A SOUTHERN MAN OF NORTHERN PRINCIPLES:

MICHAEL C. GARBER AND THE

POLITICAL REALIGNMENT

OF THE 1850s

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PREFACE

A detailed study of the thought and behavior of an individual in the midst of turbulent events can often clarify those events and thereby assist in the critique and refinement of various historical interpretations. An example is the life and writings of Indiana editor Michael C. Garber from 1849 to 1856. A Virginia-born Democrat, Garber purchased the Madison *Daily Courier* in 1849 and for almost five years filled its pages with Jacksonian dogma and effusive praise for the party of Jefferson and Jackson. And yet, in May 1854, Garber denounced the Democratic Party, and immediately became a leader in Indiana's anti-Democratic Peoples' Party, and later in the Republican Party that evolved out of it. Garber's writings not only address the various reasons he bolted from the Democratic Party, but they also provide insights into the cultural and ideological underpinnings of the early Republican Party.

This study is a political biography of Michael C. Garber up to the presidential election of 1856. Unfortunately, very few of Garber's personal papers still exist. Especially tragic is the absence of his correspondence with other Indiana political leaders of the day. For this reason, the study is based chiefly upon Garber's writings in the Madison *Daily Courier* between 1849 and 1856. While Garber has been the subject of a few published writings over the years, most were written by friends or family members and either focused upon specific incidents in his life or provided a brief biographical overview. This is the first work to extensively study the political thought of this important voice in mid-nineteenth century Indiana politics, and is done in an attempt to

better understand both political realignment and the formation of the Republican Party within Indiana during the early 1850s.

Since the 1960s historians have debated the causes of political realignment in the 1850s, and the character of the Republican Party born of that process. After forty years of dispute, two interpretations currently reign. Restating but modifying the traditional view that political realignment was caused by sectionalism produced by the debate over the extension of slavery into the territories, Eric Foner claims that members of the Republican Party coalesced around a free labor ideology that exalted the economic and social progress resulting from individual labor. Adherents of free labor ideology viewed Southern slave society as the antithesis of their vision for the nation's future; therefore Southern efforts to extend slavery provoked them to organize the Republican Party to resist these efforts. On the other hand, Michael Holt and William Gienapp have challenged the traditional view of political realignment by insisting that ethnocultural issues destroyed the second party system, a result which then unleashed long simmering sectional hostilities. Motivated by traditional republican political values, the Republican Party was organized primarily to battle "the Slave Power," defined as slaveholder aristocrats who exercised undue control the federal government to the economic and political detriment of Northern citizens.

Michael Garber's case is thus a paradox, for his life and thought extensively intersects with all the issues central to both of these interpretations of political realignment and the origins of the Republican Party. Garber was not only an ardent supporter of the rights of free labor, but believed free labor was the basis of societal progress, which he believed was clearly demonstrated in the North. In short, he adhered

to free labor ideology, and was accordingly outraged by Southern attempts to spread the slave labor system into free territory. And yet Garber's writings are full of republicanism, demonstrated by his virtual obsession with individual rights and liberties, his fear of concentrated power, and his hatred of political corruption. After his bolt from the Democrats, no Republican editor more boldly expounded upon the threat the Slave Power posed to both Northern working men and the future of the American Republic. Therefore, neither interpretation fully encompasses or explains Garber's thinking and actions during the 1850s.

This study argues that Michael Garber's life and thought were anchored in a Jeffersonian tradition of republican political economy that saw aristocracy as the source of all political or economic corruption. Garber's belief in amorphous republican economic theory made slavery expansion appear to be a threat to the future of free labor society, while his belief in republican political theory made the Slave Power appear to be a threat to Northern civil and political rights. This intellectual background explains his move to the Republican Party, all the while claiming that he had not changed his foundational principles. For the first forty years of his life Garber considered the Jefferson – Jackson party tradition to be the political expression of republican political economy. By 1854 however, Garber was convinced the Democratic Party had betrayed that tradition, and he saw no choice but to help start a new party that would embody the principles of republican political economy, the Republican Party.

I sincerely thank my advisor, Dr. James L. Huston, for sharing his vast knowledge of the Civil War era, as well as providing practical guidance during the preparation of this

thesis. My sincere appreciation also extends to my other committee members, Dr. Ronald Petrin and Dr. Alyson Greiner, whose encouragement and friendship are highly valued.

I also want to thank those who provided suggestions or assistance for this study. In Madison, I especially want to thank Mrs. Mary Goode Wallis and Mrs. Jane Jacobs for access to the Garber family papers, without which this study would not have been possible. The staff at the Madison-Jefferson County Public Library was ever helpful, especially Mrs. Janice Barnes. The staff at the Madison-Jefferson County Historical Society was likewise supportive, and Mr. Ron Grimes consistently went out of his way to assist me. As always, my parents, Carl and Aneta Furnish, provided their son with whatever was needed – encouragement, money, whatever!

In Oklahoma, my good friend Mr. Thomas Franzmann provided excellent comments upon multiple drafts of this and other papers on Michael Garber. Even more useful were the hours he spent explaining the nuances of the many interpretations of antebellum political and social history. I would also like to thank Miss Brandi Allen for making the long hours in the library much more enjoyable than they otherwise would have been. Finally, I want to thank the Department of History at Oklahoma State University for the teaching assistantship that made these past two years of study possible.

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Chapter I

Early Life, 1813 – 1849

In his younger days Colonel Garber was able to do two men's work, and he did it. He was a man of indomitable pluck and perseverance, and he never tired in his undertakings. – William Wesley Woollen, *Biographical and Historical Sketches of Early Indiana*, 1883.

Michael Christian Garber was a fourth generation American when born in Augusta County, Virginia, April 7, 1813. His ancestors were from the Palatinate who followed a standard migration path to America's middle colonies and then to Virginia. As a boy Garber learned to value hard work and the political heritage of Thomas Jefferson. By the time he was a young man, his thinking was fully rooted in Jeffersonian political economy. In manhood, Garber tried his hand at various occupations until he realized he had a talent for political expression and thus settled down to be a small town editor.

Michael C. Garber's great-grandfather settled in New York's Mohawk Valley, arriving from the Palatinate about 1713. His grandfather moved to Pennsylvania's Lancaster County, farmed, and became a devout Quaker. Family lore claims he would not allow his sons to fight in the American War for Independence, and on one occasion tracked down his twelve year old son, Michael, who had run off to join the American army that passed through the area. Like thousands of other Pennsylvanians in the late

eighteenth century, Garber's grandfather moved after the war to the upper Shenandoah Valley of Virginia.[1]

In Staunton, Augusta County, Virginia, Garber's father, Michael, grew to manhood and lived a very active life. Michael Garber married the daughter of Captain John Smith, a veteran of the Revolution and prominent landholder and citizen among the Scotch-Irish settlers of the area. The union with Margaret Smith undoubtedly shaped the rest of his life, for he became a Presbyterian, a farmer, a slaveholder, the father of eleven children, and a politician. After fulfilling his long held desire for military service during the War of 1812, Michael Garber had an active political life, serving several terms as sheriff of Augusta County, as well as mayor of the town of Staunton.[2]

Michael Garber's political views, described as Jeffersonian republicanism, very much reflected the world in which he lived. Republican political theory, which evolved over centuries and flowered in eighteenth century England, described how republics degenerated into despotic oligarchies or dictatorships. Ambitious men led the electorate away from virtue – placing self interest over the general welfare – and into corruption

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[1] Several informal biographies of Michael C. Garber were done by friends and family members in the late-nineteenth or early-twentieth century and are in the Garber family papers (hereafter Garber Papers) presently in the possession of Mary Goode Wallis (great-granddaughter of Michael C. Garber) in Madison, Indiana. The best "official" biographies of Garber are by his son William S. Garber, *A Chapter in the Early History of Journalism in Indiana* (Indianapolis: n.p., 1922), later published as "Jesse D. Bright and Michael C. Garber," *Indiana Magazine of History* 33 (March 1932): 277-303; William Wesley Woollen, *Biographical and Historical Sketches of Early Indiana* (Indianapolis: Hammond & Co., 1883; reprint, New York: Arno Press, 1975), 480-84; Frank S. Baker, "Michael C. Garber, Sr., and the Early Years of the Madison, Indiana, Daily Courier," *Indiana Magazine of History* 48 (December 1952): 397-408; and by Garber's great-great grandson Don Wallis, Jr., *Madison and the Garber Family: A Community and its Newspaper; The Madison Courier 1837-1992*, (Madison, IN: Historic Madison, Inc., 1992). There are serious discrepancies in the sources concerning the Garber family origins. A booklet that traces the ancestry of Garber's wife claims that both of their families came from the Palatinate in the early-eighteenth century. See William P. Schell, "The Ancestry of Ellen Schell Garber," Madison, IN: The Courier Company, 1898, located in the Garber Collection, Carton 1, File 106, Jefferson County Historical Society, Madison, Indiana.

[2] Wallis, 5; Woollen, 480. A very useful source in the Garber Papers is a biography of Michael C. Garber with no author or date of publication given. Though hard bound, the text seems to have been printed on a blue ink mimeograph machine (hereafter Mimeographed Text). Considering the details given, the author had to be a contemporary and a friend of Garber's. See Mimeographed Text, 2.

through the use of needless wars, excessive debt, high taxes, and political patronage. In short, free, self-governing, independent citizens would be reduced through luxury and corruption into a state of slavery. This theory was at the center of the American Revolutionaries' critique of the British Empire, whose corruption they believed was so great as to justify their separation from it. Republican political theory was also at the heart of Jeffersonian critiques of Federalist policies in the 1790s, which is the reason the critics called themselves "Republicans" when they organized to elect Thomas Jefferson president in 1800.[3]

More than merely a description of political degeneration, republicanism as enunciated by Jefferson and espoused by the Republicans was a vision of agrarian civic life. Jefferson believed that the greatest political threat to the American Republic came from a strong federal government, thus he advocated policies that would restrict it or keep it weak. Therefore he believed in a strict interpretation of the Constitution in order to keep the power of the federal government within its proscribed boundaries, and allow state and local governments – those authorities most accountable to the people - to conduct most aspects of governance. But Jeffersonian republicanism had an economic component as well. Jefferson believed that republican government could not survive large discrepancies of wealth, for the wealthy would use their riches to corrupt poor electors and seize control of the government. As a result, he advocated policies that would restrict government involvement in the economy, thereby denying special privileges contributing to the economic aggrandizement of any group or individual. When the

[3] The classic work on republican theory and the American Revolution is Gordon S. Wood, *The Creation of the American Republic, 1776-1787* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1969). For republican theory's centrality to Jeffersonian Republicanism see Lance Banning , *The Jeffersonian Persuasion: Evolution of a Party Ideology* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978).

political and economic components of Jeffersonian republicanism were merged, they formed a political agenda that would be central to American politics for most of the nineteenth century: Republicans denounced a large standing military, national banks, corporations, protective tariffs, and national debt, while they advocated state's rights, laissez faire economics, and an ever expanding agricultural society.[4]

Jeffersonian republicanism not only shaped the political views of Michael Garber, but it formed the worldview of his tenth child, Michael Christian. On several occasions during the tumultuous 1850s Garber would claim that his political principles were not new or unique, but merely those of Jefferson, for having been born "in sight of the range of mountains among which Monticello is nestled" he was "brought up from infancy in the straitest sect of the Virginia State Rights men." While in time he would distance himself from some aspects of his Virginia heritage, Garber would always believe that the Jeffersonian republicanism he learned from his father in the Valley of Virginia reflected the philosophy of the American Republic's primary architect, and thus it was his duty to remain aligned with it. Though he would be intensely involved in party politics throughout his life, he would always strive to maintain his "republican principles" in the midst of partisan struggle, even if this set him against the mainstream of his party. It seems that his father was his model in this as well, for despite Virginia's overwhelming support of William H. Crawford for president in 1824, Garber would boast that "the old

[4] Banning, chapters 9-10. On the concurrent development in America of both the economic and political components of republicanism, see James L. Huston, "The American Revolutionaries, the Political Economy of Aristocracy, and the American Concept of the Distribution of Wealth, 1765-1900," *American Historical Review* 98 (October 1993): 1079-1105, and his *Securing the Fruits of Labor: The American Concept of Wealth Distribution, 1765-1900* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1998). Huston argues that while virtually all Americans between the Revolution and the Civil War espoused the political tenants of republicanism, parties formed during the period largely due to disagreements over the degree of government involvement in the economy. Disciples of Jefferson, located in the Republican and Democratic parties, were constantly fearful that government interference in the economy would create financially privileged individuals who would corrupt the republic.

Dutchman . . . was one of about fourteen voters in the county of Augusta . . . that voted for Jackson."[5]

The Jeffersonian republicanism Garber learned as a youth in the Shenandoah Valley was also a major source of his views on slavery. Though the Constitution clearly let the question of slavery be determined by state legislatures, he was taught that Washington, Jefferson, Madison and Monroe all "hoped for the ultimate eradication of the evil of slavery." He claimed that in the Virginia schools of his boyhood "the proposition of Mr. Jefferson in 1784 to exclude slavery forever from *all* the territories was lauded and taught to be fully equal to the famed resolutions of 1798 [the Virginia and Kentucky Resolutions]." He stated that "after the insurrection in Southampton in 1832 [Nat Turner's rebellion] was suppressed, the resolutions passed by town and county meetings inculcated similar ideas as to the wrong, enormity and ruinous to the State, tendencies of Negro slavery." Garber went so far as to assert that "from youth to manhood we never heard the system in Virginia spoken of but as a great evil, as unwise in policy as it was great in iniquity." And while Garber never denied that his family owned slaves, his relative silence on the topic demonstrated his disapproval (and perhaps shame) of the fact. Throughout his life he would consistently argue that slavery was inconsistent with the principles of Jeffersonian republicanism.[6]

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[5] *Madison Daily Courier*, 17 July 1854, 25 September 1855, 31 July 1851. Hereafter abbreviated as *MDC*. David Hackett Fischer and James C. Kelly state that in the Revolutionary and Early National periods the Virginia piedmont and upper Shenandoah Valley were very ethnically and religiously diverse, having been settled by Scotch-Irish Presbyterians, English and Welsh Quakers, and German Lutherans, Calvinist, and pietists. They claim that this diversity inspired Jefferson and Madison to believe that republics would be strengthened rather than weakened by diversity of interests, and to advocate local government and broad suffrage. See Fischer and Kelly, *Bound Away: Virginia and the Westward Movement* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2000), 131-32.

[6] *MDC*, 25 September 1855, 17 July 1854. Fischer and Kelly, *Bound Away*, 207-11, claim that virtually all Quakers and most Germans in Virginia were troubled by slavery, and thus many (like Michael C. Garber) migrated out of the state between 1800 and 1860. As a result, as the nineteenth century

Hard physical work began early for Garber, and provided another central theme for his life and thought. As a young teenager he drove stages on his father's stagecoach line, ranging up and down the valley on the Great Wagon Road. In his late teens he moved to Hollidaysburg, Pennsylvania, to become a partner with his uncle, Christian Garber, a merchant. Throughout the 1830s Garber was heavily involved in the transportation boom that swept the nation. As a construction contractor he built a section of the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal, and later operated a "forwarding" company in the Hollidaysburg area that moved freight between Philadelphia and Pittsburgh by canal and railroad. In the early 1840s Garber operated a foundry with a George McFarland. Apparently he had bought out McFarland, or Garber had just established his own foundry, when an economic downturn in 1843 financially ruined him. It seems that Garber was embarrassed by the failure, so he sold his property, paid his creditors, and looked west for a new start.[7]

Garber married Ellen Schell in 1837, and for the rest of his life domestic relations would be very important to him. Ellen was born and raised in Schellsburg, Bedford County, Pennsylvania, roughly thirty miles down the valley from Hollidaysburg. Like Garber's family, the Schells were Swiss Reformed who fled the Palatinate in the first half of the eighteenth century, and were active in state and local politics. The Garbers would raise four girls (one an adopted niece) and two boys to adulthood. The couple's first two children died before reaching the age of five. These deaths seem to have deeply marked

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progressed pro-slavery attitudes in Virginia hardened. Wallis, 6, implies that the elder Garber was a kind master, and even claims that his grief over a slave's death hastened his own death in 1845. It could well be that Michael Garber acquired slaves when he acquired his wife, and that he spent the rest of his life in moral tension with the world around him.

[7] Wallis, 6; Woollen, 480; Mimeographed Text, 2-4. The author of the Mimeographed Text is the only source to note that Garber's uncle Christian died soon after the foundry failed, and to mention Garber's embarrassment. Christian was a bachelor, so it is likely that his store and its assets all went to Garber, who was embarrassed that these were the means of paying his creditors.

Garber, for his personal and public conversations and writings were full of ruminations upon the fragile and fleeting nature of life.[8]

The death of their first child, Ellen (Ellie) Margaret, in March 1839, also had long term religious implications for the couple. When due to some technicality their Presbyterian minister would not baptize Ellie on her deathbed, but the local Episcopal minister would, they became immediate converts to the Episcopal Church. This event, along with serious discussions with his atheist foundry partner George McFarland, seem to have turned Garber from the Calvinism of his youth to a "Broad Churchman" approach to Christianity. While he maintained a serious and active Christian faith, and enjoyed religious discussion, he detested Christian sectarianism. Apparently "it was a frequent remark with him that the Sermon on the Mount and the Lord's Prayer constituted his religion."[9]

Michael Garber's marriage to Ellen Schell may also have influenced his views toward slavery. Having grown up among Germans in the mountains of central Pennsylvania, Ellen apparently escaped serious exposure to slavery until after she was married at the age of twenty. In a letter written to her grandchildren in1887, Ellen described her wedding day and honeymoon fifty years before. Discussing her first trip to Virginia to meet her husband's family, Ellen said "your grandma saw a sight she never forgot, slaves driven like cattle to market from Richmond . . . ." While Garber claimed he

[8] Schell, "The Ancestry of Ellen Schell Garber." The Madison *Daily Courier* during the period researched is glutted with poems, sermons, wise sayings, and moral stories warning the reader to recognize life's fragility. A family letter reveals that Garber's personal conversations contained such thoughts as well. See Letter from Sallie A. Menzies, Rising Sun, Ind., to Dr. Alex. M. Garber, June 20, 1847, Garber Papers, Madison, Indiana.

[9] Typed copy of Letter from Ellen Schell Garber to Granddaughters, Garber Collection, Carton 1, File 181, Jefferson County Historical Society, Madison, Indiana. Mimeographed Text, 3-4, states that "McFarland was an Infidel lecturer, and his views made some impression upon the mind of his friend and partner."

was always against slavery, growing up in its midst probably dulled his sensibilities to its moral offense. Obviously, this was not the case with Ellen, and her disdain for the institution must certainly have exerted influence upon him over the years.[10]

Just how extensive Ellen Garber's influence may have been on her husband's views of race and slavery is hinted in the same letter. After describing the circumstances of her daughter Ellie's death, Ellen says:

> And when my little black girl Jane died, she looked up and said, 'O you sweet little angel come to me,' and I always believed the spirit of my dear little Ellie hovered over her. She died and was made free from slavery and from sin. It strikes me now she never was baptized, she was sent to me to receive her freedom, and she did.

