part 7, 6821. Cf. Rep. Gilbert L. Laws. Cf. also the Index to Volume XXI of the Congressional Record, for a listing of the petitions, joint resolutions, and bills introduced by the "frontier democrats."

what could be considered, at the time at least, lesser evils.³⁷

The "frontier democrats" of 1890, however, were very much concerned with the "lesser evils" and with legislation concerning same. One factor which may have had an influence with respect to this situation may be found in the geographic dissimilarity of the two frontier areas. The "frontier democrats" of the earlier period were settling an area which did not differ in important respects from that which they had left behind. Once the pioneers moved beyond the famous, or infamous, ninety-eighth meridian, however, this was not the case. Many were the pioneers who moved west proclaiming "Kansas or Bust," and many there were who returned east "Busted!"

Frontier life had never been easy; pioneers had gone into debt before, and would again. The settlement of the United States was not accomplished by the faint of heart. Men had returned "busted" from Ohio in 1820, as they would from Illinois and Iowa in later years. Once on the Plains, however, the pioneer was dealing with a portion of the legendary Great American Desert. Here was a land which appeared, to some of the more imaginative at least, to be in league with the "powers of darkness." A land determined to not only

³⁷ The development of the prohibition movement as such must also be considered as a factor in a discussion of the lack of agitation concerning liquor and its regulation in the Sixteenth Congress. Until 1836, the "movement" had been dominated by the ideal of temperance as opposed to complete prohibition. The prohibitionist faction managed to control the general convention held at Saratoga Springs, New York, in that year, however, and changed the direction of the movement. Henceforth, the emphasis would be placed on the abolition of alcohol completely. Carl R. Fish, The Rise of the Common Man: 1830-1850, Vol. VI of A History of American Life, ed. Arthur M. Schlesinger and Dixon R. Fox (13 vols.; New York: The Macmillan Co., 1927-48), 263-264. The fact that Kentucky, the most populous of the frontier states, was, and is, both a tobacco and liquor producing state, while the "West" of 1890 was not, should be noted as well.

defeat, but destroy, anyone foolish enough to attempt to tame it.³⁸

Walter Prescott Webb maintained in his, Great Plains: A Study in Institutions and Environment, that the ninety-eighth meridian constituted an "institutional fault" and that practically "...every institution that was carried across it was either broken and remade or else greatly altered."³⁹ East of the Mississippi, according to Webb "...civilization stood on three legs--land, water, and timber; [whereas] west of the Mississippi not one but two of these legs were withdrawn,--water and timber,--and civilization was left on one leg--land. It is [no] small wonder that it toppled over in temporary failure."⁴⁰ Frederick Jackson Turner stated that the "...old America could not deal with this region [the Great Plains] in the old way."⁴¹ In the words of a saying common to the area, "it was hell on women and dogs."

That the land was difficult there is no doubt; much more difficult than the American pioneer had yet faced. In the words of a later author, however, "...sufficient results are apparent to warrant the assertion that these influences will breed a great race."⁴² The "frontier democrats" of the Plains were told that they would "breed a great race," but to do so they had first to survive. One could survive on the Plains, of course, but life remained,

³⁸ Residents of the Plains during the so-called "dirty thirties" must have wondered if the attempt at settlement should have been made in the first place.

³⁹ Walter Prescott Webb, The Great Plains: A Study in Institutions and Environment (New York: Ginn and Company, 1931), 8.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 9.

⁴¹ Conversation between E. E. Dale and F. J. Turner. Cited in Fred Shannon, An Appraisal of Walter Prescott Webb's, The Great Plains: A Study in Institutions and Environment (New York: Social Science Research Council, 1940), 172.

⁴² William E. Smythe, The Conquest of Arid America (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1900), 29.

at best, a precarious existence. There was no time for what might be termed the social vices. Liquor was not a problem limited to the Plains, of course, but when a man's neighbor might prove to be his savior in time of natural disaster, it could be tolerated.⁴³

Another factor which may have had a great deal of influence with respect to private morality would be the economic position of the Great Plains. Frontier areas are considered by some economists to be "colonial areas" in that the majority of the goods used within the frontier must be "imported" from outside the area. The prices of such products are thus determined by factors which the pioneers are not in a position to influence. This problem faced the pioneer in the West of 1820 as well, but it became vastly more important once the frontier line moved past "ninety-eight."

The Italian economist Achille Loria, writing in 1889, speculated that:

...as long as free lands exist that can be cultivated by labor alone, and where a man without capital may, if he chooses, establish himself upon an unoccupied area, capitalistic property is out of the question.... Eventually, the increasing population and the diminishing fertility of the soil ends the era of free lands cultivatable by labor alone. Then the

⁴³ William G. Clugston, a native of Kentucky, suggests that the Republican party, in Kansas at least, adopted the prohibitionist's position concerning liquor because it was expedient politically. Mr. Clugston stated in his work, Rascals in Democracy (New York: Richard R. Smith, 1940), 20-21, et passim, that the "establishment" in the state needed an issue to arouse an emotional response following the end of slavery as an issue in 1865, and consequently fastened on the idea of regulation of "private morality" which they interpreted in a very wide fashion. This may very well have been a factor in bringing about the condition under discussion at this point, but it would seem that such a policy could not exist in a vacuum, despite the organization between "clergy," "establishment" and "communication media" which Mr. Clugston describes. Women's suffrage on a restricted basis was the rule in all three "Western" states by 1900, and must not be discounted as a factor in dealing with the emphasis on "private morality." Carry Nation had widespread male support in her crusade, although the extent of feminine influence has yet to be assessed.

era of capitalistic production relations begins and man, though legally free, actually loses his freedom.⁴⁴

The industrialization of the United States during the period preceding 1890 may be attributed to the end of free land, or rather the end of the frontier, or the necessities of the Civil War and the years after that conflict. One may even maintain that it was a combination of both. The fact remains, however, that the United States in 1890, was rapidly becoming an industrial power, and was perfectly capable of supplying the domestic market with domestic manufactures. Such a situation did not exist in 1820. The "frontier democrat" of 1890, on the other hand, was, as the result of the high tariff barriers, at the mercy of his fellow Americans in the industrial areas. (It can be safely asserted that there is rarely a great deal of affection between the "haves" and the "have-nots" in any culture.⁴⁵ This generalization was definitely applicable concerning the feeling of the "West" toward the Eastern industrial and transportation interests.)⁴⁶

Thorstein Veblen referred to the phenomena of "conspicuous consumption"

⁴⁴ Lee Benson, Turner and Beard: American Historical Writing Reconsidered (Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, 1960), 6-7. The quotation cited is Benson's paraphrase of Loria's thought. Cf. Achilla Loria, The Economic Foundations of Society, trans. Lindley M. Keasbey. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1904), 1-9, et. passim.