While this short passage is frustratingly cryptic, it clearly conveys that early in their marriage the Garber's kept a black girl in their home in Pennsylvania, and her purpose there was to obtain her freedom. While the black girl, Jane, was not treated exactly like their child (she was never baptized), the passage nevertheless shows Ellen's deep affection for her. While Garber always denied being an abolitionist, whom he defined as someone who wanted to interfere with slavery where it existed, he and Ellen obviously did not share the virulent Negrophobia and racism so common in America during the time in which they lived.[11]

Looking to start a new life in the west, Garber took a steamboat trip from Pittsburgh to New Orleans and back during February and March 1845 to discover the opportunities open to him. When he returned to Hollidaysburg he announced to Ellen that Missouri was their destination. After selling most of their possessions and spending the

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[10] Letter from Ellen Schell Garber to Granddaughters. On the experiential impact of slavery upon northerners, see James L Huston, "The Experiential Basis of the Northern Antislavery Impulse," *Journal of Southern History* 56 (November 1990): 609-40.

[11] Letter from Ellen Schell Garber to Granddaughters. Garber's views on race and slavery are complex and are discussed in detail in chapter 3.

summer with her parents in Schellsburg, in August the Garbers boarded a steamboat in Wheeling for the long trip down the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers. They only got as far as Cincinnati. Garber's sister Elizabeth, nearly twenty years his senior, and her husband William A. Menzies, were well established at their estate "Roseneath" in Boone County, Kentucky, across the river from Cincinnati. While hosting the Garbers, they convinced the couple to settle in Kentucky. The Garbers set up a home and store in Florence, but for unclear reasons they only remained in Kentucky for about eighteen months. Perhaps business prospects were poor in Florence, or perhaps the Garbers realized they disliked living in a slave state, but by 1847 they were in Rising Sun, Indiana, a small but growing town about thirty miles down river from Cincinnati. Here Garber established - possibly with his younger brother Christian - a store that could take advantage of the expanding river trade.[12]

While little specific is known of Garber's political activities from the time he left Virginia as a teenager until his arrival in Indiana at the age of thirty-four, he was certainly active during this period of significant political transitions. From 1824 to 1840 two highly organized parties developed out of the old Republican coalition: the Democrats, whose national leader was Andrew Jackson, and the Whigs, whose national leader was Henry Clay of Kentucky. Only a boy of eleven when his father voted for Jackson in 1824, Garber was undoubtedly told countless times that the will of the people was thwarted by a "corrupt bargain" when Henry Clay threw his electoral votes to John Quincy Adams to

[12] Garber's diary of his 1845 western steamboat trip is located in the Garber Collection, Carton 1, File 104, Jefferson County Historical Society, Madison, Indiana. In the 1850s Garber compared Indiana and Kentucky and clearly stated that he chose Indiana because he wanted to live in a free state. Curiously, in the *Daily Courier* between 1849 and 1856 he never mentioned having lived in Kentucky, nor do any of his biographers. Only Ellen's letter to her granddaughters reveals that they lived in Kentucky, or that they originally intended to move to Missouri. Perhaps in 1845 Garber was still willing to live in a slave society, but his experience in Kentucky changed his mind. As suggested in the text, perhaps Ellen encouraged the move north as well.

deny Jackson the presidency. No doubt he was also told that Jackson's break with the Republicans was similar to Jefferson's break with the Federalists in 1800, and the Revolutionaries' break with Britain in 1776: scheming aristocrats had attempted to suspend the rights and liberties of common citizens, but true republicans asserted their rights, battled the aristocrats, and saved the republic. In other words, Michael C. Garber received from his father the belief that the Democratic Party embodied the principles of Jeffersonian republicanism, and thus in early manhood Garber became its ardent supporter. While the Democratic Party would develop an agenda that went well beyond the issues of concern to Jefferson, and while Garber would very much adopt that party agenda, his support of the Democrats was always based upon his perception of their faithfulness to the Jeffersonian legacy.[13]

Soon after settling in Rising Sun, Garber began regularly to write letters to a local newspaper expressing his views on political topics. It is not known if this was an old habit or a new practice, but apparently favorable responses in the community and among friends in Pennsylvania encouraged him to consider journalism as an occupation. In the summer of 1849, an opportunity for such a career move fell into his lap. A cholera epidemic was sweeping the nation and the city of Madison, Indiana, forty miles downstream from Rising Sun, was hard hit. Desperate to escape the city, editor Samuel F. Covington offered the Madison *Courier* to Garber in trade for his store's inventory and a small amount of capital. It was a risky business move for Garber, for failure was the norm among newspapers of the era. In the forty years since Madison's founding seventeen newspapers had been published, and only two had survived. Nevertheless,

[13] For an excellent description of how revolutionary republicanism was embodied in Jacksonian political parties, see Marc W. Kruman, "The Second American Party System and the Transformation of Revolutionary Republicanism," *Journal of the Early Republic* 12 (Winter 1992): 509-37.

within days, and without any experience in printing or journalism whatsoever, Garber turned out his first edition of the *Courier*. Raised from a boy to consider politics and government a high civic duty, at the age of thirty-six Garber entered the excessively political, rough and tumble world of Jacksonian journalism. He had found his calling.[14]

[14] Mimeographed Text, 5; Wallis, 6-7; John W. Miller, *Indiana Newspaper Bibliography* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1982).

Chapter II

Jacksonian Editor, 1849 – 1850

"We are progressive in all things. In politics we are for 'leveling up' from the lowest to the highest."
- Michael C. Garber, Madison *Daily Courier*, 10 June 1851.

As the largest town in Indiana in 1850, Madison was in its "golden age" when Garber took over the struggling *Courier*, and with hard work and a witty style the independent editor soon made it one of the leading papers in the state. Dramatic changes were taking place in American journalism in the mid-nineteenth century, and Garber and the *Courier* very much reflected those trends. While one-half to three-quarters of the *Daily Courier* consisted of advertising, plenty of space was left in its four pages for detailed local news, national and international news received by telegraph, informative and entertaining articles and snippets reprinted from exchange papers, and Garber's vigorous editorials. A new Whig administration was in power in Washington in 1849, so many of the novice editor's comments concerned its corruption or ineptitude, real or assumed. Otherwise the *Courier's* political content, whether articles or commentary, was classic Jacksonian Democratic dogma. But as the weeks and months rolled by one topic of debate increasingly began to dominate the column space of the *Daily Courier* in the same manner that it began to dominate virtually all political discourse within the nation: the place of slavery in the western territories.[1]

[1] On Indiana population statistics for 1850 see Emma Lou Thornbrough, *Indiana in the Civil War Era, 1850-1880* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Bureau, 1965), 1. On life in Madison during its antebellum "golden age," see Woollen, 513-37.

Technological innovations created during the early decades of the nineteenth century seriously impacted the economic, social and cultural lives of antebellum Americans. With the invention of one new technology in the 1840s, the telegraph, the last piece was in place for the development of America's first mass media: the newspaper. Steam-driven presses allowed for the mass reproduction of newspapers, extensive and growing transportation networks allowed for the mass distribution of newspapers, and finally the development of telegraph networks - which by 1852 linked all major population centers except San Francisco - allowed for the mass gathering and dissemination of the information that filled newspapers. As a result, journalism in America was significantly transformed.[2]

Before 1850, most newspapers were small, infrequently printed, and discussed mostly politics. Usually funded by a state or local party organization, or by a few politically like-minded individuals, these "organs" served primarily to disseminate the views of their patrons to the growing electorate. Answerable only to their patrons, newspaper editors lavishly praised their party's leaders and policies, and mercilessly excoriated their opponent's. Understandably, newspaper readership peaked during political campaigns, but dropped precipitously after elections. As a result, the failure rate

[2] The impact upon antebellum life due to economic changes brought about by technological innovation is now commonly called "the market revolution." It is presented in Charles Sellers, *The Market Revolution: Jacksonian America, 1815-1846* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), and critiqued and refined in Melvyn Stokes and Stephen Conway, eds., *The Market Revolution in America: Social, Political, and Religious Expressions, 1800-1880* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1996). The discussion of journalism in the 1850s in this and following paragraphs rely on Lorman A. Ratner and Dwight L. Teeter, Jr., *Fanatics and Fire-eaters: Newspapers and the Coming of the Civil War* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003), chapter 1. They posit the interesting thesis that the North and South's ability to compromise was "put under additional (and, it might be argued, intolerable) strain by tectonic shifts in newspaper circulation and content that rose to a crescendo during the 1850s."

among newspapers was quite high, especially in sparsely populated areas, due to the difficulty of maintaining year-around funding.[3]

With the rise of the mass media press in the late-1840s, newspapers became increasingly more independent, egalitarian, commercial, and sensational, while correspondingly less partisan. As printing technology improved, new economies of scale reduced production costs, enlarged subscription lists, expanded distribution areas, exploded the number of dailies, and made journalism an economically viable profession. But mass production and distribution also increased competition between papers, who then sought readers regardless of age, gender, religion or political affiliation. Papers thus increasingly appealed to the broad information and entertainment tastes of their readers, rather than the narrow political concerns of party leaders. Also, by receiving news directly from Washington over the telegraph, editors and their readers were better informed than ever about the actions of the federal government and their elected officials. As a result, by the mid-1850s most editors still presented news from a distinct political viewpoint, but they were somewhat independent of their party's leaders.[4]

From his first day as editor, Michael Garber and the Madison *Daily Courier* intentionally embodied the new kind of journalism emerging in the mid-nineteenth century. While several of the paper's previous owners had difficulty keeping it solvent, some even despite party patronage, Garber quickly got the paper on sound footing.[5] He continued to print both daily and weekly editions, but expanded advertising and

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[3] For a good description of the trials facing editors in antebellum Indiana, see James H. Butler, "Indiana Newspapers, 1829-1860," *Indiana Magazine of History* 22 (September 1926): 297-333.

[4] Ratner and Teeter, 9-16. Ratner and Teeter argue that the competition between newspapers led them to reckless sensationalism in reporting news, which created an environment not conducive to compromise.

[5] Apparently Indiana's Senator Jesse D. Bright, a Madison native, had provided some financial support for the *Courier* under S. F. Covington. See Wayne J. Van Der Weel, "Jesse David Bright, Master Politician from the Old Northwest," (PhD. diss., Indiana University, 1958), 92-93, 99.

emphasized interesting content.[6] While over half the front page was devoted to advertising, the rest consisted of useful information of a standing nature (steamboat and railroad arrival and departure times, church listings and times of services, market prices, etc.) and one or two columns of a serialized fictional story. Page two was the heart of the paper, featuring Garber's witty editorial comments, detailed coverage of local events, especially governmental proceedings, and a host of reprinted accounts from papers across the country of a usually sensational nature: murders, suicides, sex scandals, tragic accidents, natural disasters, and any freak or bizarre occurrence. While page three featured news off the telegraph (usually from Washington, but also from around the world) and legal notices, page four usually consisted entirely of advertisements. In short, under Garber the *Daily Courier* featured something of interest for every member of the family, and usually provided a chuckle in the process.[7] Despite being a Democratic newspaper in a predominately Whig town, subscriptions to the *Daily Courier* were solid, and in time only grew.[8]

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[6] The *Courier* was a weekly paper until S.F. Covington began additionally publishing a daily edition on 30 April 1849. It seems that Garber was encouraged to cease daily publication until the paper was more financially sound, but he apparently recognized where the future of journalism lay. The Madison *Weekly Courier*, which Garber often called the "Dollar Courier" in reference to its yearly subscription price, was published on Wednesdays and contained the best information presented in the previous week's *Daily Courier*. The subscription base of the *Courier's* weekly edition was larger and much broader than its daily. Garber claimed the "Dollar Courier" had subscribers throughout "Hoosierdom and the States 'adjacent thereto,' and has a respectable circulation in Virginia, Alabama, South Carolina, Pennsylvania, California, New Mexico and Texas, without the aid of traveling agents and borers." *MDC*, 13 May 1851. For the purpose of this study, only the Madison *Daily Courier* was consulted.

[7] On the content of the *Courier* under Garber, see Baker, "Michael C. Garber," 404-06. The best description of the *Courier*'s content and its target audience is Garber's own advertisement for the *Weekly Courier*: "The Dollar Courier, this week, contains the whole of the admirable story of 'The Heroine;' the amusing sketch of the 'Negro Rappings;' the news by the two arrivals from Europe and California; horrid murders; all the news of the week; agricultural matter; sketch of the life of the great Apostle of Democracy, Thomas Jefferson; Editorial upon the principal topics of the times; market reports; money markets in New York and Madison, with prices of the different stocks in the New York market; dispatches by Magnetic Telegraph from all parts of the Union. As an instructor for the man of business, and as an intellectual companion for the family circle, the 'Dollar Courier' is not excelled by any paper from the St. Johns to the Rio Grande." *MDC*, 13 May 1851.

[8] In *MDC*, 15 May 1850, Garber claimed with pride that the *Daily Courier* had over 500 subscribers.

Garber's insistence upon complete editorial independence also reflected the changes in American journalism. Originating in his Jeffersonian worldview, Garber always held to the ideal of America as a republic consisting of independent citizens who thought for themselves but acted in the best interest of their community. Since most citizens were busy in occupational pursuits, Garber believed it was the job of the independent press to keep them fully informed about current events so they could make intelligent decisions about the issues that affected their lives and communities.[9] Therefore, Garber utterly detested traditional "party organs:"

> The establishment of mere party organs by an Executive officer or an associated body of politicians, was conceived in iniquity, and is and has been corrupting in practice. Presses so established become the *particular organs* of the few who own and sustain it; more frequently the apologist of the owners, and is interested in deceiving the people by hiding or evading the truth.

On the other hand, Garber admired - and apparently attempted to model the *Courier* after - independent newspapers such as the New York *Sun*, the New York *Herald*, the Philadelphia *Public Ledger*, and the Baltimore *Sun*. Garber praised these papers "as organs of the whole people to whom *the people* of both, of all parties look for information and news, unbiased by party ties or party policy." In truth, while Garber's editorial independence was motivated by political principles, it was really only possible due to the technological innovations that had transformed journalism shortly before he entered the field.[10]

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[9] Letters from readers affirmed this role of the press. One reader, "Madison," referring to Garber's importance in the community asked, "are you aware of the high place you occupy?," since no one had time for books or lectures, but everyone read the newspaper. Madison concluded, "I am not sure but that we ought to elect our editors. The office is much more important than Mayor, or Marshall or councilman." *MDC*, 1 March 1850. The role of an independent press was a common theme from the beginning for Garber, see *MDC* 28 February, 16 March, 20 March, 18 November 1850; 8 February 1851.

[10] *MDC*, 21 January 1851. Early in his editing career Garber especially admired the independent but Democratic leaning New York *Sun*, and seems to have considered it his model for the *Courier*. Capable of

Ultimately, the Madison *Courier* under Michael C. Garber was very political, but not particularly partisan. Each issue of the *Courier* certainly bore the impress of Garber's political views, and usually advocated his party's policies while denouncing those of the opposition's. Yet Garber was serious in his desire to maintain "principle over party," and his ready willingness to question or criticize the actions of his party's leaders demonstrated his emphasize upon "measures not men." Schooled in republicanism from youth, Garber believed that any political organization could be corrupted, especially if focus were shifted from founding principles to mere personalities. However, when Garber took over the *Courier* in 1849 he apparently possessed little fear of demagoguery or corruption arising within the Democratic ranks. He seemed convinced that the Democratic Party embodied all truth and virtue, and the Whig Party all things despicable.

On his first day as editor, 11 July 1849, Garber promised to "make the Courier a Democratic paper, devoted to the cause of the masses – the toiling millions of our beloved country – supporting the well known and well defined principles of the Democratic Party." Wasting no time in fulfilling that promise, the next day he reprinted from another paper a full-column article entitled "Reign of Terror: Biddle vs. Jackson," which glorified President Andrew Jackson's dismantling of the United States Bank in the 1830s. Declaring the bank to be a tool of the "Oligarchy of Money," it praised Jackson's resolve "to destroy the power of an overgrown and, of course, corrupt Corporation, which ruled with more than imperial sway, the trade, commerce, manufactures, money, and

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printing 20,000 copies an hour, he claimed the *Sun* had "broken down the rich man's monopoly on knowledge." *MDC*, 18 November 1850.

even the bread of the Community." Later, in a reprinted article titled "Banks - What They Indicate," Garber explained the pernicious effects of banks upon the economy.

> The multiplication of banks is always the first indication of a speculative season and of transferring capital from productive to trading and speculative employments. It is the ascendancy of the speculative over the industrial spirit, favoring a consumption rather than the production of wealth.

Under Garber, the *Courier* would constantly warn its readers of the dangers posed by banks, and the speculation, false credit, and paper money that inevitably followed in their wake.[11]

Michael C. Garber's political views, which changed very little over time, can be clearly discerned in the pages of the Madison *Daily Courier* during the first two years of his editorship. Warning of the insidious nature of corporations, Garber reprinted this extract from the *Washington Union*:

> Men, when they desire to rule their fellows in an easy way, do so by means of incorporations. We never knew an incorporated company that did not extend its powers and influences far beyond the intentions of its creators, and that did not play the sycophant when it was weak, or the tyrant when it was strong. Soulless and reckless, armed with peculiar authority, and supported by legal fictions, it corrupts its own circle first, and then the community that surrounds it.[12]

The resolution of a Whig state legislator asking Congress to pass an internal improvements bill provided Garber the occasion to link the Whigs with both the discredited Federalist Party and the financial enslavement of laborers through a national debt:

[11] *MDC*, 11, 12 July 1849; 13 March 1850. For other early anti-bank comments see *MDC*, 30 August, 21 November 1849; 31 May 1850; 3, 7 May 1851.

[12] *MDC*, October 8, 1849. Also see *MDC*, 13 January 1850.

> The question of the internal improvement of the states by the Federal Government has always been a great favorite with Federalism, because it furnished the readiest and surest method of creating a national debt.[13]

Garber was especially adept at using humor or sarcasm to advance his cause. Attacking protective tariffs, Garber declared absurd Treasury Secretary Meredith's claim that "to give prosperity to one branch of industry is to increase that of the rest." Using that logic, Garber encouraged Meredith to "let the government support the printers, and then the iron manufacturers, cotton lords, and everybody else will prosper. Hurra!"[14]

Like most stalwart Democrats, Garber utterly detested all forms of aristocracy, whether exemplified by European royalty, American capitalists, or members of the Whig Party. While all European monarchies received their share of criticism, Britain consistently received Garber's special censure. He mercilessly rebuked the astounding disparity in wealth and education in Britain, and was particularly incensed by its blatant moral hypocrisy - criticizing American slavery while oppressing the natives of its colonies, especially Ireland and India. Garber clearly saw aristocracy as the origin of Britain's economic and social oppression of the common masses, both domestic and foreign. This is demonstrated by Garber's glowing approval of this reprinted paragraph titled, "WHO IS THE GREATEST SLAVERHOLDER?"

> We say Great Britain, with all her stilted sympathy for Freedom; with all her noisy professions against Servitude. She holds millions upon millions in Slavery. Her slaves are of many kinds; the slaves of her Debt; the slaves of her factories; the slaves of her Mines; the perishing slaves of her Cities; the Crushed slaves of her colonies; the crouching slaves of her Military

[13] *MDC*, January 9, 1850. For other early comments critical of internal improvements, see *MDC*, 1 February, 6 April 1850; 2 February, 2 June 1851.

[14] *MDC*, January 25, 1850. Garber especially battled Whigs over the Walker Tariff of 1846, see *MDC*, 15 February, 1 May 1851.

> Establishment! And all these – her slaves – are white men, women, and children. Think of it, ye who have been misled by British professions.[15]

Yet Garber's greatest denunciations of aristocracy were reserved for those closer to home. Like all ideologically motivated Democrats, Garber believed the world was divided into producers and non-producers (often consumers), or, labor and capital. Contrary to capitalist's arguments that the two groups' interests were the same because labor was dependent upon capital, Garber held that American labor was independent of capital, and thus their interests were very different:

> Capitalists are interested in getting the largest amount of work for the smallest sum of money. Hence their advocacy of Tariffs, which protect only the money invested in their machinery; leaving the door open to the *pauper labor* to come and compete with the free labor of the States. Hence their Banks to make every hard dollar count three; hence their opposition to all laws tending to protect the operative – to the ten hour law, in States where it has been proposed or enacted; hence their advocacy of Bankrupt Laws, to defraud their producer; and their advocacy of all manner and kinds of State indebtedness. On the other hand, labor is interested in getting a fair remunerating return for the sweat of the brow of the poor man. Hence the establishment of Trades Unions, Typographical Societies, &c.

In the conclusion of his article Garber articulated his primary motivation for political activity: "we do not wish to make every man a *drayman* – we only desire to divide more equally the profits of labor between the drayman and the *purse proud aristocrat*." Typical of Jacksonian Democrats, Garber equated capitalists with aristocrats, and believed his Democratic Party was labor's only defense against them.[16]

Since Democrats of Garber's generation likened capitalists to aristocrats, then it only followed that they associated the party that advocated policies favoring capitalists

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[15] *MDC*, 24 May 1851. For other early criticisms of British aristocracy see, *MDC*, 23 August, 4 September, 19 October 1849; 7, 8 February 1850.

[16] These excerpts are from Garber's article "Labor and Capital," which articulates well his views of political economy. *MDC*, 13 May 1851. Also interesting is his article "Code Napoleon – Origin of the Working Men's Party," *MDC*, 12 January 1850. See also, *MDC*, 8, 19 May 1851.

with aristocracy, and thus they ceaselessly denounced the Whig Party as the party of aristocracy. From his first day as editor Garber was merciless in "exposing" the Whigs aristocratic tendencies, both economic and social. He, like many Jacksonian Democrats, considered the Whigs really just a continuation of the defunct Federalist Party, whose members he accused of aristocratic designs and pretensions. In the run up to the fall 1849 elections Garber reprinted a short paragraph, "which fully accords with our own notions of the matter," that excellently illustrates the common Democratic linkage of "Whiggery" with aristocracy.

> Whether for war or peace, for glory or prosperity, for honor or shame, the dignity, the prosperity, the prestige, of this great Republic, are to be found in the support of the Democratic Republican party. And why? Because they represent the PEOPLE. We want no aristocracy. The whigs are aristocrats. We want no enemies of democracy. The whigs are federalists. We want no advocates of monarchy. The whigs incline that way. We want no money monopolists. Of this ruinous faction are the whigs. We want the broadest liberty. The whigs would clip the wings of freedom. Away with them![17]

Obviously, all of Garber's views aligned with the standard Democratic agenda of the Jacksonian era: anti-bank, anti-paper money, anti-protective tariff, anti-corporation, anti-federally funded internal improvements, anti-aristocracy, advocacy of western expansion, and glorification of the common laborer. During the second half of the twentieth century historians seriously debated not only the origins and motivations behind this Democratic agenda, but of the era's party rivalry – known as the second party system - as a whole. In the process, the pendulum of historical consensus swung full cycle. At mid-century the two parties' programs were considered to represent the true economic interests of their respective constituencies. During the century's third quarter it was generally believed that party programs, like the parties themselves, lacked any real

[17] *MDC*, 18 October 1949. See *MDC*, 3 September 1849, for a criticism of the aristocratic social pretensions of Whigs.

substance, and were largely symbols for cultural groups to rally around. By the end of the twentieth century, historians were convinced that the parties and their programs were substantive and meaningful to their members, but there was little agreement upon the origins and intent of these programs or the motivations of their members. A few historians have made recent attempts to explain the second party system while seriously addressing the economic and cultural impulses of the era, but their success is questionable.[18]

Michael C. Garber's hearty advocacy of the Jacksonian Democratic agenda can be directly traced to his Jeffersonian republican worldview, especially its conception of political economy. From the mid-eighteenth century onward, most Americans believed that the maintenance of a republic required an equitable distribution of wealth, and many of them believed that four principles governed wealth distribution: the labor theory of value, the political economy of aristocracy, the laws of primogeniture and entail, and the population-to-land ratio. While laws of primogeniture and entail – inheritance laws that

[18] The literature on the Jacksonian era and the second party system is immense, so only representative works are listed. The classic mid-century class based interpretation is Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *The Age of Jackson* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1948). While not a work of "ethnocultural" history, Edward Pessen, *Jacksonian America: Society, Personality, and Politics*, rev. ed. (Urbana: Illini Books, 1985), reflects the effects of that school, questioning the connection between voters and party programs. Over the last three decades many works have attempted to define the Democratic and Whig Parties. Michael F. Holt, *The Political Crisis of the 1850s* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1978), argues that party programs reflect different approaches to the common goal of defending republicanism. Major L. Wilson, *Space, Time, and Freedom: The Quest for Nationality and the Irrepressible Conflict, 1815-1861* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1974), insists that the parties had different conceptions of freedom, progress, and nationality. John Ashworth, *'Agrarians' & 'Aristocrats': Party Political Ideology in the United States, 1837-1846* (New Jersey: Humanities Press Inc., 1983), claims the parties embodied the conflicting values of capitalism and democracy. Lawrence Kohl, *The Politics of Individualism: Parties and the American Character in the Jacksonian Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), argues parties differed due to psychological make up, "inner-directed Whigs vs. "tradition-directed" Democrats. Alexander Saxton, *The Rise and Fall of the White Republic: Class Politics and Mass Culture in Nineteenth-Century America* (London: 1990), argues that Democrats, North and South, were committed to white supremacy and the preservation of slavery. Recent attempts at synthesis include Harry L. Watson, *Liberty and Power: The Politics of Jacksonian America* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1990); and Daniel Feller, *The Jacksonian Promise: America, 1815-1840* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995). For a historiographical overview see, Daniel Feller, "Politics and Society: Toward a Jacksonian Synthesis," *Journal of the Early Republic* 10 (Summer 1990): 135-61.

assigned to the eldest son the parents' entire estate – were not an issue by the nineteenth century, the other three principles continued to dominate American thinking about wealth distribution, and consequently, political policy, for the entire century.[19]

The labor theory of value was the cornerstone of republican economic theory. While its sources were multiple, the primary influences were Protestantism, which insisted that reward be earned "by the sweat of one's brow," and various eighteenth century philosophers and political economists, who posited that only labor created value. From these bases American logic produced the notion that since an individual's labor created value (usually property), then only the individual had the right to possess and dispose of that value. In time, the phrase "the fruits of labor" became verbal shorthand for the labor theory of value concept, and the phrase became ubiquitous in American political discourse. Throughout the nineteenth century most Americans agreed that the best manner to maintain an equitable distribution of wealth was to ensure that workers received the full value that their labor created - that they received the fruit of their labor.[20]

The term "political economy of aristocracy" was not actually used in the eighteenth or nineteenth century, but it is a useful phrase to describe a collection of ideas that early Americans connected together concerning aristocrats and wealth. As a concept, the political economy of aristocracy was a natural outgrowth of the political theory of republicanism espoused by America's founding generation. In noting the manner in which republics degenerated into despotic regimes, American republicans believed they discovered the five policies that aristocrats used to cheat workers out of the fruits of their labor. These five aristocratic policies of wealth distortion included high taxation, the

[19] The discussion of republican economic theory, here and throughout the work, is from Huston, "American Revolutionaries," and *Securing the Fruits of Labor*.

[20] Huston, "American Revolutionaries," 1080-81; *Securing the Fruits of Labor*, chapter one.

creation of large bureaucracies, the granting of economic favors and monopolies, the formation of an established church, and the manipulation of currency. From the knowledge of these five policies American republicans made two observations: first, wealth disparities came not from nature, but from legislation produced by aristocratic social systems; and second, the way to maintain relative wealth equity, and thereby a republic, was to adopt policies contrary to these five aristocratic policies. It was but a short leap for American republicans to conclude that laissez faire economic policies, precisely because they were opposite of the policies established by aristocrats, would produce an equitable distribution of wealth.[21]

The last principle considered to govern wealth distribution, the population-to-land ratio, was discussed by elites in the eighteenth century, but was a popular concern in nineteenth century America. It described how population growth ultimately drove citizens from the country - where they could no longer buy land to farm - and into manufacturing jobs in the cities, where they became poor by earning only subsistence wages. While various writers worried that excessive population would produce great disparities of wealth, Thomas Jefferson always believed that America could be preserved as an agricultural society with a healthy distribution of wealth by continuous westward expansion. Following Jefferson's lead, many Americans by the mid-nineteenth century believed that westward expansion was crucial to maintaining a stable republic.[22]

The three principles believed to govern wealth distribution, and the degree of men's faith in them, were a major factor in the formation and perpetuation of political parties in nineteenth century America. It seems that those citizens who most firmly

[21] Huston, "American Revolutionaries," 1083-90; *Securing the Fruits of Labor*, chapter two. The phrase "political economy of aristocracy" is a creation of Huston's.
[22] Huston, *Securing the Fruits of Labor*, 50-53.

believed that these principles described earthly realities tended to congregate in a series of parties – the Jeffersonian Republicans and the Jacksonian Democrats - that emphasized minimal government and economic laissez faire. The adoption and continuation of these guiding concepts, as well as the numerous policy positions they produced, makes perfect sense in light of republicans' unquenchable fears of the establishment of a political economy of aristocracy. Convinced that significant wealth disparity did not originate in natural processes, but were the sole product of legislative actions, Jeffersonian Republicans and their Jacksonian heirs assumed that the restriction of federal involvement in the economy would simultaneously stymie aristocratic legislative machinations to acquire unearned wealth, while freeing common citizens to receive the full fruits of their hard earned labor. Virtually all aspects of the Jacksonian Democratic program – especially restrictions upon the federal government's involvement in financial regulation, funding of internal improvements, and establishment of protective tariffs – are explained by these overarching republican economic assumptions. For thoughtful Jacksonian Democrats like Michael Garber, perseverance in the guiding concepts of minimal government and laissez faire economics - concepts handed down by Jefferson and his disciples - was the only way to maintain an equitable wealth distribution in America, and thereby the only way to maintain America as a genuine republic.[23]

While Michael Garber's writings and editorial selections during his first two years at the Madison *Courier* reveal both his strident advocacy of Jacksonian Democratic policies, and their Jeffersonian republican origins, they also reveal another important strain of his thinking: free labor ideology. While the phrase "free labor ideology" was

[23] Huston, "American Revolutionaries," 1096-97; *Securing the Fruits of Labor*, chapter 7.

not used in the nineteenth century, it is a useful term to describe the body of assumptions, ideas, and values that bound many northerners together when contemplating the virtues of their free labor society.[24]

Flowing out of the labor theory of value and the assumed right of men to the fruit of their labor, free labor ideology developed in the north during the two decades preceding the Civil War. Its advocates asserted that free labor – as opposed to slave or indentured labor - was precisely what was historically unique and great about America. They claimed that free labor produced a dynamic capitalist society with virtually unlimited opportunities for economic and social advancement by common workers. While free labor ideologists praised the nobility of labor and laboring men, they assumed wage earning was just a step towards economic independence – that is, property ownership. Despite growing evidence to the contrary, free labor ideologists discounted the possibility that a free labor system would produce a dominant capitalist class and a "wage slave" laboring class of propertyless workers. Instead, they argued, free labor produced a strong, stable, virtuous middle class, where labor and capital – hands and brains – were combined. In fact, free labor produced an ever progressive society of economically and politically independent citizens – the very goal of the republican fathers.[25]

From early in his editorship, Michael Garber revealed himself to be an advocate of free labor ideology. The *Courier* was sprinkled daily with poems and wise sayings

[24] The classic work on free labor ideology in the antebellum North is Eric Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party Before the Civil War*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995). Foner created the term "free labor ideology."

[25] Foner, *Free Soil*, chapter one. Huston more explicitly explains the connection between the labor theory of value and free labor ideology, "American Revolutionaries," 1100; *Securing the Fruits of Labor*, chapter nine.

reminding readers that "the success of individuals in life is greatly owning to their learning early to depend upon their own resources," and that "God helps those who help themselves."[26] But more revealing are articles that seamlessly combined Protestantism's demand that men obey God's command to labor and have dominion over the earth, and republicanism's demand that citizens be economically and socially independent, with a general belief in the progress of civilization.

> Let the working man denounce and spurn the idea that toil is dishonorable. Let them take no man by the hand who lives in idleness and usefulness, while enjoying the fruits of their labor. Let them make manual labor respected by their words and their deeds. Nothing is more honorable. God made men to labor, and made work for them to do. He set them the example of working when he made the world. The honest man who patiently toils in building cities, or subduing the fields for cultivation, is, however humble he may be in the eyes of men, the friend of God. He has not promised him power or riches – for men abuse these. Man is fearfully warned against the temptations of riches – but he has higher rewards than these – the consciousness of being useful – independence and freedom from bowing down to his fellow-men as a superior being – he can look up with confidence when the toil of every day is over, with a feeling that he has done something useful as a humble apprentice of the great master-builder of the Universe.[27]

Such formulations were common from Garber, especially as the 1850s progressed. And while Garber seldom quoted a Whig politician except to criticize the ideas they expressed, he did not hesitate to give full approbation to these reprinted words of Daniel Webster.

> I have spoken of labor as one of the great elements of our society, the great substant interest on which we stand. Not feudal service, not prodial toil, not the irksome drudgery by one race of mankind, on account of color, to the control of another race of mankind; but labor, intelligent, manly, independent, thinking and acting for itself, earning its own wages, accumulating its own wages into capital, becoming a part of society and of our social system, educating childhood, maintaining worship, claiming the right of the elective franchise, and holding to uphold the great fabric of the

[26] *MDC*, 1 August 1849; 7 February 1850.
[27] *MDC*, 16 March 1850.

> State. THAT IS AMERICAN LABOR, and I confess that all my sympathies are with it, and my voice, until I am dumb, will be for it.[28]

This passage, which Garber considered "as equally remarkable for truth and eloquence," articulates virtually all the themes of the free labor ideology in short compass. Not only does it demonstrate that the free labor ideology was fully developed by 1850, but that it had enthusiastic adherents across the North in both parties by that time.[29]

Garber's adherence to free labor ideology was also evident in his almost boundless belief in progress, and his active support of progressive causes. In articles with titles such as "The Progress of Enlightened Knowledge, Christianity, &c.," Garber explained to his readers that theirs was a period of progress unknown to the world before, and that America, the child of Protestant Christianity and Enlightenment Reason, was in the vanguard.[30] He never tired of praising "the unparalleled advancement of the United States, in wealth, population, independent spirit, social improvement, individual and collective enterprise, and elements of national greatness."[31] But Garber did more than just praise, for he promoted economic and social progress as well. Despite an occasional comment on the superiority of agrarian virtues, he was a consistent supporter of all commercial enterprises that contributed to the local economy. Due to his experience with canals and railroads in Pennsylvania, Garber understood better than most the importance of transportation links to Madison's economic health, and therefore constantly advocated

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[28] *MDC*, 3 November 1849. For other early comments praising labor, or the free labor ideal, see *MDC*, 14 January, 7 March 1850; 9 May, 20 June 1851.

[29] Eric Foner's thesis in *Free Soil* is that the key unifying principle of the Republican party before the Civil War was opposition to the expansion of slavery based upon adherence to free labor ideology. Critics claim that free labor ideology was neither mature nor widespread until the late-1850s. See especially William Gienapp, *The Origins of the Republican Party, 1852-1856* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987): 353-57.

[30] *MDC*, 11 March 1850.

[31] *MDC*, 3 November 1849. For other early comments concerning the march of progress, see *MDC* 13 February, 2 March 1850; 7 June 1851.

the construction of additional rail lines and turnpikes to maintain the city's edge on its competitors.[32] In truth, Garber seemed in love with virtually all things his age considered progressive and new, for he supported causes as diverse as temperance, prison reform, peace conferences, and "the bloomer outfit."[33] In his support of bloomers, Garber made a humorous allusion that could seriously be considered his life's motto: "We are progressive in all things. In politics we are for 'leveling up' from the lowest to the highest."[34]

Garber's adherence to free labor ideology was especially evident in his views toward slavery. Northern adherents of free labor ideology believed that the distinctive feature of their free labor society was the opportunity it provided wage earning workers to rise to economic independence. This opportunity was possible, they believed, because northern society allowed men to enjoy the fruits of their labor. Slavery, on the other hand, denied men the fruits of their labor. Worse yet, slavery "degraded" all forms of labor that slaves performed, because it lowered both the prestige and the wages given for their performance. As a result, free laborers in a slave society were doomed to a life of mere subsistence or poverty, for they possessed neither the motivation nor means to economically or socially advance through their labor. Therefore, free labor ideologists detested slavery because they believed that it denied the fruits of labor to all laborers, both slave and free, and thereby created a society that was economically and socially

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[32] The *Courier* was full of discussion of local commercial concerns, especially those related to the Madison and Indianapolis Railroad and the steamboat trade on the Ohio River. Garber advocated many internal improvements both local and national, but generally favored private financing; see *MDC*, 22 September, 18 October, 6, 21 November 1849; 28 January 1850; 3, 8, 12 May 1851.

[33] Garber was active in the temperance movement; for early comments see *MDC*, 8 August, 6, 24 October, 21 November, 4, 5, 11 December 1849; 7 May 1851. On prison reform, see *MDC* 9 May 1851. On peace conferences, see *MDC*, 9 April 1850. Garber showed unusual interest in the bloomer fashion of dresses that appeared in 1851. He favored them over inconvenient long dresses, and on both 10 and 11 June 1851, printed two plates illustrating different styles of the dress.

[34] *MDC*, 10 June 1851.

stagnant. This belief was the basis for free labor advocates' general contempt for southern society, which they considered to be socially static and economically backward in comparison to the north. Garber fully concurred with these free labor views on slavery and its consequences, and expressed them repeatedly in the *Courier*.[35]

Garber ably presented the view that slavery degraded labor, and thereby debased society, in an 1850 article he wrote in light of concerns that slaves would be introduced to the California gold field.