⁴⁵ The unofficial battle cry of the 1965 riots in the Watts district of Los Angeles, "Burn baby burn," is the most recent and vivid example of this manifestation.

⁴⁶ Representative Anderson spoke for the "frontier democrats" when he declared that trusts must be eliminated for the good of the people as they destroy competition, and competition is the life blood of the country. Congressional Record, 51st Cong., 1st Sess., 1890, XXI, Part 6, 5958-5959. Senator Ingalls referred to trusts as those "...great doctors of finance, [those] learned pundits who stand here [in the Senate] by one means or another to interfere between law-making power and the rights of the people,..." Ibid., Part 3, 2648.

in his classic work, The Theory of the Leisure Class, published in 1899.⁴⁷ It might be possible as well, considering some of the activities of the wealthy classes, to refer to the 1890's as the era of "light-hearted social vice!" In other words, the distaste for "social vice" was quite likely intensified by the animosity between the frontier and the more settled areas. Such animosity may have led to a desire to impose the simple, good life on the entire nation.⁴⁸

An examination of the type undertaken by this paper results in one more significant difference between the Sixteenth and Fifty-first Congresses. The attitude of the "frontier democrats" toward political parties and party unity differs greatly in the two assemblies. References to the opposition party are conspicuous by their absence in the recorded speeches of the Sixteenth Congress. In the Fifty-first Congress, on the other hand, rare indeed is the address which does not contain at least one such reference, usually derogatory.

One reason for this may be found in the fact that the years from the end of the War of 1812 to the mid-1820's in American political history have been termed the "Era of Good Feeling" by historians of the period.⁴⁹ Presumably,

⁴⁷ Thorstein B. Veblen, Theory of the Leisure Class: An Economic Study of Institutions (New York: Vanguard Press, 1924), 68-100.

⁴⁸ Clugston, op. cit., 22, maintains that in reality such a movement was an attempt, which would be repeated periodically, of the Kansas "establishment" to acquire the power which goes with national office. That the movement, in short, was nothing more than the vehicle to be utilized to obtain the greatest of political plums, the presidency! Regardless of this fact, however, some of the criticism of the wealthy class was based on a distaste for "social vices." Cf. J. Willis Gleed, "Is New York More Civilized than Kansas?" The Forum, XVII (April, 1894), 217-234. The article concludes that Kansas is the more civilized area.

⁴⁹ The phrase itself stems from an article in the 12 July 1817, issue of the Columbia Centennial. Cf. Martin and Gelber, op. cit., 197.

during this period the Federalist Party of Alexander Hamilton was breaking apart. The Federalists would be replaced first by the National Republicans, and later the Whig Party.⁵⁰ The Democratic-Republicans were definitely the dominant party in the Sixteenth Congress (35 seats in the Senate and 156 in the House of Representatives), but the Federalists were still represented (7 Senators and 27 Representatives).⁵¹ Among the "frontier democrats," only two members of the rapidly fading party were elected, Representatives Philemon Beecher and John Sloane from Ohio.⁵² Of far greater importance, is the fact that nine of the twenty-four "frontier democrats" were listed as having no party affiliation in the Biographical Directory of the American Congress: 1774-1949. One could conclude that during the "Era of Good Feeling," the level of partisan political conflict in Congress was much lower than in later years.

Other factors may also be of importance in dealing with the influence of political parties in the two assemblies. The fact that congressional districts in the West were probably a great deal larger than those of the earlier period meant that the candidates in 1889 had to travel longer distances in order to

⁵⁰ Bailey, op. cit., 163. During the formative years of American political parties the prevailing belief was that parties were unnecessary and even undesirable agencies in carrying on government. Party loyalty was lightly esteemed and sometimes deplored as the spirit of faction. During the early 'twenties, there were several efforts to amend the Constitution in such a manner as to assure the permanence of non-party government. Cf. Homer C. Hockett, Western Influences on Political Parties to 1825: An Essay in Historical Interpretation (Columbus, Ohio: Ohio State University, 1917), 82.

⁵¹ U. S. Bureau of Census, Historical Statistics of the U. S., Colonial Times to 1957 (Washington: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1960), 691.

⁵² U. S., Congress, House, Biographical Directory of the American Congress: 1774-1949, 81st Cong., 2nd Sess., 1930, House Document 607, 833 and 1821.

conduct their campaigns. It was necessary to become associated with one of the national parties in order to acquire the funds to conduct an effective political campaign. Note must be taken, as well, of the fact that political aspirants in 1889, were under pressure to utilize the new, but relatively expensive, communication and transportation facilities. The cost of the campaigns was consequently further increased. It would seem reasonable to assume that the factors listed above had an influence on the relationship between the "frontier democrats" of 1890 and political parties or party unity.