> Wherever white men work, labor is esteemed honorable, and while white men dig the soil of California, the negro has no place there. It is only where labor becomes a dishonor and degradation to the white man, that he seeks slaves to do that labor. While there is no slavery in California, no man will hold it dishonorable to toil, but the moment the white man's toil is set against that of a slave, he will scorn and abandon it. In California, or wherever labor is free, the white man is both master and slave; the master of his time and actions, and the slave of those common necessities, which make the toil which answers them, useful, honest, dignified and honorable. Why, then, should the soil of California be cursed with what will make labor a degradation to the white man, rendering him, in time, enervated and tyrannical, and making him finally the slave of a condition which he cannot throw off, and which, according to all precedent, must end in abasement and ruin?[36]

In this passage Garber asserts all the standard free labor ideology arguments: all labor is honorable; free labor combines capital and labor, brains and brawn; slave labor degrades all labor; slave labor systems degrade free men, making them weak and dependent, and in time, slaves of their own system. All of these arguments had been circulating in the North, especially among thoughtful Jacksonian Democratic writers, for decades before 1850. Garber's childhood memories of Virginia testify to the fact that many of these ideas were in circulation among Jeffersonian Republicans during the first decades of the

[35] Foner, *Free Soil*, 40-51; *MDC*, 20 June 1851, Garber describes the particularly pernicious effects upon white labor of slaves with mechanical skills.
[36] *MDC*, 7 March 1850.

nineteenth century. In fact, all these arguments had their origins in republican economic theory, and were formulated during the Revolutionary generation. What was distinctive to *Courier* readers about Garber's 1850 article was not its expression of free labor ideology, but its clear implication that the free labor system in the new western territories was threatened by slavery.[37]

Garber's opposition to the expansion of slavery into the new western territories was characteristic of free labor ideologists, and was a position which flowed naturally from their critique of slavery. Believing that slave economies denied all laborers the fruits of their labor, and thereby the mobility to rise into the economically independent middle class, free labor advocates loathed to see such a system become entrenched within the many states that would be organized out of the vast western lands. Many believed the aristocratic social system of the south maintained by slavery was a hindrance to national social and moral progress, so they definitely did not want it to spread further. And some free labor advocates, believing western lands should be a "safety valve" for overcrowding northern cities – i.e. places where settlers could move to flee the falling wages of urban manufacturing jobs – insisted that free labor should not have to compete with slave labor in these presently free territories. While emphasis varied among the individuals and groups that made up the "free soil" movement – the name given to those who opposed slavery expansion into the territories – their motives generally flowed from this constellation of free labor ideology assumptions. Michael Garber, concerned whether the

[37] On Garber's memories of popular contempt for slavery in Virginia, see Chapter I above. On the origin of the free labor ideology in republican economic theory, see Huston, "American Revolutionaries," 1100; *Securing the Fruits of Labor*, 65, 296-306, 315-17. The difference in the political content of the Madison *Daily Courier* during the editorships of Samuel F. Covington (1849) and Michael C. Garber (1849-56) is minimal – free labor ideology is ubiquitous during both periods.

western social order would resemble his native South or adopted North, solidly favored the free labor North.[38]

Sectional tensions were high when Garber took over the *Courier* in 1849, as Congress attempted to organize the vast track of western lands the United States had acquired as a result of its 1846 to 1848 war with Mexico. In the three years since Pennsylvania's Representative David Wilmot had added a proviso to a war related spending bill that forbid the establishment of slavery in newly acquired territories, Congress had unsuccessfully struggled to find an organizational scheme acceptable to both North and South. For a radical Jacksonian like Wilmot, and likeminded northeastern Democrats called Barnburners,[39] it was axiomatic that slave labor degraded free labor, and therefore slavery must be prohibited from the territories for the good of all laboring men. However, most Democrats considered the Wilmot Proviso unnecessarily provocative to southerners and supported a doctrine known as "non-intervention" (or "non-interference"), which allowed settlers to decide the issue at the point of statehood. Non-intervention was the creation of Lewis Cass, the Democrats 1848 presidential contender, and was the official position of that year's Democratic national platform. Democrats who insisted upon adoption of the Wilmot Proviso broke with their party and established the Free Soil Party, with former president Martin Van Buren as their candidate. Partly owing to defections to the Free Soilers, Whig candidate Zachary Taylor won the presidency in 1848. Although a slave owner, Taylor shocked the South and

[38] Foner, *Free Soil*, 54-58.

[39] For my purposes, "radical Democrats" were those who insisted upon laissez faire government economic policy, hard money, and strict economy in government. In some ways, they were simply Democrats who actually meant what they said.

increased sectional strife by attempting to establish California and New Mexico immediately - bypassing territorial status - as free states. As a result, Congressional debate grew curt and hostile, while editorial effusions, including Garber's, grew increasingly long and prolific.[40]

Michael C. Garber's views on slavery and its expansion into the western territories during his early years at the *Daily Courier* were consistent, but also, like the times themselves, complex. Depending upon the issue addressed and its particular context, he could at times appear inconsistent. For instance, despite his basic belief that black men were equal to white because they both bore the image of God, he consistently denounced abolitionists, who espoused these same views, as dangerous fanatics. And though he adamantly believed in restricting slavery from the western territories, he condemned the Free Soil Party for disrupting the Democratic Party in 1848. In truth, despite strong personal opinions on these issues, Garber knew that democratic government required compromise, and he seemed genuinely to fear that the Union might founder if men did not work to keep it together. As a result, throughout the period his views very much aligned with the mainstream of northern Democratic thought.[41]

In response to the prodding of Madison's Whig paper, the *Republican Banner*, only a few days after taking the helm of the *Courier*, Garber expressed his view on

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[40] James L. Huston, *Calculating the Value of the Union: Slavery, Property Rights, and the Economic Origins of the Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003): 153-179; James M. McPherson, *Ordeal By Fire: The Civil War and Reconstruction* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1982):58-65; Michael A. Morrison, *Slavery and the American West: The Eclipse of Manifest Destiny and the Coming of the Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997).

[41] Garber did not criticize abolitionists often, but when he did it was usually for the hypocrisy of caring more for enslaved blacks in the far off South than for poor white northern workers in their midst; see *MDC*, 31 January, 8 February 1850. Though he held "free soil" views, Garber disliked the term in the early 1850s because he associated it with the Free Soil Party, which he blamed for the defeat of Cass in 1848. Before 1854 he apparently believed that petty ambition motivated the party's leadership as much as principle; see *MDC*, 14, 20 March 1850.

organizing the territories: the doctrine of non-interference. After reprinting the entire resolution of the 1848 Democratic platform that articulated the position, he explained it to his readers. Starting from the fact that Mexican law had forbidden slavery in the territories, non-interference meant "that slavery could not exist without a municipal law creating it; that it did not exist in the newly acquired territory, and could not be carried into it without a law of congress."[42] Therefore, while non-interference technically allowed existing states to establish slavery within their borders, it denied the institution a foothold in the territories from which new states would be created, and thereby effectively eliminated the possibility of the formation of new slave states. Non-interference was considered by Garber and most northern Democrats the perfect formulation to accomplish their goals: it maintained the West as free soil, it did not deny Congress' Constitutional right to regulate the territories, and it avoided offending southern sensibilities. Garber was so convinced of the soundness of non-interference, which was the position of the Indiana Democratic Party in 1849, that in the August congressional campaign he claimed that "opposition to the extension of slavery, and to its introduction into newly acquired territories, is one of our measures."[43]

But non-interference satisfied neither the advocates of the Wilmot Proviso, nor southerners demanding legislation protecting slave property in the territories, so sectional tensions continued to rise through the spring of 1850, as did fears of national dissolution. Like many Democratic editors at the time, Garber both denounced abolitionists and pressed the old party issues all the harder, apparently fearing the continuous focus on slavery might destroy the union.

[42] *MDC*, 16 July 1849.
[43] *MDC*, 31 July 1849.

> There is a class of people in this country who have no sympathy for any but the colored race; who write volumes upon the iniquity of negro slavery; and who are always keenly alive to the wrongs and hardships of the negro. This feeling has almost divided a great people, and sundered the political ties that held a great political party together. Why should all the philanthropy in the country be bestowed on Cuffee and Phillis? Have we no white laboring class, as deserving as can be found in any country? Would it not be better to devote a portion, at least of our sympathies to the class who form the great mass of the people, to educate and improve them, to emancipate them from the thralldom of the capitalist and monopolist? We should have nothing to do with the "peculiar institution." Let it remain with those who love it; but let us turn our attention to the wants of the laborers among us, and endeavor to better their condition.[44]

Later he would turn his scorn upon fanatics of both sides, claiming "it would be a mercy of Providence if there was some corner of our territory that could be set off for a mad-house, and all the Northern and Southern lunatics sent to it."[45] In February 1850, Garber went public with his concerns in a long editorial titled "The North and the South." Declaring "the Union is in danger!," he pleaded for both sections to reign-in their "ultras," and to accept the position of non-interference, since climate made the territories unsuitable for slavery anyway. Garber claimed that, "this has been Democratic doctrine from the beginning of this useless excitement; and now, we see the same position assumed by Mr. [Henry] Clay. Why then all this pother? Would we dissolve on an abstraction?"[46]

To his credit, Garber usually printed articles presenting various sides on all issues, and the debate over "the slave issue" in the territories was no exception. Some of the

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[44] *MDC*, 23 July 1849; see also 24 October 1849. On 30 July 1849, Garber printed a humorous paragraph titled "Troubles of an Editor," where he related the rough handling he had received by readers over various stories he had printed during his first three weeks as editor. He claimed "the 'upper ten' of the 'colored population' of this city have determined to victimize us, because we called the universal negro race 'Cuffee' and 'Phillis.' Who would be an editor?" The comments must have had effect, for it does not seem that Garber used the derogatory names again, despite their common usage in antebellum journalism.

[45] *MDC*, 25 January 1850.

[46] *MDC*, 13 February 1850. For comments concerning a Whig editor's favorable response to "The North and the South," see *MDC*, 25 February 1850.

most interesting were letters from "Democracy," a local reader who denied that the fate of the Union was seriously threatened. Garber strongly disagreed with the reader in a response that clearly revealed his deeply held, and thoroughly Jacksonian, values: "We hate slavery as much as man can hate sin; and there is only one thing we hate worse than slavery – Disunion. With the latter innumerable disasters, among which the worst kind of servitude, will come. The Union first – the Union all the time."[47]

Genuinely concerned for his nation's survival, Garber's emotions rose and fell in the spring and summer of 1850 as he filled the *Courier* with reports and commentary on Congress's debate over Henry Clay's compromise proposals. In May he was upbeat but distinctly less willing to conciliate the South, especially when they spoke of possibly amending the "compact," that is, the Missouri Compromise.

> We are for the compromise. If that be lost, then we are for the admission of California with her present boundaries and constitution, and for Territorial Governments for Utah and New Mexico, *with the Proviso*. If the South is not willing to let the question remain as it is now fixed in the constitution, but must seek to amend it, it is the duty of the North to make the amendments on the side of liberty and equality; if there must be a new compact between slavery and freedom, the former must be told that no more slave territory, under any circumstances, can be admitted; that not a foot of territory now free shall ever be polluted by the touch of slavery. The compact as it is; but, if it must be changed, make it safer for freedom.[48]

Apparently Garber received jests or even criticisms for his enthusiastic support of proposals put forth by Henry Clay, long the leader of the Whig Party. Therefore, in an editorial a week later he reaffirmed both his principles on slavery expansion and his lack of concern for political labels.

> If this compact [the Missouri Compromise] is to be changed, we wish it to be so changed that there will be no doubt of the power of Congress to prevent

[47] For letters from "Democracy," see *MDC*, 16, 18 February 1850. For Garber's response, see *MDC* 18 February 1850.

[48] *MDC*, 16 May 1850.

> the spread of a "great social evil," deplored by all good men. If this be Whiggery, then we are a Whig, and a supporter of a Whig measure brought forward by the "embodiment" of all the Whiggery.

Also in this article Garber noted for the first time something he would discuss repeatedly over the next four years - the tendency for "the slave issue" to break down party lines.

> This is another evidence of the fulfillment of the prophecy that "old things are passed away.' The Banner, the organ of Whiggery in Jefferson county, is in *quasi* opposition to Mr. Clay, Mr. Webster, and Mr. Bell; and the Courier is acting with these distinguished men in this matter. We wish to say, however, that we are bound to no party, sect, or man.

While Garber noted these shifts with more curiosity than joy, it is obvious they did not make him particularly uncomfortable either. If he believed that he was standing on the ground of right principle, Garber usually did not care who stood next to him.[49]

Garber's mood sank to low ebb in early August as he declared "The Factionalists Have Triumphed," when reporting the defeat of Clay's compromise proposals.[50] Clay had submitted all the proposals in one "Omnibus" bill, in the hopes that a majority from each geographic section would vote for the whole bill in order to get the part it favored. The strategy backfired, as opponents of each proposal voted against the whole in order to kill the part they disliked.[51] Garber expressed his incredulity at the obtuseness of politicians, and his fellow citizens, for not seeing the ramifications of this defeat.

> Those who look upon the slavery question now at issue between the North and the South as a mere temporary struggle for political equality or political

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[49] *MDC*, 24 May 1850. Before 1970, historians assumed that debate over slavery in the territories destroyed the second party system and led to the formation of the Republican Party. Two modern defenses of that view are Eric Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men*, and James L. Huston, *Calculating the Value of the Union*. Since 1970, some historians have claimed that immigration issues, not debate on slavery expansion, destroyed the second party system. Two presentations of this view are Michael Holt, *The Political Crisis of the 1850s*, and William E. Gienapp, *The Origins of the Republican Party*.

[50] *MDC*, 3 August 1850.

[51] McPherson, *Ordeal By Fire*, 65-67; Huston, *Calculating the Value*, 181. The Omnibus admitted California as a free state; organized New Mexico and Utah territories under the vague principle of non-interference; adjusted the Texas-New Mexico border, and gave Texas $10 million to finance its public debt; created a new fugitive slave law; and abolished the slave trade in Washington, D.C.

> ascendancy, and Abolition as a hobby-horse, on which to ride into power, and afterwards thrown aside as a piece of lumber, no longer serviceable or useful, take but a superficial view of a subject that involves the most momentous consequences to present and future generations. Not only is the Union staked on its issue, but other results, if possible still more vital to the peace and happiness of the United States and of the world at large. It involves a war of extermination between two great races of mankind; it involves dissentions in the Christian Church, highly injurious to its salutary influence, if not fatal to its existence; and finally, it involves a complete subversion of the social state, as it subsists at present, and as it has subsisted since the advent of the Saviour, and the establishment of His doctrines.[52]

While some of his readers may have considered these sentiments overblown, to fellow free labor ideologists they would have seemed fully appropriate. Convinced that the United States was the premier agent of progress in the world, and that America was the unique nation that would bring Christianity and republican government to the world's oppressed masses, it was shocking for Garber to think that this mission could be utterly disrupted by the selfish conniving of a few petty politicians. Certainly Garber wanted a compromise settlement to maintain the Union, but it is obvious from his comments that he considered America to be more than just a union of states, slave and free. This tension between what America actually was, and what he hoped it would be, would agitate free labor ideologists like Garber for the next ten years.

Motivated by his fears of the consequences of disunion, Garber was supportive of the Compromise of 1850 when its final proposals were passed in mid-September. Stephen A. Douglas saved the possibility for a settlement by breaking Clay's bill down into separate bills that shifting coalitions could accept, and in August and September he maneuvered the bills to passage in the Senate, while Speaker Howell Cobb did the same

[52] *MDC*, 2 August 1850.

in the House. Like most of the nation's citizens, Garber was thankful that disaster had been averted, and generally returned his focus to local news and the old party issues.[53]

By the end of the year 1850, Michael C. Garber had to be pleased with his first year and one-half as editor of the Madison *Courier*. Having no experience as a journalist, and having purchased a paper with a long history of financial instability, Garber had made the *Courier* a success by offering interesting and informative material for readers of all ages. Always fascinated by new technology, his was the first paper in Madison to get news by telegraph, and thus his subscribers always got the scoop on national and international news. And though the Democrats were the minority party in both Madison and Jefferson County, he seemed to relish the challenge of communicating his party's views to his fellow citizens. In short, it is obvious from the enthusiasm inherent in Garber's quips and comments that he loved his new career in journalism: the opportunity it gave him to know what was going on in the community and the nation, the chance it gave him to express his opinions on all matters great and small, the sense it gave him of being at the center of everything. Due to these public and private successes, it is unlikely that in December 1850 Garber suspected that over the next three years both his political views and his livelihood would be seriously challenged.

[53] Huston, *Calculating the Value*, 181; McPherson, *Ordeal by Fire*, 67-68.

Chapter III

Conversion, 1850 – 1854

"It is now a work of ***time***, but we doubt not the issue. ***Time*** will set us right, and in time the people will learn to estimate correctly the actions of our oppressors, and also the means and tools used by men high in office to carry out their nefarious schemes." - Michael C. Garber, Madison *Daily Courier*, 11 August 1851.

Various events between 1850 and 1854 convinced Michael C. Garber that it was necessary for him to leave the Democratic Party and help form a new party that advocated his principles. Garber's views on race and slavery were a central source of his political conversion. His anti-slavery views, especially his criticisms of the Fugitive Slave Law in 1851, led to his long personal and political feud with Senator Jesse Bright, which was a key element in his conversion. The feud with Bright slowly transformed Garber's opinion of the Democratic Party as he increasingly recognized that the aristocratic and corrupt Bright was not an anomaly within the party, but the norm. In June 1854, convinced that the Democratic Party no longer embodied Jeffersonian Republican principles, Garber left the party to help form a party that espoused those beliefs – the Republicans.

Michael Garber's views on race and slavery, which were consistent but complex, were a central cause of his conflicts and ultimate disillusionment with the Democratic Party in the early 1850s. Garber genuinely believed the basic Christian tenet that God had created all men, and therefore all men have a common humanity that bears God's image. In the midst of a dispute with his rival Whig editor at the *Banner*, Garber once

euphemistically called southern slaves "the *dark* image of the *Great Creator* in the south."[1] But like many Americans, Garber also conflated this explicitly Christian doctrine with the Enlightenment inspired formulation of Thomas Jefferson in the Declaration of Independence asserting "that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these, are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." These rights were considered to be "natural rights," rights that men universally possessed at birth, and had the right to enjoy. Therefore, those who logically followed Jefferson's axiom believed that all forms of slavery were inherently evil, for they all infringed upon men's natural right to liberty. As a result, Garber considered the enslavement of blacks in the American south to be evil.[2]

Just like their idol Jefferson, disciples like Garber found it easier to declare that all men were equal then to actually consider black men to be their equal. Typical of his age, Garber considered it self evident that the "Anglo Saxon" race - which he never clearly defined - was superior to all other races of men. Though he considered black Africans to be a race inferior to white Anglo Saxons, he did not believe this justified enslaving them, as so many of his contemporaries did. Nonetheless, Garber considered full integration with blacks to be impossible, for he assumed blacks could not compete with whites in the labor market, and the result would be a permanent pauper class. Worse yet, such integration would inevitably lead to cases of amalgamation - race mixture - which degraded the Anglo Saxon race. Therefore, Garber was an enthusiastic supporter of African colonization – sending free blacks from America to the colony of Liberia in

[1] *MDC*, 3 April 1850.

[2] For an excellent description of a Jacksonian Democrat whose anti-slavery sentiments were produced by natural rights philosophy alone, see Daniel Feller, "A Brother in Arms: Benjamin Tappan and the Antislavery Democracy," *Journal of American History* 88 (June 2001): 48-74.

West Africa. Throughout the period from 1849 to 1856, Garber constantly enthused over the work of colonization societies in the United States and the brilliant success of settlers in Liberia. Despite the inconsistencies of his racial views, Garber was perfectly consistent in his insistence that all men were equal, and that slavery was evil, and these two pillars inevitably made him uncomfortable with the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850.[3]

Like most northerners, Garber did not fully recognize the implications of the Fugitive Slave Law, an element of the Compromise of 1850, until it was enacted, whereupon he soon called for its modification. On 23 October 1850, Garber opened a half column editorial titled "The Fugitive Slave Law," with the declaration "We don't, can't like it. It is repugnant to all the feelings of a man living in a free State." Although the article discussed the law in detail, and even provided the arguments of its defenders, the primary impression of the article was critical. Garber's major complaints with the law were that it denied the fugitive a trial by jury, it paid judges higher fees for deciding that fugitives were slaves than that they were free, and it required citizens to assist in slave catching. But despite his personal distaste for the law, Garber clearly articulated what he considered to be a reasonable and moderate position on the issue:

> The fugitive slave law may be modified; some of its obnoxious features may be stricken out; but so long as the constitution remains as it is, the right to claim a fugitive from labor or service cannot be abrogated or avoided; and so long as we remain in the Union with slave States must be carried out in good faith; and after all the ridicule we of the North have heaped upon the South, about nullification, disunion, &c., &c., it won't do for us to talk about such things.[4]

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[3] Garber's comments on race, whether theorizing or using it for humor, were in fact relatively rare, and seem to have only decreased with time. Possibly Garber understood the contradictions in his thought and did not wish to display them publicly. Generally his comments on amalgamation were confined to rebuking southern morality by noting the large number of mulattos in the south. For Garber's most extensive statements on race and the need for colonization, see *MDC*, 25 January, 4 February 1851. For other early comments or reports on colonization, see *MDC*, 13, 29 October 1849; 26 January, 1 August 1850; 8 May, 6, 9 August, 6 September 1851.