Two additional factors should also be noted with respect to the increased importance of political parties in the Fifty-first Congress. First, a reaction took place against the decentralization of power in the House of Representatives during the period. This reaction took the form of a tremendous growth in the power of the Speaker of the House. Thomas B. Reed, Speaker of the House in 1889-1891 and again in 1895-1899, established during the Fifty-first Congress "...the principle of party responsibility in the lower chamber. The party became a compact disciplined body, the interests of individual members were subordinated to those of the group, and the Speaker became a functionary of power and influence unique in legislative annals."⁵³

A second factor to be considered is the electoral position of the two major parties. By 1890, the Democratic party was slowly overcoming the stigma which had been attached to it as the result of the Civil War. The congressional victories of 1874, Tilden's near victory in 1876, and Cleveland's election eight years later demonstrated that the Democrats had been restored to

⁵³ William H. Robinson, Thomas B. Reed: Parliamentarian (New York: Dodd, Mead and Co., 1930), 388.

respectability in the minds of large segments of the electorate.⁵⁴

In sum, the increased power of the Speaker of the House, which tended to favor the majority party, did much to bolster party responsibility in the Fifty-first Congress (although the House of Representatives would never equal the House of Commons in that regard). On the other hand, the increased support obtained by the Democratic party at the polls undoubtedly intensified party responsibility on both sides of the aisle.

Nevertheless, "frontier democrats" in the Fifty-first Congress many times found themselves caught between their expressed sentiments and political realities. Representative William Connell dealt with this problem on 21 June 1890, when he speculated aloud as to why the silver bill had been made a political question. The gentleman from Nebraska could not understand why many western congressmen were voting against something, i.e., the "free and unlimited coinage of silver," which they had favored in their recorded speeches.⁵⁵ The way of the "frontier democrat" in the Fifty-first Congress was truly difficult in that although they opposed the "eastern interests," those very interests controlled the party to which they owed their allegiance. The stage was set for the emergence of a third party in the West, the now famous Peoples Party, or as they were better known, the Populists.

⁵⁴Wilfred E. Binkley, American Political Parties: their natural history (3rd ed. rev.; New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1959), Chapter 13.

⁵⁵Congressional Record, 51st Cong., 1st Sess., 1890, XXI, Part 7, 6364.

CONCLUSION

In assessing the effect of the frontier on representatives to the Congress of the United States, the concept of the "frontier democrat" appears to be a valid one. Admittedly, differences did exist between the frontier congressmen of 1819-21 and 1889-91, but such differences are relatively unimportant when compared with the similarities.

Both groups possessed a belief in a liberal interpretation of the Constitution; a broadening of the power of the federal government; the concept of government as a public trust; and the myth of self-reliance.⁵⁶ The two congresses did differ with respect to the split which occasionally developed within the frontier states in the Sixteenth Congress over certain pieces of legislation such as land policies; the emphasis on private morality and social vice in the Fifty-first Congress; and the increase in the power of political parties by time of the 1890 assembly. In short, although the Westerners of 1890 had greater difficulty obtaining legislation favorable to the problems which faced them, especially in the matter of laws relative to water,⁵⁷ they

⁵⁶ It may also be noted that the West in both periods was involved in an economic struggle with the more settled sections of the nation. During the 1820's, this struggle took the form of agitation for internal improvements and land reform in order to be able to settle the land profitably. In the 'nineties, on the other hand, the issue was one of a more equitable adjustment of the economic system and the acquisition of political power. The struggle in the latter period was premised on retaining the land already settled. In both cases, however, the problem was essentially one of how to secure a profit from the land.

⁵⁷ Webb, op. cit., 385-452.

appear to have much in common with the frontier democrats of the earlier period.

Men do not always say exactly what they believe, and successful politicians may be considered past masters of the difficult art of consistent deception. Nevertheless, this study has demonstrated, albeit on a limited scale, that congressional representatives from frontier areas, despite the difference in time, possessed characteristics which may be said to represent the "frontier ethic." Whether the various individuals examined in this study voted in accordance with their personal philosophy; or in agreement with their assessment of what they believed was the desire of their constituencies, the fact remains that the use of the concept of the "frontier democrat" is a meaningful category to utilize in isolating individuals within the larger body which is the Congress of the United States. The general assumption that most frontier democrats in a particular congress will behave in accordance with a kind of "frontier ethic" permits a study to deal with exceptions as aberrations resulting from such factors as legislative log-rolling or party pressure. This is not to say that the preceding pages deny the existence of individuals who fail to qualify as frontier democrats, but rather that such individuals must be examined by other means than those utilized in this study before definitely establishing the effect of the frontier in a political situation.

This study neither conclusively proves or disproves the "frontier hypothesis" of Frederick Jackson Turner and Walter Prescott Webb, as indeed it was not intended to do. Nevertheless, it does demonstrate that the experience of the frontier appears to have a recognizable effect, regardless of the period under examination. Although the frontier as a phenomena is not the sole determining factor in terms of causation, neither may it be safely discounted.

APPENDICES

Appendix A
Biographical Information

SIXTEENTH CONGRESS

Senate

Johnson, Richard Mentor (1781-1850)¹

Representative and Senator from Kentucky, as well as Vice-President under Martin Van Buren (1837-1841). Served in the state legislature (1804-1807) and the House of Representatives (1807-1819). Elected as a Jackson Democrat to the Senate in 1819, to fill a seat vacated by the resignation of John C. Crittenden. Remained in the Senate until chosen Vice-President of the United States by the Senate, as no candidate had received a majority of the electoral vote.

Logan, William (1776-1822)²

Senator from Kentucky. In 1798, admitted to the bar, and served as delegate to the state constitutional convention (1799) as well as the state legislature (1803-1806 and 1808). Elected as a Democrat to the U. S. Senate, and served from 1819-1820. Resigned to run, unsuccessfully, for Governor of Kentucky in 1820.

Noble, James (1785-1831)³

Senator from Indiana. In 1795, admitted to the bar and in 1816 was a member of the convention to draft the state constitution. Member of the first state house of representatives, and elected to the U. S. Senate in 1816, where he served until his death.

Ruggles, Benjamin (1783-1837)⁴

Senator from Ohio. In 1807, was admitted to the bar and served as president judge of the court of common pleas for the third judicial circuit 1810-1815. Elected as a Democrat to the U. S. Senate in 1815 and served in that capacity until 1832.

Talbot, Isham (1773-1837)⁵

Senator from Kentucky. Practiced law until election to the state senate (1812-1815). Served in that capacity until chosen to fill the vacancy in the

¹U. S., Congress, House, Biographical Directory of the American Congress: 1774-1949, 81st Cong., 2nd Sess., 1950, House Document 607, 1379.

²Ibid., 1472.

³Ibid., 1619.

⁴Ibid., 1764.

⁵Ibid., 1893.

U. S. Senate caused by the resignation of Jesse Bledsoe (1815-1819). Elected to the Senate to fill the chair vacated by the resignation of William Logan (1820-1825).

Taylor, Waller (pre 1789-1826)⁶

Senator from Indiana. Practiced law first in Virginia and member of the state house of delegates (1800-1802) after which he moved to Indiana. Held various military positions within the state until 1816 when he was elected to the U. S. Senate where he remained until 1825.

Trimble, William Allen (1786-1821)⁷

Senator from Ohio. In 1811, was admitted to the bar, but served in the military forces of the United States until 1819. Resigned commission to enter the U. S. Senate, where he remained until his death.

House of Representatives

Anderson, Richard Clough, Jr. (1788-1826)⁸

Representative from Kentucky. Admitted to the bar and practiced law until election to the state house of representatives in 1815. Elected to the House of Representatives (Fifteenth and Sixteenth Congresses) but declined to be a candidate in 1820 and returned to the state legislature in 1821-1822.

Beecher, Philemon (1775-1839)⁹

Representative from Ohio. Admitted to the bar and practiced law until election to the state legislature in 1803 and 1805-1807. Elected as a Federalist to the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Congresses. Returned to the House of Representatives in 1823, and served until 1829.

Brown, William (1779-1833)¹⁰

Representative from Kentucky. Admitted to the bar, practiced law, and served in state legislature (dates unknown) until election to Sixteenth Congress.

Brush, Henry (1778-1855)¹¹

Representative from Ohio. In 1803 admitted to the bar and practiced law until election to state house of representatives in 1810. Served in state senate in 1814 and was elected to the Sixteenth Congress in 1819.

⁶ibid., 1902.

⁷ibid., 1932.

⁸ibid., 782.

⁹ibid., 832.

¹⁰ibid., 902.

¹¹ibid., 906.

Campbell, John Wilson (1782-1833)¹²

Representative from Ohio. In 1808, was admitted to the bar and practiced as well as held various judicial positions until election to state legislature in 1810, 1813, and 1815. Served as a Democrat in the House of Representatives from 1817-1827.

Clay, Henry (1777-1852)¹³

Representative and Senator from Kentucky. In 1797, was admitted to the bar and practiced law until election to state house of representatives in 1803. Elected to U. S. Senate in 1806 to fill vacancy resulting from resignation of John Adair and served from 1806-1807. Member of the state house of representatives in 1808-1809 and elected to U. S. Senate in 1810 to fill vacancy caused by resignation of Buckner Thruston, where he remained until 1811. Elected to the Twelfth through Sixteenth Congresses, as well as the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Congresses. Served as Secretary of State under John Quincy Adams (1825-1829) and U. S. Senator from Kentucky in order to fill a vacancy (1831-1836). Re-elected to the U. S. Senate in 1836 and 1849.

Hardin, Benjamin (1784-1852)¹⁴

Representative from Kentucky. In 1806, was admitted to the bar and practiced law until elected to state house of representatives in 1810 and 1811. Elected to the Fourteenth, Sixteenth, and Seventeenth Congresses. Returned to the state house of representatives in 1824 and 1825, and served in the state senate (1828-1833). Elected to the Twenty-third and Twenty-fourth Congresses.

Hendricks, William (1782-1850)¹⁵

Representative and Senator from Indiana. Admitted to the bar and practiced law until 1812 when he became the printer/owner of the second printing press in the Indiana Territory (Western Eagle). Secretary to state constitutional convention in 1816 and elected as a Democrat to the Fourteenth through Seventeenth Congresses. Governor of Indiana (1822-1825) until resigned office to enter the U. S. Senate, where he remained until 1837.

Herrick, Samuel (1779-1852)¹⁶

Representative from Ohio. In 1805, was admitted to the bar and held various state and federal judicial positions until elected as a Democrat to the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Congresses (1817-1821).

¹²Ibid., 942.

¹³Ibid., 986.

¹⁴Ibid., 1265.

¹⁵Ibid., 1298.

¹⁶Ibid., 1304.

Johnson, Francis (1776-1842)¹⁷

Representative from Kentucky. Admitted to the bar and practiced law until elected to state house of representatives in 1812, 1813, and 1815. Elected as an Adams Democrat to the Sixteenth Congress to fill the vacancy created by the death of David Walker. Re-elected to the Seventeenth through Nineteenth Congresses (1820-1827).

McLean, Alney (1779-1841)¹⁸

Representative from Kentucky. In 1805, was admitted to the bar and practiced law until elected to state house of representatives in 1812 and 1813. Elected to the Fourteenth (1815-1817) and Sixteenth Congresses.

Metcalf, Thomas (1780-1855)¹⁹

Representative and Senator from Kentucky. Followed the trade of mason until election to state house of representatives (1812-1816). Elected as a Democrat to the Sixteenth and four succeeding Congresses (1819-1828) when he resigned to become Governor of Kentucky (1829-1833). Returned to Congress as a Senator to fill the vacancy resulting from the resignation of John J. Crittenden (1848 to 1849).

Montgomery, Thomas (1779-1828)²⁰

Representative from Kentucky. Admitted to the bar and practiced law until elected to state house of representatives in 1811. Elected as a Democrat to the Thirteenth Congress (1813-1815). Returned to the Sixteenth Congress upon the resignation of Tunstall Quarles and re-elected to the Seventeenth Congress.

Robertson, George (1790-1874)²¹

Representative from Kentucky. In 1809, was admitted to the bar and practiced until election to the Fifteenth through Seventeenth Congresses (1817-1821). Resigned in 1821, before the convening of the Seventeenth Congress.