[4] *MDC*, 23 October 1850.

Garber quickly discovered that despite his best attempts to remain moderate and unemotional on the fugitive slave issue, it was extremely difficult to stay so. Almost immediately church and anti-slavery groups began to declare their noncompliance with a law they considered immoral. Garber consistently berated this behavior, calling it "northern nullification" to emphasize both its illegality and tendency to incite sectional antagonism.[5] Then in mid-November southern Indiana got its first fugitive slave case, as a grandmother, her daughter, and grandson were brought before a magistrate in New Albany, across the Ohio River from Louisville. Garber reprinted an article from the New Albany *Ledger* that detailed the case:

> What is singular about this case is that the so-called fugitives are, to all appearances, white persons! No trace of negro or Indian blood is discernable in the oldest woman nor in the boy. About ten days ago the family were kidnapped or enticed across the river, there they were put on a boat bound South; but when in the neighborhood of Howesville were, as they say, put on shore by the passengers, and made their way back here. The oldest woman says that her husband was killed by Indians, and she and her daughter carried away captive by them, among whom she has ever since lived – latterly in Arkansas – but are not slaves, and were never treated as such.[6]

The case was tied up in the New Albany courts until December when townspeople, insisting "they are white!," finally purchased the family's freedom. The *Courier* ran several stories on the case, and upon its conclusion Garber claimed that it clearly demonstrated why the Fugitive Slave Law desperately needed to be amended to allow those accused to present evidence in their defense.[7]

Then in early-December Garber received the first of what would become a long string of attacks in the Indiana press upon his demand for modification of the Fugitive

[5] *MDC*, 4, 13, 27 November 1850.
[6] *MDC*, 15 November 1850.
[7] *MDC*, 5 December 1850.

Slave Law. While Garber could understand why various Kentucky papers – representing the viewpoint of slaveholders – were disagreeing with his position, he did not understand the motivation of the Hoosier editors: they criticized him merely because his position differed from the leader of Indiana's Democratic Party, Senator Jesse Bright. In his response to this first attack, Garber both asserted his editorial independence and defined his relationship to Bright.

> We are not the "blow pipe," nor have we ever been of any man, clique or party. In all of our intercourse with Mr. Bright, we have ever found him careful of the rights and privileges of others. We differ with him on many questions of public policy; yet we are friends – political and personal friends. Upon this question of the fugitive law, we are not certain how far we differ with the U. States Senator; nor have we ever stopped to enquire.[8]

Without realizing it, with those words Garber had become an enemy of Jesse Bright and begun a feud that would define the rest of his life.[9]

Jesse David Bright's rise from a second rate small town lawyer to being the leading politician of Indiana and a major national figure was truly phenomenal. A fourth generation American of German descent, he was born in New York in 1812 and arrived with his parents in Madison, Indiana, in 1820. He followed his brother Michael into the legal profession, and was admitted to the Madison bar in 1833. Though never an eminent lawyer, traveling the judicial circuit on legal matters allowed him to develop an interest in politics and a familiarity with voters. Personally popular and adept at political organization, Bright, a Democrat, won several elections in predominately Whig Jefferson County; first as probate judge, then as state senator in 1841. An expert at behind the

[8] *MDC*, 7 December 1850. Later in the article Garber would insist that "the law must be so modified and framed that white people may not be liable to seizure and extradition, upon proof made in another State," obviously a concern generated by the recent events in New Albany.

[9] While it is impossible to know the exact point at which Bright turned against Garber, it likely began with this reply. See Garber, "Jesse D. Bright and Michael C. Garber," 32; Van Der Weele, "Jesse David Bright," 99-100.

scenes maneuvering - what critics would label "wire pulling" - and always a staunch party man, Bright obtained his party's nomination for lieutenant governor in 1843, and he won the election in a commanding fashion. The presiding officer of an equally divided state Senate, for two years Bright repeatedly cast the deciding vote that kept that body from joining a Whig dominated House to elect a new United States Senator. When the 1845 Indiana elections returned a split Senate but a Democratic House, Bright not only brought the bodies into joint session, but managed to get himself elected Senator.[10]

As a United States Senator, Bright continued to prefer to wield influence quietly rather than in the public eye. Seldom speaking on the floor of the Senate, Bright exercised power through committees and social engagement, and quickly became popular among his peers. Through patronage and dictatorial tactics, he also soon gained dominance of the Indiana Democratic Party, which he would maintain for almost two decades. As a member of the Senate Committee on Territories, he was deeply involved in the Congressional wrangling that produced the Compromise of 1850, and was roundly praised for his contributions. Perhaps it was his emotional investment in the Compromise that made him angry at anyone who criticized it. Perhaps it was his financial investment in slaves, which he held on a Kentucky farm upriver from Madison, that made him angry at critics of the Fugitive Slave Law. Or perhaps, as one contemporary who knew him well insisted, Bright "was imperious in his manner, and brooked no opposition either from friend or foe." Whatever the case, Bright almost certainly influenced Indiana's Democratic organ, the Indiana *State Sentinel*, to chastise Garber for expressing views

[10] Van Der Weele, "Jesse David Bright," 1-37; also "With My Face Toward My Accusers": The Expulsion of Jesse David Bright From the United States Senate," in *Their Infinite Varieties: Essays on Indiana Politics* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Bureau, 1981): 79-84. The leading Whig candidate to whom Bright denied the Senate seat was Joseph G. Marshall, also of Madison. Needless to say, Marshall and Madison Whigs hated Bright thereafter.

contrary to his. Garber's strong response only made Bright more suspicious of Garber, and willing to try new tactics to shepherd him into line.[11]

Despite his strong support for the Indiana Democratic Party and its leaders, to Garber's astonishment, he continued to receive attacks for his independent views. In January he fully supported the reelection of Bright to the Senate, and also strongly backed two actions of Governor Joseph Wright – a veto of an incorporation bill, and a denunciation of state banks. But criticism in the press continued. Then on 3 February, Joseph Chapman, the Democratic representative from Jefferson County, proposed a resolution in the state House that would forbid its door keepers from the normal practice of distributing free copies of the Madison *Daily Courier* to members with their mail. The proposal was tabled without action, but it opened Garber's eyes to the forces he was up against. In his 4 February editorial he claimed he was being ostracized for being independent, for siding with Governor Wright, and for failing to agree "that the fugitive law is the most beneficent, benevolent law on the statute books; that it has saved the Union, and that none are patriots who dislike any of its features or details. This is probably the 'head and front of our offending.'" After once again articulating the obnoxious features of the bill, Garber closed with the assertion "we admit the necessity of a fugitive slave law; but its details must be based upon the principles of *Justice* and *Right*."[12]

Throughout the spring of 1851 the pressure against Garber steadily grew. Attacks by William Brown, editor of the *State Sentinel*, increased in frequency and ferocity, calling Garber a party disorganizer, a disunionist, and an abolitionist. Garber's

[11] Van Der Weele, "With My Face Toward My Accusers," 85; "Jesse David Bright," 98-100; on Bright's slaves – 21 recorded in the 1860 census - see page 43. Quote is from Woollen, 223.
[12] *MDC*, 4 February 1851.

responses grew increasingly vociferous as well, as he continued to defend both his stand on the Fugitive Slave Law and his editorial independence. While Garber must have suspected Bright's involvement in these attacks, for both Brown and Chapman were known Bright lackeys, he never publicly implicated the Senator.[13]

Then in June, clear evidence of Bright's intrigues surfaced and open warfare between the two men began. By strange circumstances Garber gained possession of a February letter from Bright to a lieutenant named Taylor that expressed his hatred of the editor, and revealed machinations against him. For some reason, Bright was convinced that Garber had plotted against his reelection, and thus needed to be driven out of business by a more loyal Democratic paper. When confronted, Bright would not confirm his authorship of the letter, but did openly declare his intention to drive Garber from the party. On 18 June 1851, Bright and twenty six other Madison Democrats published their names on a card in the Whig *Tribune* announcing they had stopped subscribing to the *Courier* as it was no longer a worthy Democratic paper. To demonstrate Bright's duplicity, over the next few days Garber published both the Taylor letter and previous letters Bright had written to Garber praising his work.[14]

In his long introduction to the Taylor letter on 23 June, Garber addressed the question "What's in the name of a Senator, that we should fear to bring our grievances to the public ear?"

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[13] The best accounts of the Bright-Garber feud are still by Garber's son, William S. Garber, *A Chapter in the Early History of Journalism in Indiana*, and "Jesse D. Bright and Michael C. Garber," though both contain factual errors. For examples of Garber's newspaper war over the Fugitive Slave Law and editorial independence, see *MDC*, 4, 30 January, 6, 12 February, 12 May 1851.

[14] Garber, "Jesse D. Bright and Michael C. Garber," 33-36; some of the dates Garber cites are incorrect. Van Der Weele, "Jesse David Bright," 103-104. Noting Bright's lifelong obsession with secrecy and intrigue - both his own and others - Van Der Weele suggest that he may have been clinically paranoid. For Garber's growing estrangement from Bright, see *MDC*, 6, 9, 10, 14, 16-20, 23-27, 30 June 1851.

> Is it because a Senator has grown rich, and has some twenty-five or thirty negroes to work for him, while we are poor and depend upon the daily labor of our head and hands for bread to feed a family? While he has grown to be honored, a great man in the nation's councils, we are but an humble follower of the precepts of Jefferson, the cardinal one of which is "error of opinion may be tolerated, where reason is left free to combat it." That this Senator is powerful we admit. That he can crush us and ruin our business, while he declares to our friends that he does not wish to do so, remains to be demonstrated. His influence has been sufficient to take from us some whom we had supposed our friends. Some in whom we have trusted; have crouched down at his feet, like pointer dogs at the sportsman's cry of heed! and some whom we thought would not wear the collar with pride. The Senator may crush us, may muzzle a free press, but not before we have cited him to appear at the bar of public opinion, of the State and Union, to answer for his conduct.

It is clear that Garber considered Bright to be an aristocrat using the political economy of aristocracy to oppress poor free laborers like him. He obviously also saw a direct connection between Bright's ownership of slaves, and his demand that free men obey his commands like trained dogs. Like a genuine republican, Garber was declaring he would die fighting rather than submit to aristocratic domination.[15]

Bright publicly admitted his authorship of the Taylor letter on 24 June, but his embarrassment at its exposure only made him more determined to crush Garber. On 1 July, Bright presided over a meeting of seventy one Democrats at the Madison courthouse for the purpose of selecting candidates for the fall election. After a rambling two hour harangue that charged Garber with holding free soil views, being a party disorganizer, and not being sufficiently Democratic, Bright proposed that Garber be "read out" of the party. Though Garber responded with a spirited one hour defense, the motion passed with only three dissenting votes.[16]

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[15] *MDC*, 23 June 1851.

[16] Garber, "Jesse D. Bright and Michael C. Garber," 34; Van Der Weele, "Jesse David Bright," 104-105. For Garber's expulsion from the party, see *MDC*, 2, 3, 5 July 1851.

If Bright thought expelling Garber from the Democratic Party would cow or crush him, he had seriously miscalculated Garber's determination, popularity and influence throughout the Madison area. Garber denounced Bright's aristocratic schemes daily throughout the summer of 1851, and as a result, subscriptions to the *Courier* rose despite the appearance of the *Madisonian*, Bright's "orthodox" Democratic paper. Garber was particularly outraged when he discovered that Bright loyalists had pressured Democrats and colluded with Whigs to arrange the Democratic fall ticket to Bright's approval. Garber encouraged the establishment of a ticket of independent candidates, and vigorously publicized political meetings in their support. Declaring the August election a referendum on Bright's leadership of the Democratic Party, Garber was ecstatic when most of Bright's local ticket went down to defeat.[17]

While the white-hot intensity of Michael Garber's feud with Jesse Bright loyalists was to continue into the spring of 1852, by the middle of that year the battle had cooled to the form it would sustain for the next eighteen months - trading daily insults with the editors of "Bright papers." Ironically, while Bright had hoped to drive Garber from the Democratic Party, the conflict had actually increased Garber's popularity and influence throughout the state and region. Apparently Garber became a minor hero to all editors, regardless of party, who valued editorial independence, as well as to all who disliked Bright. And Garber never let his readers forget who Jesse Bright was: an aristocrat, who embodied everything Jefferson and Jackson denounced, who used political office to

[17] *MDC*, 15 July 1851, Garber claims that he had lost 25 subscribers but gained 125. For a list of Bright's corrupt dealings, see *MDC*, 19 July 1851. On Bright's manipulation of local politics, see *MDC*, 16 June, 25 July 1851. On election campaign of 1851, see *MDC*, 23, 28-31 July, 1-2, 4-9 August 1851. A reader who signed his letter "DEMOCRACY" also insisted the election was a referendum on Bright: "Will you, by you conduct at the polls on Monday next, show these men of the purple robe that you know you rights and will maintain them? If it is necessary to sacrifice Caesar to save Rome, let him fall. God and Liberty." *MDC*, 29 July 1851.

amass wealth, who thwarted the will of the people in his electoral deals with Whigs, who used party papers to distort the truth and smear men's characters, who owned slaves and whose personal interests were aligned with slaveholders, and who disdained the common free laborers whose interests he was elected to represent.[18]

Though a pariah in Bright's Democracy, Garber continued to espouse traditional Jacksonian policies and support politicians who did likewise. One such man was Joseph A. Wright, governor of Indiana throughout most of the 1850s. A self-made man and consistent Jacksonian, he became the darling of all Democrats appalled at Bright's autocratic ways. In 1851 Garber was apparently convinced that the aristocrat Bright was merely an unfortunate and embarrassing aberration in Democratic leadership, and that in time he would be replaced by the more worthy Wright. When once asked by a Kentucky editor the cause of his feud with Bright, Garber replied that "the whole matter may be stated thus. We are for right, Wright, and the masses of the people. The Factionists are for Bright and corruption."[19]

In retrospect, the feud with Bright was ultimately responsible for transforming Garber's opinion of the Democratic Party. Since steamboats, railroads and telegraphs now made reports from Washington or Indianapolis quickly and easily accessible, Garber always had a ready supply of stories on Bright's corrupt dealings. But with a list of Bright's schemes and corruptions ever fresh in his mind, editor Garber could not have avoided seeing disturbing patterns in his party across the country as he assiduously read

[18] Apparently in the fall of 1851 Garber accepted the challenge to a duel by the co-editor of the *Madisonian*, Robert S. Sproule, but friends intervened to stop it; see the Madison *Courier*, 15 July 1895; Wallis, 15-16. In January 1852 Garber was stabbed and almost killed in an altercation with Bright supporter Hamilton Hibbs; see Garber, *A Chapter in the Early History of Journalism in Indiana*, 48-57; "Jesse D. Bright and Michael C. Garber," 37-39; Wallis, 16-18. Apparently while convalescing from his almost fatal wounds Garber was reminded how dependent his family was upon his financial support, and this encouraged him to moderate his attacks on Bright.

[19] *MDC*, 8 August 1851. For a brief sketch of Wright, see Woollen, 94-103.

dozens of newspapers weekly searching for material to reprint. During the three years following his break with Bright, Garber increasingly realized that the Democratic Party had become unprincipled and corrupt, and that the aristocrat Jesse Bright was more typical of party leadership than an anomaly.[20]

While Garber was initially pleased with the outcome of the election of 1852, he quickly became disappointed with its results. The election had virtually destroyed the Whigs and given the Democrats significant majorities in Indianapolis and Washington, as well as control of the White House. But rather than use their advantage to press the standard "party issues" associated with minimal government, the Democrats soon degenerated into squabbling factions – which freely recruited Whigs - that largely argued over petty issues of patronage. While freely using humor to castigate such Senate maneuvers as the one that allied anti-slavery Whig William Seward, Free Soil Democrats Charles Sumner and Salmon Chase, and proslavery Democrat Jesse Bright, Garber was obviously more appalled than amused. Likewise, the reports of political graft coming out of Washington, which Garber reprinted and seems to have believed, were thoroughly bi-partisan and virtually endless. And it disgusted Garber that even laws pertaining to simple local affairs, such as determining which Madison newspaper should print the uncalled letter list from the post office, were being disregarded for selfish political aims. By early 1854, Garber seemed to agree with the sentiments of a letter writer that politics

[20] On the mass political corruption in the 1850s, and the role technology and journalism played in exposing it, see Mark W. Summers, *The Plundering Generation: Corruption and the Crisis of the Union, 1849-1861* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987). Bright is mentioned repeatedly for his corrupt dealings.

was little but "the aspirations of selfish partisans, whose principles are no deeper than their pockets, and no higher than their overweening ambition."[21]

The feud with Bright also made Garber increasingly critical of slavery and those who served its interests. While Garber's roots in Christian and natural rights thought led him to believe slavery was evil, his concerns not to stoke sectional feelings motivated him to dampen his criticisms of the institution during his first year as editor. After his break with Bright, Garber apparently saw no reason to restrain his declarations that slavery was evil. Technically, he continued to hold "free soil" views, meaning that he did not want to touch slavery where it already existed, but was adamant that it should not expand to areas presently free. Nevertheless, Garber had no patience for anyone who argued – whether from an economic, philosophic, or religious point of view - that slavery was anything less than an evil system.[22]

In May 1853, Garber's nemesis, William J. Brown of the Indiana *State Sentinel*, ran a series of articles defending the notion that slavery was a "Divine Institution." Garber's response reveals much about his thinking on both slavery and the Bible.

> This thing of running to the Bible to approve oppression is just simply ridiculous. All the Bibles in the world if they taught it on every page could not make slavery anything but an infringement of human rights. Some people flee to the same book to prove that liquor drinking is a Divine Institution, when their own eyes demonstrate that it is a curse. No *book* can make a *wrong* right.[23]

Apparently Garber's anger grew as installments proceeded, until on 28 May he finally denounced Brown by brutally describing the system the editor so glowingly advocated.

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[21] The *MDC* throughout 1853 is full of discussions Democratic squabbles in Congress, especially between so-called "Hard" and "Soft" factions. For the strange alliance noted, see *MDC*, 19 December 1853; Garber quipped that if Bright kept associating with free soilers he would soon send his children to the Elutherian Institute - an interracial school twenty miles north of Madison. For the "uncalled letter list" controversy, see *MDC*, 6, 9, 11, 13 January 1854. For quote, see *MDC*, 6 January 1854.

[22] *MDC*, 3 February 1854, Garber gives a clear explanation of free soil views.

[23] *MDC*, 10 May 1853.

> We have great respect for the black negro. God made him so, and in making him had a wise purpose in view. – Wm. J. Brown.
> What do you think that wise purpose was, dear reader, which Mr. Brown says God had in view? Why nothing more than that the poor African should be seized in his native jungle, where he was as happy as the day was long, thence to be dragged in chains and sold to the "white nigger," to work for lazy men, to have his heart strings cruelly snapped asunder by the soul-driver, the wife of his bosom and the daughter of his heart taken away from him to minister to the lust of some soulless beast in human form. That's the object God had in view in creating the sable sons of Africa, according to William J. Brown, who sets himself up for a Democrat![24]

Having been raised in a slave society, Garber held no illusions about the oppression inherent in the system of chattel slavery, and was offended that men would plainly deny what was so clearly evident. Garber also connected the oppression of the slave to the laziness of the master. Garber obviously believed that the host of evil consequences that proceeded from slavery originated in men's desire to avoid God's command to work. As with virtually all of Garber's analyses of slavery, this one's roots are in republican political economy: the labor theory of value, and the critique of the political economy of aristocracy.