Ross, Thomas Randolph (1788-1869)²²

Representative from Ohio. In 1810, was admitted to the bar and practiced law until election to the Sixteenth through Eighteenth Congresses (1819-1825).

¹⁷Ibid., 1375.

¹⁸Ibid., 1545.

¹⁹Ibid., 1559.

²⁰Ibid., 1578.

²¹Ibid., 1746.

²²Ibid., 1760.

Sloane, John (1779-1856)²³

Representative from Ohio. Member of the state house of representatives 1803-1807; U. S. receiver of public moneys (1808-1819) at Canton and Wooster, Ohio. Elected as a Federalist to the Sixteenth and four succeeding Congresses (1819-1829).

Trimble, David (1782-1842)²⁴

Representative from Kentucky. Admitted to the bar and practiced law until entering military service during the War of 1812. Elected as a Democrat to the Fifteenth and four succeeding Congresses (1817-1827).

²³Ibid., 1821.

²⁴Ibid., 1932.

FIFTY-FIRST CONGRESS

Senate

Ingalls, John James (1833-1900)²⁵

Senator from Kansas. In 1857, was admitted to the bar and after moving to Kansas in 1858, held various civil and military positions until election as a Republican to the U. S. Senate (1873-1891).

Manderson, Charles Frederick (1873-1911)²⁶

Senator from Nebraska. In 1859, admitted to the bar, practiced law in Ohio, served in the Civil War, and moved to Nebraska in 1869. Elected to state constitutional convention in 1871, and 1874 on a by-partisan ticket. Elected to the U. S. Senate in 1882 as a Republican, where he remained until his voluntary retirement from public office in 1895.

Moody, Gideon Curtis (1832-1904)²⁷

Senator from South Dakota. In 1853, admitted to the bar and practiced law in Indiana until service in Civil War. Held many territorial offices in South Dakota after movement there in 1864, and was elected as a Republican to the U. S. Senate upon South Dakota's entry into the Union, where he served until 1891.

Paddock, Algernon Sidney (1830-1897)²⁸

Senator from Nebraska. In 1857, admitted to the bar, practiced law, and held various territorial positions until successful in reaching the U. S. Senate in 1875, as a Republican. Defeated for re-election in 1881, but returned to the Senate in 1887, where he remained until 1893.

Pettigrew, Richard Franklin (1848-1926)²⁹

Senator and Territorial Delegate from South Dakota. Entered law department of University of Wisconsin in 1867, and after moving to South Dakota was admitted to the bar in 1871. Practiced law, engaged in Government surveying,

²⁵Ibid., 1356.

²⁶Ibid., 1497.

²⁷Ibid., 1978.

²⁸Ibid., 1644.

²⁹Ibid., 1673.

real estate business, and held various territorial offices until election as a Republican to the U. S. Senate (1869-1901).

Plumb, Preston B. (1837-1891)³⁰

Senator from Kansas. Printer and editor who studied law and was admitted to the bar in 1861. Served in the Civil War and was active in the early development of Kansas. Elected as a Republican to the U. S. Senate (1877-1891).

House of Representatives

Anderson, John Alexander (1834-1892)³¹

Representative from Kansas. Ordained a Presbyterian minister in 1857, and after service in the Civil War with the U. S. Sanitary Commission, moved to Kansas. Elected as a Republican to the Forty-sixth and three succeeding Congresses (1879-1887). Elected as an Independent to the Fiftieth Congress and as a Republican to the Fifty-first Congress.

Connell, William James (1846-1924)³²

Representative from Nebraska. In 1869, admitted to the bar and after holding various judicial positions was elected as a Republican to the Fifty-first Congress.

Dorsey, George Washington Emery (1842-1911)³³

Representative from Nebraska. After service in the Civil War, was admitted to the bar in 1869. Engaged in banking, and was elected as a Republican to the Forty-ninth through Fifty-first Congresses (1885-1891).

Funston, Edward Hogue (1836-1911)³⁴

Representative from Kansas. After teaching school and service during the Civil War, took up a homestead in Kansas. Served in state legislature (both houses) from 1873-1884 when he was elected as a Republican to the Forty-eighth Congress to fill a vacancy caused by the death of Dudley C. Haskell. Re-elected to the Forty-ninth and three succeeding Congresses (1884-1893).

Gifford, Oscar Sherman (1842-1913)³⁵

Representative and Territorial Delegate from South Dakota. After service in the Civil War was admitted to the bar in 1871. Held various local positions,

³⁰Ibid., 1687.

³¹Ibid., 781.

³²Ibid., 1010.

³³Ibid., 1096.

³⁴Ibid., 1189.

³⁵Ibid., 1208.

and in 1885 was elected Territorial Delegate to the Forty-ninth and Fiftieth Congresses as a Republican. Elected as a Republican to the Fifty-first Congress.

Kelley, Harrison (1836-1897)³⁶

Representative from Kansas. Served in the Civil War, state house of representatives (1868-1870), and various state and federal positions. Elected as a Republican to the Fifty-first Congress to fill a vacancy caused by the resignation of Thomas Ryan.

Laws, Gilbert Lafayette (1838-1907)³⁷

Representative from Nebraska. Served in the Civil War, published a newspaper in Wisconsin, and held various local offices in that state. After moving to Nebraska, held position as postmaster and later secretary of state of Nebraska. Elected to Fifty-first Congress to fill vacancy caused by death of James Laird.

Morrill, Edmund Needham (1834-1909)³⁸

Representative from Kansas. Served in the Civil War, and after moving to Kansas entered banking. Member of the state senate 1872-1874 and 1876-1880. Elected as a Republican to the Forty-eighth and three succeeding Congresses (1883-1891).

Perkins, Bishop Walden (1841-1894)³⁹

Representative and Senator from Kansas. Served in the Civil War, was admitted to the bar in 1867 and practiced law in Indiana and Kansas. Held local judicial positions and became newspaper editor in 1873. Elected as a Republican to the Forty-eighth and three succeeding Congresses (1883-1891). Appointed to U. S. Senate to fill vacancy caused by death of Preston B. Plumb (1892-1893) until a successor was elected.

Peters, Samuel Ritter (1842-1910)⁴⁰

Representative from Kansas. Served in the Civil War, admitted to the bar in 1867, practiced law and edited the Memphis Reveille (Memphis, Tennessee) (1868-1873). Practiced law in Kansas, served in the state legislature (1874-1875) and judge of the ninth judicial district (1875-1883) until his election as a Republican to the Forty-eighth and three succeeding Congresses (1883-1891).

³⁶Ibid., 1397.

³⁷Ibid., 1443.

³⁸Ibid., 1589.

³⁹Ibid., 1669.

⁴⁰Ibid., 1672.

Pickler, John Alfred (1844-1910)⁴¹

Representative from South Dakota. Served in the Civil War, admitted to the bar in 1872, member of Iowa state legislature (1881-1883) until moving to South Dakota. Elected to Dakota legislature (1884) and elected as a Republican to Fifty-first and three succeeding Congresses (1889-1897).

Turner, Erastus Johnson (1846-1933)⁴²

Representative from Kansas. Served in the Civil War, admitted to the bar in 1871 and practiced law in Iowa and Kansas until election to Kansas house of representatives (1881-1885). Secretary of Kansas board of railroad commissioners (1883-1886). Elected as Republican to Fiftieth and Fifty-first Congresses (1887-1891).

⁴¹Ibid., 1680.

⁴²Ibid., 1936.

Appendix B
Voting Records

PUBLIC LAND BILL (16th Congress)

Senate (1st session)

Question: Edwards' Amendment (Defeated 28-8)⁴³

Yeas: Johnson, Logan, & Noble.

Nays: Ruggles, Taylor, & Trimble.

(This amendment would have allowed the purchase of one quarter section of land on credit.)

Question: Noble's Amendment (Defeated 28-8)⁴⁴

Yeas: Johnson, Logan, & Noble.

Nays: Ruggles, Taylor, & Trimble.

(This amendment would have removed the cash purchase provision.)

Question: Passage to the House (Passed 31-7)⁴⁵

Yeas: Ruggles, Taylor, & Trimble.

Nays: Johnson, Logan, & Noble.

House of Representatives (1st session)

Question: To refuse to strike the clauses relative to credit. (Defeated 125-19)⁴⁶

Yeas: Anderson, Brush, Beecher, Campbell, Hardin, Herrick, Robertson, Ross, & Sloane.

Nays: Brown, Hendricks, McLean, Metcalfe, & Trimble.

⁴³Annals of Congress, 16th Cong., 1st Sess., 1820, XXXV, 486.

⁴⁴Ibid.

⁴⁵Ibid., 489.

⁴⁶Ibid., XXVI, 1895.

Question: Passage of the bill (Passed 133-25)⁴⁷

Yeas: Anderson, Beecher, Brush, Campbell, Hardin, Herrick, Robertson, Ross,
& Slocum.

Nays: Brown, Hendricks, McLean, Metcalfe, Trimble, Walker.

⁴⁷Ibid., 1902.

UNIFORM SYSTEM OF BANKRUPTCY (16th Congress)

Senate (1st session)

Question: To postpone until next session (Defeated 22-19)⁴⁸

Yeas: Johnson, Logan, Noble, Ruggles, & Taylor.

Nays: Trimble.

Question: To order a third reading (Defeated 21-15)⁴⁹

Yeas:

Nays: Johnson, Ruggles, Taylor, & Trimble.

Senate (2nd session)

Question: To postpone the bill indefinitely (Defeated 32-10)⁵⁰

Yeas:

Nays: Johnson, Talbot, Taylor, & Trimble.

Question: Passage to the House (Passed 23-19)⁵¹

Yeas: Noble & Taylor.

Nays: Johnson, Ruggles, Talbot, & Trimble.

House of Representatives (2nd session)

Question: Indefinite postponement (Defeated 73-58)⁵²

Yeas: Campbell, Hardin, Metcalfe, & Ross.

Nays: Beecher, Brush, Clay, Herrick, Johnson, Robertson, Sloane, & Montgomery.

⁴⁸Ibid., XXXV, 560.

⁴⁹Ibid., 561.

⁵⁰Annals of Congress, 16th Cong., 2nd Sess., 1821, XXXVII, 331.

⁵¹Ibid., 359.

⁵²Ibid., 1261-1262.

Question: To lay the bill on the table (Passed 63-58)⁵³

Yeas: Campbell, Hardin, Herrick, Johnson, & McLean.

Nays: Beecher, Brush, Sloane, Montgomery, & Ross.

Question: To consider the Senate bill (Defeated 70-58)⁵⁴

Yeas: Brush, Hendricks, Robertson, & Sloane.

Nays: Campbell, Hardin, Herrick, Johnson, McLean, Metcalfe, Ross, & Montgomery.

⁵³Ibid., 1269-1270.

⁵⁴Ibid., 1287-1288.

PUBLIC LAND BILL (16th Congress)

Senate (2nd session)

Passed without division--no recorded vote.⁵⁵

House of Representatives (2nd session)

Question: Passage of the bill (Passed 97-40)⁵⁶

Yeas: Anderson, Beecher, Brown, Brush, Campbell, Clay, Hardin, Hendricks,
Herrick, Johnson, McLean, Metcalfe, Robertson, Ross, Sloane, &
Montgomery.

Nays:

⁵⁵Ibid., 338.

⁵⁶Ibid., 1249.

SHERMAN SILVER PURCHASE ACT (51st Congress)

House of Representatives (1st session)

Question: Passage to the Senate (Passed 115-119)⁵⁷

Yeas: Connell, Dorsey, Funston, Gifford, Laws, Morrill, Perkins, & Pickler.

Nays: Anderson, Kelley, & Turner.

Paired: Peters w/Hooker of Mississippi.

Senate (1st session)

Question: Passage w/amendments and return to House (Passed 42-19)⁵⁸

Yeas: Ingalls, Manderson, Moody, Paddock, Plumb, & Pettigrew.