Garber was not only disgusted by slavery apologists, but was utterly appalled at their growing source – the Democratic Party of the North. From his youth Garber had believed that adherence to Jeffersonian principles logically led one to value individual liberty and detest slavery, and that the Democrats where the heirs of this tradition. When the Wilmot Proviso thrust the issue of slavery expansion into public debate, Garber was proud that virtually every northern Democratic politician and organization – whether backing the proviso or noninterference - took strong positions against slavery's expansion. In fact, William J. Brown had been one of the strongest advocates of the Wilmot Proviso in Indiana, and had obtained his Congressional seat with this stance in

[24] *MDC*, 28 May 1853.

1849. And yet, after Jesse Bright gained control of the state party in 1850, Brown and dozens of Democrats like him became "doughfaces" – northern men who were advocates for the interests of southern slaveholders. For Garber, to have a slaveholder like Jesse Bright as the leader of the Democracy in a free state was a shameful contradiction, but to have dozens of local Democratic leaders abandon the interests of free laborers merely to gain Bright's patronage was simply unconscionable. Garber's contempt for such corrupt and unprincipled men knew no bounds, and seriously undermined his attachment to the party.[25]

Though unhappy with many aspects of the Democratic Party at both the state and national levels by late 1853, Garber was optimistic by nature, so he remained upbeat as he strongly urged reform. And while the feud with Bright had disillusioned him a bit as it forced him to see that the Democratic Party was not all that he once thought it was, he continued to proudly call himself a Democrat. Stirred by a reprinted partisan piece, Garber was compelled to add these boisterous lines:

> Every magnificent enterprise that has made our nation great and prosperous, respected and feared abroad – every movement that has increased our power and developed our resources – has been the work of the Democratic party. It is truly and emphatically the party of progress. All young men should be proud as they grow up, to unite themselves with such a glorious party.[26]

Throughout the first half of 1854 the Madison *Daily Courier* was filled with news about the debate in Congress over the Kansas-Nebraska Act. Proposed by Illinois Senator Stephen Douglas on 13 January, its purpose was to organize the territories

[25] While Garber constantly attacked the duplicity of Brown and similar Bright loyalists, it does not seem he used the term "doughface" until the Kansas- Nebraska controversy. See *MDC*, 17-18 June 1851; 11, 24 May, 15, 19 Nov, 9 Dec 1853; 1, 3 February, 13 June, 8 November 1854.

[26] *MDC*, 17 November 1853.

between the Mississippi River and the Rocky Mountains. As of late January it was rumored, though not certain, that the bill would repeal the Missouri Compromise's restriction on slavery above latitude 36 30', and thereby allow slavery to enter lands previously designated free. In his 27 January editorial Garber attempted to clarify the issue, stating that the bill did not repeal the Missouri Compromise, but as always, the people of a territory could permit slavery when they formed their state constitution. But Garber was confident: "If slavery can be kept out of the territory until then there will not be much danger of its introduction into the States of Nebraska and Kansas." Nevertheless, two columns over from his editorial Garber placed an extraordinary paragraph as a warning to his readers of the stakes involved in the bill.

> A SCENE – It may be what the coalition democrats in this State call the "free soil proclivities" of our composition which makes us loathe the hideous exhibitions of slavery, but certainly no good man, even in Kentucky, could look upon the scene described in the five line paragraph annexed from the Louisville Courier without a sickning (*sic*) sensation at the heart, and an audible prayer of thankfulness to the Omnipotent that such scenes are prohibited in Indiana, and to ask that such may be prohibited in any and every new State which may be formed hereafter out of the Territories of the United States:
> A SCENE – We noticed yesterday a gang of 50 negroes, 300 sheep, 150 fat beeves, and about an equal number of horses and mules, all in a string on the wharf awaiting a steamer, to start down the river for the Southern market.[27]

By 1 February it had become clear that the "Nebraska bill" did repeal the Missouri Compromise, and so Garber announced his thorough opposition to the legislation. Like many editors across the nation, Garber resented Douglas's tinkering with a well established arrangement whose change would only enflame sectional strife: "Let the Missouri Compromise alone – let the Compromise of 1850 alone. They were both, as good men and true patriots believed, *political necessities* when made. They are

[27] *MDC*, 27 January 1854.

not less political necessities now. Let them alone!" It was precisely because Garber could see no legitimate need for the repeal of the Missouri Compromise, that he, like a growing number of northerners, suspected that its only purpose was to expand slavery.[28]

Not only was Garber appalled by the Nebraska bill and its potential to spread slavery into free territories, but he was incensed that northern Democrats – the defenders of free labor – were the ones to introduce and drive it through Congress. Stephen Douglas had long been a supporter of free working men with his strong backing of traditional Democratic policies. Garber reasoned that it had to be Douglas's desire to curry favor with the South for an 1856 presidential bid that motivated him to betray free labor's interests so blatantly. And reports poured out of Washington that President Franklin Pierce – who held a reputation as a solid Jacksonian - was freely using his control over a multitude of appointive offices to buy the votes of northern Democrats to attain the bill's passage in Congress. Also galling to Garber were attacks upon Nebraska bill critic Senator Thomas Hart Benton, a member of Andrew Jackson's cabinet, by members of his own party. Responding to the assertion that Benton no longer supported policies "tending to the preservation of the peace and harmony of the Union," Garber insisted that "if the great and good Jackson were alive he would be found alongside of his ancient and bosom friend Benton, fighting for the sacredness of compacts, in opposition to the "crooked smuggling" policy of the present Administration." When the Nebraska bill was adopted by the House of Representatives on 22 May, it enraged Garber that it was passed by an alliance of the solid South and northern Democrats.[29]

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[28] *MDC*, 1 February 1854.

[29] All throughout the spring of 1854, but especially the month of May, the *MDC* was full of speeches, articles and commentary upon the pending Kansas-Nebraska bill. For Pierce's use of patronage to buy

Garber and other Democratic opponents of the Kansas-Nebraska Act barely had time to get over the shock of its passage when Jesse Bright delivered a second blow at the Democratic state convention on 24 May. In an apparent bid to gain complete control over the Indiana Democracy, Bright made support of the Nebraska bill a test of party orthodoxy. As a result, over the next several weeks local Democratic leaders who would not support the bill were "read out" from the party at congressional district conventions controlled by Bright loyalists.[30]

Garber was present at the state convention and was utterly disgusted with its autocratic tone and agenda. Bright had used the same dictatorial tactics to expel him from the party in wake of the Compromise of 1850, and now three years later he was doing it on a state wide scale. Equally devastating to Garber was the leadership failure of Joseph Wright. Though Wright had been a consistent free soil advocate, at the convention he submitted to both Bright's bullying and the Nebraska test. For Michael Garber the combination in May 1854 of the Nebraska bill's passage and Jesse Bright's tyranny permanently changed his relationship with the Democratic Party.[31]

It is doubtful that Garber was the first in Indiana to call for the formation of a new party, but he was certainly one of the first to act upon the impulse. The week following the Democratic convention several editors called for the establishment of an anti-Nebraska Democrat ticket for the fall elections. A group of Democratic voters signing themselves "Many Citizens," submitted to Garber the name of a respected friend for the position of state auditor, since they did not consider the nominations made at the state

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votes, see *MDC*, 22 May 1854. For comments on Benton, see *MDC*, 3, 6, 8 May 1854; quote is from 8 May.

[30] Thornbrough, *Civil War Era*, 54-57; Van Bolt, "Fusion Out of Confusion," 353-90;

[31] *MDC*, 24, 26, 29, 31 May 1854.

convention to be binding: "Politicians having ceased to reflect the will of the people, it remains to be seen whether the people will be sovereign or serf." Undoubtedly encouraged by this kind of local sentiment, on 3 June, Garber announced a mass meeting of citizens to meet in Madison in ten days to protest the Nebraska act. Except for its sensational title, "Gathering of the Million," this notice was not exceptional since such meetings were occurring all over the North that summer.[32]

Then in an 8 June editorial, Garber justified the need for a new party organization. Garber stated frankly that the South was united "in schemes for the extension of slavery." With "the old Whig party so completely disbanded" and "disaffection at the vitals of the Democratic party," it was obvious that "a new organization becomes as inevitable and necessary as when the leaders overthrew General Jackson in the House of Representatives in 1824 and elected John Q. Adams." Asserting that "the Nebraska issue is the great issue, before which others pale into insignificance," Garber was adamant that "every man having the good of his State and country at heart will unite to oppose this monstrous enormity." Motivated by his Jeffersonian republican principles, Michael Garber had departed the Democratic Party.[33]

In Garber's report of the 13 June anti-Nebraska meeting, he claims there were as many as two thousand in attendance to hear anti-Nebraska Democrats Thomas Smith and John A. Hendricks speak for over two hours. But what Garber described was not a mass political meeting as much as a citizens' revolt.

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[32] On calls for a new party, see *MDC*, 2, 30 May; 2, 6 June 1854. For "Many Citizens" quote, see *MDC*, 2 June 1854. Never one to pass up an opportunity to use humor to ridicule his opponents, on 10 June 1854, Garber wrote: "We have been informed that the Nebraska Democrats are laboring under the impression that they are not invited to attend the meeting on Tuesday, because the call is for the ***freemen*** to assemble. The call is for all Nebraska men, as well as the ***freemen***, for the purpose of eliciting a "free and untrammeled expression" of public sentiment."

[33] *MDC*, 8 June 1854.

> The spirit of 1824 – the spirit which enabled General Jackson to thrust aside the corruptions of Congressional cliques and the demagogues who had fattened in power and fed upon the emoluments of office – is abroad in the land again. The people of the county assembled yesterday in their might. There was a general outpouring of the hardy sons of toil – men who labor, who are not ashamed to labor, and who feel a deep interest in maintaining the dignity of labor. They were the solid men of the country of all parties: farmers who had dropped the work on their farms as did the farmers in the vicinity of Concord and Lexington in 1775, in the busiest season of the year; mechanics who had left their work-shops to vindicate free labor and to protest against the iniquity of the Nebraska and Kansas bill, composed this, the largest meeting held in Madison since the canvass of 1844.

Garber then highlighted the hour long speech of former Democratic congressman Thomas Smith, who claimed the Democracy had become a disgusting "kettle of fish": "The fire eater and secessionist, and whigs of the Southern States, and doughfaces and traitors of the North, all stirred together with the spoon of public patronage, in the hands of President Pierce, and made to boil and bubble by the fire of corruption." Garber concluded by returning to Jackson and his brave denunciations of corruption in his day.

> The democrats felt that it was too true, that the name of democrat, like that of republican in 1824, had lost its true significance, and a tear fell to the memory of Jackson; he, of all the public men of that era, had the firmness to denounce the corruptions of the politicians, who then disgraced the name of the Republican party as that of democrat is now disgraced, and many an unuttered fervent prayer went up to the Giver of all Good to send another Jackson to drive out the corruptions of office holders.[34]

Evident throughout his report of the 13 June meeting was Garber's insistence that those resisting the Nebraska bill were republicans walking in the footsteps of their republican forefathers. Like their Democratic fathers in 1824, and their Revolutionary fathers in 1775, common laboring men were standing up to selfish politicians who had been corrupted by the power of office, and who had thrust upon them policies counter to

[34] *MDC*, 14 June 1854. Thomas Smith was a popular former southern Indiana congressman, and well known Jacksonian stalwart. Hendricks was a son of the eminent William Hendricks, former governor, congressman and senator from Indiana. Both men had been read out of the Indiana Democratic Party for their refusal to support the Kansas-Nebraska Act.

their political and economic interests. In 1775 it was the British aristocracy; in 1824 it was the Republican politicos; this time, southern slaveholders and northern doughfaces had colluded to create an iniquitous scheme to steal the free laborers' birthright of free soil, and thereby degrade their labor and enslave them. The only hope for republican laborers was to imitate Jackson by renouncing their old parties of corruption and banding together to establish a new party that embodied their republican values of political and economic independence.

The resolutions produced at the Madison anti-Nebraska meeting seem to have set the agenda for Nebraska opponents throughout the state. While there were a total of thirteen proposals, they called for four actions: the reinstatement of the Missouri Compromise, the defeat of all northern Congressmen who voted for the Nebraska bill, the renunciation of the Indiana State Democratic Platform approved in convention on 24 May, and the mass meeting of all those in opposition to the Nebraska bill in Indianapolis on 13 July. While the last resolution did not specifically state that the purpose of the 13 July meeting was to start a new party, that appears to have been its goal. Throughout the month of June other editors and politicians opposed to the Nebraska bill, including Whigs, Democrats, Free Soilers, and Know Nothings, agreed to meet to attempt fusion on 13 July, the anniversary of the Northwest Ordinance of 1787.[35]

On 13 July 1854, a crowd variously estimated between three and ten thousand people assembled in Indianapolis to form the People's Party. While certainly not a majority of those in attendance, anti-Nebraska Democrats played a prominent role.

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[35] *MDC*, 14 June 1854. On 20 June, Garber announced that the Whig Indiana *State Journal* had published a card signed by 28 Whigs and 28 Democrats calling for an anti-Nebraska meeting on 13 July 1854. Also see Thornbrough, *Civil War Era*, 63-64; Van Bolt, "Fusion," 376-81; Stoler, "Insurgent Democrats of Indiana and Illinois in 1854," 18-19. All these secondary works emphasize the significance of the Madison meeting in developing a fusion movement.

Garber introduced some of the speakers, served as a convention secretary, and was selected a member of the new party's central committee. The convention's resolutions declared its firm opposition to the extension of slavery, and thereby its denunciation of the Nebraska bill, insisted upon the restoration of the Missouri Compromise, and called for the implementation of a judicious prohibition law. Both at this convention and at congressional district conventions in following weeks, anti-Nebraska Democrats received more than their share of candidacies in the hope of attracting Democratic voters in the October election.[36]

In his report from the convention Garber repeatedly emphasized both the spirit of unity among its members, and the threats that brought them together. He observed that "the meeting was composed of democrats, whigs and free soilers, all of whom had come determined to bury old party affiliations and act together in future to effect a restoration of the Missouri act restricting slavery. . . ." Garber - who had spilt much ink attacking Whigs over the years - was particularly impressed with the unanimity of Whig and Democrat politicians: "men who have battled one with the other, who have always stood face to face in the hottest political contests of the past, now joining hands upon one paramount issue, an issue which has caused the great democratic heart of the people to beat quick with apprehension of danger." The editor was also approving of the way anti-slavery Whigs and Free Soilers "appeared anxious to make sacrifices to conciliate the democrats and cement the Union of the elements of opposition to the extension of slavery, polygamy and immoral tendencies of the Government at Washington."[37]

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[36] *MDC*, 15 July 1854; Van Bolt, "Fusion," 373-81; Stoler, 19-23.

[37] *MDC*, 15 July 1854. Polygamy here refers to its practice among Mormons in Utah territory, and was a particular concern for Garber in the election campaigns of 1854 and 1856. The issue will be discussed in Chapter IV.

Courier articles in the following days reveal that Michael Garber was exhilarated by what he observed at the Peoples' Party convention. For three years he had witnessed first-hand the degenerative effects of the political economy of aristocracy, as Jesse Bright used the powers of his political office to aggrandize himself, rather than promote and protect the interests of his Indiana constituents. It was now apparent that dozens of men like Bright, driven only by selfish desires, were using elective office to foist a great evil upon the very people who had given them the reigns of power. But the people were waking up. An ardent Jeffersonian republican, Garber was ecstatic at the sight of citizens setting aside their private concerns, including old political allegiances and personal grievances, to unite in the defense of their community's political and economic interests. But unlike 1775 or 1824, that "community" was the northern free states, and the interests were democratic government and free labor society.

Upon acquiring the *Courier* in July 1849, Garber was informed by the editor of Madison's Whig paper, the *Republican Banner*, that to be a good Democrat in Madison "you must lay hold of, and hold on to Jess Bright's tail, turn when he turns, twist when he twists, bellow when he bellows, and sneeze when he sneezes."[38] Perhaps even at that early date the independent Garber suspected that someday he would fall out with Senator Jesse Bright. Garber's belief in human equality and his hatred of slavery made it virtually inevitable that he would eventually collide with the imperious slaveholding Bright. Nevertheless, when estrangement occurred, Garber was shocked at both the depth of Bright's dictatorial nature and the willingness of men to submit to him. While serious conflict with Bright loyalists lasted but a year, the feud had long term effects

[38] Reprinted in *MDC*, 25 June 1851.

upon Garber's perception of the Democratic Party. Ever on the lookout for the corrosive effects of political corruption, Garber came to the hard realization that the aristocratic Bright was less an anomaly in the Democratic Party, than the norm. Garber saw the Nebraska bill as an egregious affront to true Democratic – Jeffersonian republican – principles, and thus a proof of the party's descent into corruption. Garber, like thousands of disaffected northern Democrats, left his beloved party in 1854 to help organize a party that espoused his beliefs – the Republicans.

Chapter IV

Republican Editor, 1854 – 1856

"Kansas is the battle ground of Freedom, as Yorktown and New Orleans were during first and second wars with Great Britain. It is the principle which is embodied in the struggle, not any particular care or consideration for the people of that Territory, that actuates the Republicans. Preserve the rights of the States and of the people in Kansas – Freedom's frontier – and the country is secure; just as the capture of Cornwallis at Yorktown secured the acknowledgment of the independence of the Colonies by the British government." –Michael C. Garber, Madison *Daily Courier*, 15 August 1856.

The entire period from June 1854 to November 1856 took on the quality of a moral crusade for Madison *Courier* editor Michael C. Garber. Having departed the Democratic Party in June 1854 over its creation and support of the Kansas – Nebraska Act, Garber was a leader in the Indiana Peoples' Party that soundly defeated the Democrats that fall. Though energized by this success, and the vision of toppling Indiana's autocratic senator, Jesse Bright, Garber's influence was minimized over the next year by his ambiguous relationship with the Know Nothing movement. With the fracturing of the Know Nothings in the summer of 1855, Garber was eager to close ranks with its members to fight as republican citizens in a new Republican Party. Throughout 1856 Garber was tireless in his advocacy of the party's demand that slavery should not expand to the free territories of the west. Despite its local success in Madison and Jefferson County, Garber was very disappointed in the Republican Party's failure in Indiana and throughout the nation. Garber was particularly frustrated that many citizens did not share his republican vision, and chose party over principle.