Nays:

House of Representatives (1st session)

Question: To concur in the Senate amendments (Defeated 152-115)⁵⁹

Yeas: Anderson, Connell, Dorsey, Funston, Gifford, Kelley, Laws, Morrill, Perkins, Peters, & Turner.

Nays:

Paired: Pickler w/Stahlnecker of New York.

Senate (1st session)

Question: To concur in the conference report (Passed 36-26)⁶⁰

Yeas: Ingalls, Manderson, Moody, Pettigrew, Plumb, & Paddock.

Nays:

⁵⁷ Congressional Record, 51st Cong., 1st Sess., 1890, XXI, Part 6, 5814-5815.

⁵⁸ Ibid., Part 7, 6182-6183.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 6503-6504.

⁶⁰ Ibid., Part 8, 7109.

House of Representatives (1st session)

Question: To concur in the conference report. (Passed 122-90)⁶¹

Yeas: Anderson, Connell, Dorsey, Funston, Gifford, Kelley, Laws, Morrill,
Perkins, Peters, & Pickler.

Nays:

Paired: Turner w/Lester of Georgia.

⁶¹Ibid., 7226-7227.

RAILROAD LAND GRANT FORFEITURE (51st Congress)

House of Representatives (1st session)

Question: To recommit bill. (Defeated 107-84)⁶²

Yeas: Anderson, Connell, & Pickler.

Nays: Dorsey, Gifford, Kelley, Laws, Morrill, & Turner.

Paired: Perkins w/Kilgore of Texas; Peters w/Mansur of Missouri; Funston
w/Washington of Tennessee.

Further votes on this bill are regarded as inconclusive as the Speaker of the House of Representatives (Thomas B. "Czar" Reed of Maine) secured passage by utilizing the powers of the Speaker of the House to their fullest.

⁶²Ibid., 7388.

McKINLEY TARIFF (51st Congress)

House of Representatives (1st session)

Question: To recommit bill. (Defeated 164-140)⁶³

Yeas:

Nays: Anderson, Dorsey, Funston, Gifford, Kelley, Laws, Morrill, Perkins, & Pickler.

Paired: Connell w/Walker of Missouri; Peters w/Hooker of Mississippi; Turner w/Norton of Missouri.

Question: Passage to the Senate. (Passed 164-142)⁶⁴

Yeas: Anderson, Dorsey, Funston, Gifford, Kelley, Laws, Morrill, Perkins, & Pickler.

Nays:

Paired: Same as above.

Senate (1st session)

Question: Passage w/amendments to House. (Passed 40-29)⁶⁵

Yeas: Ingalls, Manderson, Moody, Paddock, Plumb, & Pettigrew.

Nays:

House of Representatives (1st session)

Question: To concur in conference report. (Passed 151-81)⁶⁶

Yeas: Anderson, Dorsey, Funston, Gifford, Laws, Morrill, Perkins, Pickler, & Turner.

Nays: Kelley.

Paired: Peters w/Mansur of Missouri and Connell w/Alderson of West Virginia.

⁶³Ibid., Part 6, 5122.

⁶⁴Ibid., 5112-5113.

⁶⁵Ibid., Part 10, 9942-9943.

⁶⁶Ibid., Part 11, 10641.

When the tariff bill returned to the House of Representatives, "Czar" Reed attempted to restrict debate on the bill. This parliamentary device succeeded, but it caused Representative Harrison Kelley (Kansas) to register strong disapproval, vocally and by ballot.

Senate (1st session)

Question: To concur in the conference report (Passed 33-27)⁶⁷

Yeas: Ingalls, Manderson, & Moody.

Nays: Paddock, Pettigrew, & Plumb.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 10739-10740.

SHERMAN ANTI-TRUST ACT (51st Congress)

Senate (1st session)

Question: Passage to the House (Passed 52-1)⁶⁸

Yeas: Ingalls, Manderson, Paddock, & Plumb.

Nays:

Absent: Moody and Pettigrew.

House of Representatives (1st session)

Question: To concur in the conference report (Passed 242-85)⁶⁹

Yeas: Anderson, Funston, Gifford, Kelley, Laws, Morrill, Perkins, Pickler, & Turner.

Nays:

Paired: Peters w/Hooker of Mississippi.

Absent: Connell and Dorsey.

⁶⁸Ibid., Part 3, 3153.

⁶⁹Ibid., Part 7, 6314.

UNIFORM SYSTEM OF BANKRUPTCY (51st Congress)

House of Representatives (1st session)

Question: Passage of the bill (Passed 117-84)⁷⁰

Yeas: Connell, Dorsey, Gifford, Laws, Morrill, Perkins, Peters, & Pickler.

Nays: Funston, Kelley, & Turner.

Paired: Anderson w/Spinola of New York.

Senate (1st session)

Senator Plumb did not feel that the House of Representatives had spent sufficient time discussing this piece of legislation, especially the provisions relative to involuntary bankruptcy. He proposed that the bill be bound over until the next session. This request was agreed to by the Senate, and the bill does not reappear in the records of the Fifty-first Congress.⁷¹

⁷⁰Ibid., Part 8, 7686-7687.

⁷¹Ibid., Part 10, 10211.

IMPORTED LIQUORS (51st Congress)

In 1890, the Supreme Court of the United States ruled (*Gus Leisy & Co., plaintiffs in error vs. A. J. Hardin*) that if no sale took place between the point of origination and the point of consumption other than that between the retail merchant and the private individual, if, in other words, the liquor remained in its original package, then the separate states could not regulate this traffic. The states could not impose regulations, according to the court, unless Congress chose to legislate that they could do so. This decision not only invalidated all prohibition laws, but all laws regulating liquor, as long as it remained in its original package.⁷²

Senate (1st session)

Question: Amendment of Senator Gray of Delaware (Passed 23-19)⁷³

Yeas:

Nays: Ingalls, Manderson, Moody, Paddock, & Plumb.

Absent: Pettigrew.