The campaign leading up to Indiana's state and congressional elections in October 1854 was for many, including editor Michael C. Garber, a great battle of good versus evil. That spring Democrats had pushed through Congress the Kansas – Nebraska Act, which repealed the Missouri Compromise, and thereby opened all the western territories to the possible introduction of slavery. Then at the Indiana state Democratic convention in May, not only was approval of the "Nebraska bill" established as a test of party orthodoxy, but the establishment of an alcohol prohibition law was rejected, and the political expression of clergy condemned. As a result, these three issues – Nebraska, temperance, and the proper role of clergy – as well as Utah statehood with its legitimation of polygamy, became the agenda for the campaign. But for Garber and many members of the new Peoples' Party, the 1854 election was only the first battle against the evil "land-stealing, whiskey-loving, clergy-hating, polygamy Democracy."[1]

Throughout the campaign Garber maintained his focus upon the Nebraska bill, and the need for reinstating the Missouri Compromise's restrictions upon slavery in the territories. However, his writings seem to indicate a slight shift in emphasis. While he certainly continued to believe that the repeal of the Missouri Compromise was the breaking of a sacred compact, and that the extension of slavery into the territories threatened the future of free labor there, he wrote less about these issues during the campaign than he had before the formation of the People's party in July. Instead, he highlighted the "iniquitous" nature of the Nebraska legislation, and of those who gave it birth. In response to a Louisville editor's comments in August, Garber left no doubt what

[1] Garber used this phrase, or various forms of it, through the 1856 elections. Democrats repeatedly charged him with focusing on false issues, or distorting their party's positions with such phrases, but these complaints did not deter him.

he thought of the Nebraska bill, the Democratic politicians that created it, or the thugs that threatened him and other delegates at a Peoples' Party convention the previous week.

> The Evansville Journal says the Nebraska bill was "conceived in sin and brought forth in iniquity." Then it is just like the rest of mankind. – Lou.Dem. [Louisville *Democrat*]
>
> But the conduct of the old line democrats is exactly the reverse in regard to this acknowledged iniquity to that of the rest of mankind, in relation to the spiritual defect in the organization of man. Because man was "conceived in sin and brought forth in iniquity," churches have been established, a ministry organized, and the best men in all ages have devoted their lives to the regeneration of man. On the other hand, this devilish spawn of an unholy ambition is sustained by the old line. The word of God is perverted to its advocacy. In a word, while the good men of all christendom (sic) are hard at work to overcome the consequences of the disobedience of the first man, this iniquity, which is admitted to have been "conceived in sin and brought forth" in the fullness of political corruption, is taken to the hearts of the old liners. They roll it under their tongues as a sweet morsel and have established a political inquisition to excommunicate, and, as in our case at Columbus, threaten to stone all who cannot pronounce their shibboleth.

This kind of emphasis on good versus evil, sin versus morality, marked Garber's language throughout the campaign.[2]

Garber endlessly pointed out the corrupt or hypocritical acts of northern Democratic leaders, all of whom he now grouped as treacherous doughfaces. He especially castigated Jesse Bright loyalists William J. Brown, John L. Robinson, and Cyrus Dunham, all of whom were elected to the United States House of Representatives in 1849 as advocates of the Wilmot Proviso, but now were avid supporters of the Nebraska bill. Brown, helped by Bright, had bought the Indiana *State Sentinel*, and made it Bright's organ.[3] Robinson, through the influence of Bright, had received appointment as a federal marshal, and made himself notorious for berating the political activism of

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[2] *MDC*, 7 August 1854; see also 25 July, 4, 26 August 1854. It is striking how little Garber wrote about the Nebraska bill's threat to free labor during the 1854 campaign, compared to the period of the bill's debate in Congress (see Chapter III), or during the 1856 campaign (see below), when it was his major theme.

[3] Thornbrough, *Civil War Era*, 46.

ministers at the Democratic state convention in May. Dunham, a solid Jacksonian whom Garber had supported in three elections, had caved under Bright's pressure and voted for the Kansas-Nebraska Act.[4] Such sycophancy, irreverence, and spinelessness among political "leaders" was simply immoral in Garber's eyes, and explained both the Democrats' support of the Nebraska bill, and their need to be swept from office.

Second in importance only to the Nebraska bill in the 1854 election in Indiana was the issue of temperance. The temperance movement had been growing in strength throughout the state for years when in 1852 it pressured candidates from both parties to declare themselves in favor of a Maine-style prohibition law. In response, the 1853 legislature attempted to placate the movement by passing a local option law enforced at the township level, but within months the law was struck down by the Indiana Supreme Court. Temperance men announced at their convention in January 1854 that they would not settle for anything less than a law mandating the "seizure, confiscation and destruction of liquor," and they would not support any candidate who did not advocate such a bill. When the state Democratic convention adopted a plank that denounced both intemperance and seizure of property, many temperance men were outraged and looking for a party to support their cause. The People's Party responded with a plank that promised a "judicious, constitutional and efficient prohibitory law." As a longtime temperance advocate, Garber relentlessly attacked "liquor-loving Democrats" of the

[4] Garber was a thorough supporter (and apparently friend) of Dunham until roughly 1853 when he claimed Dunham was under the influence of Bright. During the 1854 campaign Garber did not criticize Dunham as much as mock him for foolishly guaranteeing his defeat by submitting to Bright. In *MDC*, 5 July 1854, Garber said of Dunham: "Write on his tomb – 'Died of Bill Nebraska.'"

"whiskey Democracy" for caring about the profits of poison sellers more than the health and well being of Hoosier laboring men, their families, and their communities.[5]

The campaign's "clergy issue" largely had its origin in the speech of John L. Robinson, chair of the state Democratic convention. Angered at the unprecedented involvement of ministers in the political debates over temperance and the Nebraska bill, Robinson called them, among other things, the "3000 Abolitionists sent out of New England," and "non-taxpaying itinerant vagabonds."[6] Robinson's comments, and similar ones expressed by other Bright loyalists in the following weeks, particularly alienated the large number of Methodist ministers in the state who were already miffed by the party's stand on temperance. Garber made much of the Democrats supposed irreligiosity throughout the campaign, and consistently defended ministerial engagement in politics: "What could the Ministers say when called to their final account if they failed to denounce polygamy, Mormonism, human slavery and infidelity from the pulpit, in their visitations, their out-goings and in-comings?"[7]

Another issue of concern for Garber during the 1854 campaign, and to which he referred repeatedly over the next two years, was the connection between slavery and polygamy. He seems to have stumbled upon it during the Congressional debates over the Nebraska bill, and merely intended to use it to point out the hypocrisy of those members in favor of Congressional non-interference, the means of state organization proposed for the territories in the Nebraska bill.

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[5] Thornbrough, *Civil War Era*, 57-59; *MDC*, 4, 21 January, 15 May, 6 October 1854.

[6] Logan Esarey, *History of Indiana,* 2d ed., vol. 2 (Indianapolis: 1918), 612; quoted in Roger H. Van Bolt, "Fusion Out of Confusion, 1854" *Indiana Magazine of History* 49 (December 1953): 373. See also *MDC*, 26 May 1854.

[7] *MDC*, 25 July 1854; see also 3 August 1854. Through the efforts of anti-Democratic editors like Garber, Robinson became notorious for his attacks upon ministerial political activism and acquired the title "the preacher killer." He wore it proudly; see *MDC* 21 March 1856.

> The Nebraska members of Congress, while their lips talk of the people governing in the territories, oppose the Mormons in the matter of a plurality of wives. Now these same members have no objections to the introduction of slavery into any territory, and slavery gives the master a more unlimited control over his female slaves than the Mormon ecclesiastical law, allowing polygamy, does over the wives in that territory. Yet these wise Statesmen, while declaring the doctrine of non-interference by Congress with the domestic affairs of the people of a territory, assume to control the Mormons in the number of their wives. The writer believes in neither slavery nor polygamy, but he also believes that the latter is not as bad as the former, and in point of morals one is as good as the other. But if the principle of "non-interference," of leaving the people the power to arrange their own domestic affairs to suit themselves in regard to slavery is good, it is equally so in regard to polygamy.[8]

Yet it seems that in the following days Garber gave the issue more thought and concluded that the spread of polygamy was equally as great a threat as the spread of slavery. Garber's great fear - as it was with all free soil advocates - was that the denial of the federal government's right to legislate on the "domestic institution" of slavery in the territories meant that all states were constitutionally bound to uphold slavery everywhere, whether in a slave state or not. In other words, slavery restrictionists like Garber feared that non-intervention in the territories would open the door to the nationalization of slavery. In fact, Garber changed his stand from non-intervention to Congressional restriction due to this fear of the nationalization of slavery.[9] If such was the case for the domestic institution of slavery, how was the domestic institution of polygamy any different? Garber explained his logic in response to a Democratic editor's charge that the polygamy issue was an election "humbug."

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[8] *MDC*, 9 May 1854.

[9] In *MDC*, 19 February 1856, Garber explained that "the Madison *Courier* was "non-intervention" up to the time Douglas & Co. decided in favor of intervention: since that time it has been for intervention, to curb the growing, grasping power of the serf oligarchy." In other words, the Kansas-Nebraska Act convinced Garber that slaveholders would not be satisfied until they had nationalized slavery, thus the only answer was to use federal legislation to restrict slavery.

> We ask Mr. Hall how Indiana can give citizens of Utah, if she is admitted into the Union with her present "domestic institution," the same rights, privileges and immunities guaranteed to the citizens of the several States in the Constitution of the United States, in Indiana? Are we in Indiana to change the marital laws of the State so as to allow a Mormon with a dozen wives the same rights, privileges and immunities which he enjoys in Utah? Should one of these Mormons with several wives be caught in the State now, he would be sent to serve the State and Mr. Patterson at the prison in Jeffersonville. Admit Utah as proposed by the Old Line, and, to carry out the Constitution of the United States, the laws and marital rights of the State must be changed.[10]

To the great consternation of his political opponents, Garber consistently linked the Democratic Party's support of the Nebraska bill and congressional non-intervention with its willingness to nationalize "the twin relics of barbarism, slavery and polygamy." Only a thoroughly corrupt and immoral party could ever contemplate such schemes, maintained Garber.[11]

While Garber produced many words discussing the Nebraska bill, temperance, the role of clergy, and polygamy, his overarching theme throughout the 1854 campaign remained the need for republican citizens to unite to restore republican government. Since he had spent the previous five years declaring that the Democratic Party was the embodiment of Jeffersonian republicanism, he persistently worked to demonstrate that the Democrats had forsaken republican principles, and that he and the Peoples' Party were now the heirs of Jefferson. Garber addressed the accusations of the Cincinnati *Enquirer* that he and his party were "treasonous" by explaining that his beliefs in human freedom were the result of being taught the ideas of Jefferson while a schoolboy in

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[10] *MDC*, 20 October 1854.

[11] Garber addressed polygamy more in the 1854 campaign than at any other time, but the issue became a standard platform for him to attack the "polygamy Democrats" over the next two years. For examples of comments on polygamy, see *MDC*, 18, 20 May, 26 July 1854; 30 October 1855; 31 May 1856. The "twin relics of barbarism" phrase was a Republican slogan during the 1856 campaign, and it was located only once, *MDC*, 29 August 1856. To the credit of his belief in the free exchange of ideas, Garber published in three installments the letter of a Mormon woman defending polygamy, *MDC*, 24-26 May 1854.

Virginia. He then explained the perversion of Jefferson's Republican Party, and the need for his new party.

> It was not until after Jefferson's political party had been degenerated by the great influx of federalists, the name changed from Republican to Democrat, that the proslavery dogmas which now distinguish the Enquirer's faction of the party were interpolated into the party creed. Since this change in the name of the party the incroachments (*sic*) of the slave power have increased. Every session of Congress has been marked by its aggressions, and the people of the North have as often been called upon to submit- have submitted. The South presents a united front upon all sectional questions. Unfortunately, in the North the people are divided.

For Garber, the federalists were aristocrats, so he believed that the principles of the old Republican Party had been compromised by aristocratic corruption. Garber also considered that the name change from Republican to Democrat was more than cosmetic, and in fact accurately represented the shift from the Jeffersonian principles of "liberty and equality for all," to the political machinations inherent in the political economy of aristocracy.[12]

Garber also highlighted the Peoples' Party's faithfulness to republican principles by noting the "fusion between the Old Line whigs and Old Line Democrats" against them in the election. Since Garber had always considered the most conservative Whigs to be the most aristocratic, he argued that their alliance with Democrats like Jesse Bright clearly demonstrated how aristocratic the Democracy had become. In an October editorial, Garber stated his position in the new political environment: "In this new division in the political elements we have intuitively taken the side of the people – the toiling millions – of the free States, and in opposition to slave labor, slave propagandists, and the brutalizing, immoral, Old Line dogma of polygamy." After reviewing the evolution of parties since 1816, Garber then clearly stated the new political battle lines:

[12] *MDC*, 17 July 1854.

"In the fusion of 1854, the parties are known as National or Old Line Democrats and Republicans – the aristocracy and the people. The men who want negroes to work for them, wait upon them, are the Old Liners. The hard working people are the Republicans." Once again, Garber revealed that he was looking through the lens of republican political economy – the labor theory of value, and the critique of the political economy of aristocracy - to analyze and explain the world to his readers. Aristocrats, now grouped in the Democratic Party, were using the every means available to dominate free working people, now grouped in the appropriately named Republican Party. These two groups were easily distinguishable: hard working Republican free laborers considered work honorable; lazy Old Line aristocrats considered work detestable, and enslaved other men to perform it for them.[13]

Three weeks before the election Garber printed his most articulate expression of the political values which motivated him, and which he hoped would be the motive of citizens across the county, state, and nation.

> The true American is always a politician, but never a partisan. As a part of the governing power of the country, he is responsible for its policy, and is bound to exert his political influence in behalf of what he considers the right, and the true glory of the nation. But he will act from his own convictions, not from the dictation of a party. All political parties, from their very nature, are liable to become corrupted; it is the citizen's duty to see that they do not corrupt him. He will use parties as a means of enforcing his political convictions, but he will be careful that they do not use him. The man who permits himself to become the tool of a party, who blindly obeys the behests

[13] *MDC*, 7 October 1854. Notice Garber calls his party "the Republicans." He used the name occasionally during the campaign (this quote is three days before the election), but much more frequently after the party's victory in the election. While the name Republican was used officially by anti-Democratic parties in Michigan and Wisconsin during the 1854 campaign, none of the secondary sources mention its use, even unofficially, in Indiana. While Garber probably knew of its usage in other states, they were hardly his inspiration. Garber's life revolved around being a republican, and for him the purpose of the 1854 realignment was to return to republican principles, so it is hardly surprising he wanted his party to be called "the Republicans." For early examples of Garber's usage of the name Republican, see *MDC*, 26 August, 7, 17, 21 October 1854. In *MDC*, 26 July 1856, Garber asserts that he voiced his preference for the name Republican at the time of the Peoples' Party formation, but was overruled.

> of its managers, who lends himself to schemes intended to mislead the people, has forfeited his right to citizenship, and is beneath the contempt of every honest man. It is a pitiable thing to see manhood thus debased, to see the proud privileges of American citizenship thus abused. He who gives up his conscience to the keeping of his party, has made shipwreck of his principles, and become a traitor to his country. On the other hand, he who shrinks from politics because they are impure neglects the duty of a citizen, and imperils his country's safety.

Garber was espousing the political theory of republicanism: it is the duty of each independent citizen to remain virtuous and independent, yet to always act on behalf of the community's best interest, and thereby prevent tyrants from obtaining power. Garber went on in the quarter column editorial to encourage "the patriotic, the wise and good" to remain active in the political process, or its entire control would be forfeited to the "basely ambitious and their subservient tools." Garber concluded the editorial with the classic Jeffersonian republican contrast between the virtuous "agrarian" and the corrupt "aristocrat."

> The substantial farmer, who through a long course of years faithfully and honorably serves his native town in a public capacity – as overseer of the poor it may be, school-committeeman or representative, is a more useful and respectable citizen than the lawyer who worms his way into Congress, and there misrepresents his constituents to promote his own interests.

Despite its elevated sentiments eloquently expressed, no regular reader of the Madison *Courier* could have failed to recognize the person inferred in the editorial's closing lines. Senator Jesse Bright was never far from Michael Garber's mind.[14]

The Indiana Peoples' Party won a sweeping victory on 10 October 1854. They won nine of the eleven congressional races, in which only two of the eight Democrats who voted in favor of the Kansas-Nebraska Act were reelected. The Peoples' Party elected their entire ticket of state officers, and gained control of the state House of

[14] *MDC*, 23 October 1854.

Representatives, though the Democrats continued to control the Senate by two seats. Garber mixed Biblical and classical allusions to describe the outcome: "There is a people, a long suffering people, slow to anger, but when once thoroughly aroused they are as irresistible as the mountain torrent, which sweeps all the filth collected in the eddies into the ocean, there to be buried forever." But in an editorial titled "A Reminiscence," Garber returned to the past by reprinting the 17 June 1851 card, issued by Jesse Bright and twenty six Madison loyalists, that publicly announced the cancellation of their subscriptions to the *Courier* because it was an "unfit" Democratic paper. It was the opening act of his feud with Bright.

> Compare the annexed card, reader, with the vote given against Bright on Tuesday last, and the general prosperity of the Courier establishment. It appears that we have gained the confidence of the masses in a greater proportion than we lost that of Bright & Co. As they have gone down the scale of popular confidence, we have gone up. When the *bull* was issued, the Mogul was at the culmination point of his power. What is he, and what is the amount of his political influence in this county now!!!![15]

Garber had prematurely declared himself vindicated.

Though Michael Garber had done as much as anyone to bring about the success of the Peoples' Party in the election of 1854, he would spend the next nine months in political limbo due to his complex relationship with the Know Nothing movement. Originating in the states of the northeastern United States as a response to the mass influx of immigrants during the 1840s, the Know Nothings were a secret organization that wished to stem the political power of foreigners, usually by extending the period of naturalization. As most of the immigrants were Irish and German Roman Catholics, a faith Protestant Americans associated with superstition and hierarchy, the organization

[15] *MDC*, 13 October 1854; Thornbrough, *Civil War Era*, 67.

quickly took on an anti-Catholic bent. Due to the disintegration of the Whig Party after the 1852 election, Know Nothing councils spread like wild fire as they filled with Whigs looking for a new organizational base. The first Indiana council formed in February 1854, and by summer the organization covered the state. In June Garber claimed the Know Nothings were in Madison, but admitted that all his knowledge of them was rumor, including the claim that the local council had five hundred to one thousand members.[16]

During the 1854 election campaign the claim arose that the Indiana Peoples' Party was utterly, and secretly, controlled by Know Nothing members. On the two days prior to the 13 July Peoples' Party convention, Indiana Know Nothings met in the Indianapolis Masonic hall to officially establish a state organization, and apparently, to develop a slate of candidates whom they would support in the convention. Within days the *State Sentinel*, the Democratic organ for the state, reported the occurrence of this meeting as well as the names of some men in attendance, and claimed that the Know Nothing slate of candidates had been nominated by the People's Party in total. As a result, for the rest of the campaign the Democrat's primary issue was Know Nothing control of the Peoples' Party.[17]

Throughout the campaign Garber downplayed, though never denied, Know Nothing involvement in the Peoples' Party. On 15 July, the day he reported on the Peoples' convention, he also included this interesting paragraph.

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[16] Carl F. Brand, "The History of the Know Nothing Party In Indiana," *Indiana Magazine of History* 18 (March 1922): 47-59; Thornbrough, *Civil War Era*, 60-61; Gienapp, *Origins*, 109. *MDC*, 7, 12, 17, 20 June 1854.

[17] Brand, "Know Nothing Party," *Indiana Magazine of History* 18 (March 1922): 62-65; Thornbrough, *Civil War Era*, 63-64; Gienapp, *Origins*, 109-10; Van Bolt, "Fusion," 378-79. Brand relies extensively upon Democratic newspapers which play up the conspiratorial nature of Know Nothing involvement in the Peoples' Party. Gienapp relies extensively upon Brand. Thornbrough and Van Bolt, while not denying their central role, de-emphasize conspiracy, or nativism among the Know Nothings, seeing them basically as free soil Whigs. That seems to have been Garber's perception of them as well.