(This amendment would allow taxation, but not prohibition.)

Question: Amendment of Senator Bustis of Louisiana (Passed 23-20)⁷⁴

Yeas: Ingalls, Manderson, Moody, Paddock, & Plumb.

Nays:

Absent: Pettigrew.

(This amendment would allow prohibition.)

Question: Passage to the House (Passed 34-10)⁷⁵

Yeas: Ingalls, Manderson, Moody, Paddock, & Plumb.

Nays:

Absent: Pettigrew.

⁷²Stephen K. Williams (ed.) *United States Supreme Court Reports* (Rochester, New York: Lawyers Cooperative Publishing Company, 1958), XXIV, 128-150.

⁷³*Congressional Record*, 51st Cong., 1st Sess., 1890, XXI, Part 6, 5424-5425.

⁷⁴*Ibid.*, 5439.

⁷⁵*Ibid.*, 5439.

House of Representatives (1st session)

Question: Passage of the bill (Passed 119-93)⁷⁶

Yeas: Anderson, Connell, Dorsey, Funston, Gifford, Kelley, Laws, Morrill,
Perkins, Peters, Pickler, & Turner.

Nays:

⁷⁶Congressional Record, 51st Cong., 1st Sess., 1890, XXI, Part 9, 8231.

Appendix C

Maps



77 Charles O. Paullin, *Atlas of the Historical Geography of the United States*, ed. by John K. Wright. [Washington and New York] Published jointly by Carnegie Institute of Washington and the American Geographical Society, 1932. [Carnegie Inst. Pub. 401], Plate 76E.







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FRONTIER DEMOCRATS
A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE OFFICIAL RECORDS
OF THE
SIXTEENTH AND FIFTY-FIRST CONGRESSES

by

J. K. SWEENEY

A. B., Fort Hays Kansas State College, 1962

AN ABSTRACT OF A MASTER'S REPORT

submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree

MASTER OF ARTS

Department of History
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Utilizing the information obtained from an analysis of the voting records and recorded speeches of representatives from selected frontier states in the Sixteenth and Fifty-first Congresses, comparative generalizations have been formulated which might prove methodologically useful in assessing the effect of the frontier on domestic politics on a national level. Material for the Sixteenth Congress was obtained from the Annals of Congress, which was the official record until it was replaced by the Register of Debates in 1824. For the Fifty-first Congress, material was obtained from the newest of the official publications, the Congressional Record, which was established in 1873, the period from 1833 to 1873, being covered by the Congressional Globe. Research on this topic was, of necessity, limited to the Annals of Congress and the Congressional Record, because of the lack of secondary material on this subject. In this regard, however, Howard R. Lamar's work Dakota Territory, 1861-1889: a study in frontier politics, must be mentioned as being singularly useful.

An examination of the reaction toward various pieces of legislation on the part of representatives from six selected states (Indiana, Kentucky, Ohio, Kansas, Nebraska and South Dakota) near the frontier; as well as overt expressions of their political philosophy as expressed in their formal addresses to Congress leads to several conclusions concerning the concept of the "frontier democrat." In the public land controversy of the 1820's, and the bankruptcy debate of the 1890's, it is possible to detect, in the minds of a portion of the "frontier democrats" at least, the idea of government as a public trust, existing to serve the people. The discussion relative to improvements in the internal transportation system of the country by the Sixteenth Congress, and statements such as the address by Senator John J.

Ingalls (Kansas) concerning the nature of the Constitution, on the other hand, illustrate the existence of a belief among the "frontier democrats," of a free or liberal interpretation of the Constitution of the United States.

Not only does the evidence appear to point toward a belief in a liberal interpretation of the Constitution and a consequent broadening of governmental powers in both the Sixteenth and Fifty-first Congresses, the myth of self-reliance was also present in both assemblies. Thus, the "frontier democrats" in both Congresses may be said to have possessed, concurrently and somewhat hypocritically at times, a dual belief in a broadening of governmental powers and a commitment to a philosophy of individualism.

One must not assume, however, that the "frontier democrats" of the Sixteenth Congress and the Fifty-first Congress did not differ as to characteristics which may be used to describe their actions and philosophies. The frontier was not a unified bloc in 1820, as may be observed in the division between the populous and less populated areas vis-a-vis the Public Land Bill of 1820, and the "frontier democrats" of the Fifty-first Congress were exceedingly concerned with the regulation of private morality and social vice, particularly the liquor problem. It must also be noted that references to the opposition party are conspicuous by their absence in the recorded speeches of the Sixteenth Congress; whereas the opposite is the case in the Fifty-first Congress--where rare indeed is the address which does not contain at least one such reference, usually derogatory.

Men do not always say exactly what they believe, and successful politicians may be considered past masters of the difficult art of consistent deception. Nevertheless, this study has demonstrated, albeit on a limited scale, that congressional representatives from the frontier areas examined, despite

the difference in time and locale, possessed characteristics which may be said to represent the "frontier ethic." Whether the various individuals examined in this study voted in accordance with their personal philosophy, or in agreement with their assessment of what they believed was the desire of their constituencies, the fact remains that the use of the concept of the "frontier democrat" is a meaningful category to utilize in isolating individuals within the larger body which is the Congress of the United States. The general assumption that most "frontier democrats" in a particular congress will behave in accordance with a kind of "frontier ethic" permits a study to deal with exceptions as aberrations resulting from such factors as legislative log-rolling or party pressure. This is not to say that the preceding pages deny the existence of individuals who fail to qualify as "frontier democrats," but rather that such individuals must be examined by other means than those utilized in this study before definitely establishing the effect of the frontier in a political situation.

This study neither conclusively proves nor disproves the "frontier hypothesis" of Frederick Jackson Turner or the work of Walter Prescott Webb, as indeed it was not intended to do. Nevertheless, it does demonstrate that the experience of the frontier appears to have a recognizable effect, regardless of the period under examination. Although the frontier as a phenomena is not the sole determining factor in terms of causation, neither may it be safely discounted.