> "You were seen coming out of the Know Nothing Convention at Indianapolis," said a friend to us yesterday, almost as soon as we reached our office. Certainly, we were. Seeing a crowd going into Masonic Hall, we, thinking it was an anti-Nebraska meeting, went in too; and we were seen coming out for the very good reason that we were not allowed to stay in; but if the very respectable men and good citizens we saw in the hall and left in it were Know Nothings, we have no objection to be called one.[18]

This response by Garber was typical of him for the next nine months. He never denied that Know Nothings were a significant force in the party, but based upon his knowledge of, and friendship with many of them, he had no fear of their influence. He often mocked the charges Democratic papers brought against Know Nothings, "the ubiquitous society" he called them, as being mere scare tactics to frighten "green Democrats" and foreign voters. When a Democratic paper printed what were supposedly the pledges of Know Nothing membership, Garber reprinted them and then gave this balanced assessment of the order.

> We can only judge of the ubiquitous society by their works. In every instance they have selected the best men, often democrats, to office, and right here in our own city the usual scramble after county offices has been in some way allayed. If the ubiquitous society would allow us to join and then to talk about what we could learn we would join them the first meeting night – if we could find out when that was. If we found the obligation or their duties were anything like what is portrayed in the extracts we have copied to-day, we would, without hesitation, denounce both. But these are the old anti-Mason stories revamped for this particular case.[19]

Soon after the election Garber rebuked the Laporte *Times* for continuing to exaggerate the power of the Know Nothings.

> We have no fear of the Know Nothings; they were called into existence by the exigencies of the times, and will pass away when they have accomplished

[18] *MDC*, 15 July 1854. In response to another Democratic paper's "expose" of the meeting, Garber would say: "We were there – gave the man the password of the Odd Fellows and Masons, and was then turned out." See, *MDC*, 25 October 1854.

[19] *MDC*, 14 August 1854. On a later date, Garber would say that when he joined the Masons in 1832 he quickly found out how foolish the charges of anti-Masons were. He was certain that the charges against the Know Nothings were equally empty. See, *MDC*, 16 February 1855.

> their work. The columns of the Times proves that it is no longer a SECRET SOCIETY. Every thing like secrecy has been exposed time and again.[20]

After their stunning victory in the 1854 election the Peoples' Party went through a period of flux, for despite Garber's confident assertion, neither the Know Nothings nor their secrecy quickly disappeared. As a result, Garber's relationship with the order, of which he never became a member, remained very complex. From the late fall of 1854 until the summer of 1855, Garber sounded more like a distant observer of the Peoples' Party, rather than someone with direct access to its leaders. Nevertheless, he was consistently supportive of his party, which he generally admitted was led by Know Nothing members.[21]

During the first half of 1855, as the Peoples' Party was establishing its identity and agenda, Garber found very little to be happy about. The first and most devastating blow to Garber occurred in January when the Old Line Democrats used their majority in the Senate to refuse to caucus with the House, and thereby denied the Peoples' Party the selection of a new United States Senator. Then in February, the legislature passed a bill to charter a new state bank. Not only did members of the Peoples' party fully support it, they helped to pass the legislation over the veto of Governor Joseph Wright. Then in April, Old Line Democracy candidates won most of the offices in the Madison municipal election. The only bright spot that spring for Garber was when the legislature passed a Maine-style prohibition law in February.[22]

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[20] *MDC*, 6 November 1854.

[21] Garber's strained relationship with the Peoples' Party began almost immediately after the election when he perceived some men were inordinately concerned with dividing the spoils, and thus he refused to even attend the party's celebration in Indianapolis on 1 November; see *MDC*, 1, 3, November 1854. For some of Garber's comments on the Know Nothings, both supportive and critical, see *MDC*, 21, 23 December 1854; 5, 6, 16, February, 20, 26, 30 March, 12 July 1855.

[22] Van Bolt, "The Rise of the Republican Party in Indiana, 1855-1856," *Indiana Magazine of History* 51 (September 1955): 186-88. On the Senate's refusal to caucus, see *MDC*, 6, 17 January, 24 February, 10

Garber's spirits improved in the summer of 1855, for as the fortunes of the Know Nothing Party declined, those of the Republican Party improved. In June the Know Nothing Party, by then calling themselves the American Party, split on a sectional basis over the issue of slavery expansion at their national convention in Philadelphia. From that point on most Indiana Know Nothings became fully committed to the Peoples' Party. Garber was obviously elated as he reported from Indianapolis on 13 July that the crowds at "the State Convention of the masses" were estimated to be double that of 1854. He was especially happy to announce that the Grand State Council of the Know Nothings had, like in 1854, met the day previous, but had virtually eliminated all positions that distinguished them from the Peoples' Party. "This is looked upon as a virtual disbanding of the order in Indiana," claimed Garber, as he rejoiced that "its members will indubitably make better republicans in the coming struggle between whiskey, polygamy, the privileged few and *freedom* in 1856." As was inferred in Garber's statement, from that point on members of the Indiana Peoples' Party increasingly called themselves Republicans.[23]

With the proposal in 1846 of the Wilmot Proviso and its restriction of slavery from the western territories, the public debate over slavery's future within the United States escalated in intensity with each passing year. This trend can be clearly observed in the writings of Michael Garber throughout the 1850s. From his earliest days at the *Courier* Garber had openly stated his antipathy toward slavery, but after the

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March 1855. On the state bank law, see *MDC*, 2, 17 February, 5 March 1855. On municipal elections, see *MDC*, 30 March, 3, 4, 9 April 1855. On prohibition law, see *MDC*, 2 February 1855. On celebrations in Madison over passage of the prohibition law, see *MDC*, 17, 19, 23 February, 13 June 1855.

[23] Brand, "Know Nothing Party," *Indiana Magazine of History* 18 (June 1922): 181-201; Van Bolt, "Rise of the Republican Party," 193-96; *MDC*, 14 July 1855.

establishment of the Fugitive Slave Law and his expulsion from the Indiana Democracy Garber was blatantly critical of the peculiar institution. After passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act in 1854, Garber expressed nothing less than persistent and open hostility towards slavery and those who defended it.

In the two years between the 1854 and 1856 election campaigns, Garber's criticisms of slavery grew in number and variety. He increasingly reprinted articles, often from known anti-slavery papers like the New York *Tribune,* that recounted in graphic detail the torture and arbitrary execution of slaves, that described the inhumane scenes at slave auctions, and that discussed openly the sexual depredations inflicted on slave women.[24] One event that Garber especially addressed was the famous "Garner incident." In January 1856, a Kentucky slave named Margaret Garner escaped with seven other slaves to Cincinnati, Ohio, where upon being recaptured she cut her child's throat rather than have it returned to slavery. The sensational case generated multiple legal conundrums, as well as intense sectional hostility, as newspapers covered the story for weeks.[25] Some of Garber's most perceptive words on the disturbing incident were written in the days immediately following the event.

> The account published elsewhere in the *Courier* to-day of the bloody transactions in Cincinnati, consequent upon the capture of eight fugitive slaves in that city opens no new scene in the terrible tragedy of slavery. Instances of suicide of slaves – a few years ago a family of five or six cut their own throats in Covington, Ky., jail - of maiming themselves by cutting off a limb, or otherwise mutilating themselves, are numerous. These are the terrible adjuncts of slavery which the bogus democracy insist shall be extended into territories heretofore protected by congressional enactments, territories whose virgin soil has not as yet been wet with the tears of the

[24] For articles on the execution and torture of slaves, see *MDC*, 14 January 1854, 2 October 1855. On slave auctions, see *MDC*, 6 February 1855. On sexual immorality inherent in slavery, see *MDC*, 30 August 1855, 12 March 1856. On the enslaving of white mulattos, see *MDC*, 13 March, 29 April 1856.

[25] See Steven Weisenburger, *Modern Medea: A Family Story of Slavery and Child-Murder from the Old South* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1998).

> slave, or stained with his blood drawn by the driver's lash, or his heart's blood, poured out by his own despairing hand.[26]

Given another day to reflect, Garber placed the shocking incident in the context of what he believed was mankind's universal desire for freedom.

> Three thousand years ago – more or less – a workman, a plebeian, in Rome slew his daughter before the Tribunal, saying as he plunged the butcher-knife into her heart, "Go free and pure, Virginia, to thy mother and thy ancestors" – in preference to slavery. This bloody deed is a part of the history of the world. This plebeian is one of the Romans; for years and years the act has been lauded by the poet, historian, and the unanimous sentiment of mankind. GIVE ME LIBERTY OR GIVE ME DEATH. Is there a heart, outside of the bogus democratic party, that does not throb responsive to this sentiment of one of the anti-slavery fathers of the State of Virginia? – Patrick Henry. The poor negro slave woman's butchery of her children was but the impersonation of the noble sentiment of Henry. She has never probably heard of Virginius or his daughter Virginia. The inate [*sic*] love of liberty which God has implanted in every human heart prompted the bloody deed. She was born a slave, had suffered its terrible privations, and when she could not save her children from like sufferings, preferred death with them to hopeless slavery. If the act of Virginius is commendable, if the sentiment of Henry is true, the deed of the slave mother, though bloody, cannot be far wrong.[27]

Extolling the elevated republican sentiment of "liberty or death" in the context of a murderous fugitive slave, it was little wonder that Garber's Democratic opponents commonly labeled him an abolitionist. Garber had a very exact definition for the term, and since it did not apply to him, he resented being charged as one. Year after year he patiently explained the difference between abolitionist and free soil views, but apparently to little effect. In an 1855 editorial titled "Abolitionism," Garber still saw the need to define his terms, but his patience seemed greatly diminished.

> Every man has his own definition of the term: some suppose that an abolitionist is in favor amalgamating the races – not as they do in the slave States, but by inter-marriages – and add this to the generally received notions of what constitutes an abolitionist; some set down every one who advances

[26] *MDC*, 30 January 1856.
[27] *MDC*, 31 January 1856.

> an argument against the sin of slavery as an abolitionist. In fact, the term has, from constant use, become as unmeaning as the term "federalist" now is.

Garber then defined an abolitionist, as he had for years, as one who wanted to abolish slavery wherever it existed, regardless of "compacts made to sustain it," such as the Constitution at the nation's founding. A "freesoiler," on the other hand, was one who did not object to slavery where it presently existed, but adamantly opposed its spread to new lands. But having defined his terms, Garber did not stop. In a manner that was becoming typical of the political rhetoric of the times, he morally denounced his opponents.

> The wicked are always the most violent when any of their iniquities are commented upon, held up to the public eye in their naked deformities; hence slave-holding Senators representing free States always denounce men for abolitionists that do not agree with them that slave-breeding is a very respectable, God-serving business. The Senators from Indiana and Illinois are "illustriously notorious" samples of this class. Touch but the sins of this class ever so lightly, and the cry, as of old, is immediately raised – "Great is Diana of Ephesus!" and – as the workers of brass in that ancient city did upon the Apostle – all sorts of vituperation and abuse is heaped upon the righteous.

Such persistent demonization of the opposition would be the norm in the 1856 campaign.[28]

Though Michael Garber never clearly stated it, he probably had been thinking about the 1856 election ever since the day Jesse Bright had expelled him from the Indiana Democracy in 1851. Bright's senate term would expire in early 1857, and so the Indiana legislature elected in October 1856 would decide whether to reelect or replace him in January 1857. But Jesse Bright was not Garber's only concern, for the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act had proven that the Democratic Party was full of treacherous

[28] *MDC*, 6 June 1855. For other examples of Garber addressing charges that he was an abolitionist, see *MDC*, 3 February, 23 June, 12 October 1854; 15, 23 June, 23 July, 25 September 1855.

aristocrats like Bright, whether they were southern slaveholders or northern doughfaces like President Franklin Pierce. Therefore it seems that Garber's expectations for the elections of 1856 – state and congressional in October and national in November – were that they would be a continuation of the electoral successes experienced locally in 1851 and statewide in 1854. Free state citizens had finally awakened, and 1856 was the year they would throw off the aristocratic yoke and restore their republic.

Whereas in the 1854 campaign Garber attacked the Democratic record, in the 1856 campaign he had to articulate what the Republican Party believed. Garber insisted the Republican Party's primary issue was the restriction of slavery expansion. Slavery needed to be kept out of the territories because it undermined the livelihood of free laborers, it created a hierarchical society that freely infringed on the rights of free laborers, and it would likely spread to the free states if the slave power was not overthrown. But Garber also needed to defend the Republican Party from attacks that it was populated with radicals whose election would destroy the Union. Garber insisted that the Republican Party was in line with Jeffersonian principles, consisted of a broad base of workers and businessmen, and was not prejudiced against foreigners. Regardless of the rest of the party, Garber began the campaign in March and did not let up until the presidential election day in November.

In his endless attacks against slavery expansion, Garber's central argument was that it "degraded" free labor.

> No man can work with his hands and compete successfully with a steam engine. Why? Because the engine consumes fuel and oil barely enough to keep it moving. The slave is a human engine which is sustained in the same way – he gets of his labor what barely sustains life and keeps the machine in order. The slave degrades labor and impoverishes the free laborer – the two cannot exist together. These are sufficient reasons for opposition to slavery

> extension, to say nothing about the loose morals and other evils the slave system engenders.[29]

The argument was simple enough, and dogma among free labor ideologists like Garber, but it depended upon the assumption that the life of a northern free laborer was inherently superior to the life of a southern slave. In May, John B. Covington, an old friend of Garber's that was editing an Old Line Democratic paper, challenged this assumption by claiming that most southern slaves, being guaranteed food and clothing, lived in a better condition than most northern free labors. Utterly astonished, Garber began a series of exchanges debating the issue with his friend which quickly grew heated. Finally Garber ended the debate by using Covington's illustration against him.

> As a proof that poor white men are more degraded than negroes, the *Guard* editor instances the condition of the deck hands on steamboats. There are many instances of hardships and cruelty on steamboats, but there is none authorized and sustained by statutatory laws. The deck hand can leave one boat and go to another, or seek labor off the river whenever he chooses to do so; he can retire from labor – become a passenger whenever he pleases; if he has a wife and children, there is no person to take them from him, there are no laws to prohibit the teaching of his children to read the Bible; on the contrary, schools are provided for his children at the public expense in all of the free States. Anti-slavery men oppose slavery itself – no matter whether applied to white men, negroes or old line editors; and we as cordially and as earnestly condemn the wrongs committed upon the deck hands of the steamboats as the editor of the *Guard*, but we do not seek to make these oppressions an excuse for the slave trade, or to traduce the entire body of the laboring poor of the free States by declaring that they are greater slaves than negroes.

Republicans like Garber never denied that life as a worker in a free labor society could be hard, but they adamantly refused accept the notion that life as a free laborer with all the rights of a citizen could be as degraded as the life of a slave. As his reference to free schools indicated, it was simply impossible for Garber to separate the lives of free

[29] *MDC*, 15 August 1856.

laborers from the blessings of a free labor society, or the lives of slaves from the evils of a slave labor society. [30]

Throughout the campaign Garber argued that slavery must be restricted from the territories because it inevitably created an aristocratic society hostile to the rights of free laboring men. In the campaign's early months Garber mostly focused upon Kansas, where slaveholding Missouri "border ruffians" had been committing depredations upon free state settlers, many from Indiana, for almost two years. Then in May, two violent acts by southerners upon northerners occurred in Washington, D.C., within less than a week's time. California's Democratic representative Philemon T. Herbert, son of an Alabama slaveholder, shot and killed an Irish waiter Thomas Keating, in a brawl in a hotel dining room. Then South Carolina's Democratic representative Preston S. Brooks savagely attacked Massachusetts' Republican senator Charles Sumner with a cane on the floor of the Senate. Like most Republican editors, Garber portrayed all three incidents as "typical" examples of slavemasters treating whites like slaves.[31]

More fascinating are Garber's comments upon the slaveholders' control of all means of information – books, newspapers, schools – in the South. In a long September editorial, Garber explained the reason two book sellers were expelled from Alabama.

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[30] *MDC*, 5 June 1856. Covington was editor of the Greensburg *Guard*, and was co-owner with his brother, Samuel F. Covington, of the Madison *Courier* when Garber bought it from them in 1849. For their exchange see, *MDC*, 17, 23 May, 6 June 1856.

[31] Michael F. Holt, "Making and Mobilizing the Republican Party, 1854-1860," in *The Birth of the Grand Old Party: The Republicans' First Generation*. Robert F. Engs and Randall M. Miller (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2002), 45. James H. Lane, former Indiana lieutenant governor and congressman, had moved to Kansas in hopes of becoming its leading Democrat. He quickly became a free soil advocate and lectured across Indiana on the "Kansas outrages" in the winter and spring of 1856. He was speaking in Madison when the free state stronghold of Lawrence was "sacked;" see *MDC*, 26 May 1856. On Keating murder, see *MDC*, 19 May 1856. On Butler-Sumner incident, see *MDC*, 24 May 1856. Garber claims that an Irishman was killed at a Democratic meeting in Connersville, Indiana, for cheering for Fremont; see *MDC*, 16 August 1856.

> Our readers have been informed of the conduct of the vigilance committee of Mobile, Ala., in the case of the book-sellers, Strickland & Upson. The book circulated, or sold, was Fred. Douglass' memoir – "My Bondage and my Freedom." It is well known that slaves do not read, that it is against the laws of Alabama and other slave States to teach slaves to read. What, then, were the Mobilers afraid of? Evidently of the nonslaveholding whites, the free laborers among them. For the same reason there are no public schools in Alabama and other slave States. The door is as carefully shut in the faces of the youth or the State and the nonslaveholding whites as the schools are in Austria to Protestant teachers, or as the Bible is kept out of the hands of the people of Rome.

Garber then compared the Alabama incident with the earlier effort of slaveholder Jesse Bright to silence him.

> The effort of the vigilance committee of Mobile is – though more successful – similar to that of Senator Bright and the bogus democrats in this county and State, who attempted to drive the editor of the *Courier* out of the State, to "dry up his abolition sheet," in 1851. Senator Bright then gave us thirty days to wind up, pack up, and be off. The Mobilers would not allow Strickland & Upson but five days. The nonslaveholders rallied around us, however, - as they would have rallied around Strickland, if he had been allowed to appeal to them – and the result is, Senator Bright moved ostensibly to Jeffersonville. The nonslaveholders of the State will send him finally to reside with his slaves in Kentucky.

Garber then listed various incidents, both state and local, of the "Buchaneers" – supporters of Democratic presidential candidate James Buchanan – attempting to intimidate ministers and public speakers. He then warned his readers that a Democratic victory might make the North more like the South, and bring restrictions upon their right to read, speak and think for themselves.

> Could the Buchaneers succeed in silencing the press and the pulpit and the public speakers, they would be able, as their friends and fellow partisans are in Mobile and other slave States, to say which books might be sold, how preachers might preach, what papers the people might take, and what speakers they might listen to. The aim, object and intent of the Buchaneers North and South is the same. The issue of Slavery and Liberty includes the right to read Hale or Seward or Sumner's speeches; the right to hear the preaching and speaking and to read the papers we like best – in a word, it

> embraces the right to examine all sides and choose that which we may determine to be the best.

Garber concluded by asking, "Is such a Buchaneer party to be trusted with office?"[32]

While Garber seldom used the term "slave power," he did believe that slaveholders were united as an interest group, and that they desired to extend slavery not only to the lands of the west, but ultimately to the free states as well. Despite the protests of various Democratic editors, Garber insisted, as in this editorial, that "this is no fancy sketch."

> The free laborers of the Northern States relied implicitly upon the Missouri compromise to secure for themselves and their children the fair fields of Kansas and Nebraska. They have seen that stricken down. The party that committed that almost paricidal act will, whenever it dare do so, repeal the Ordinance of 1787; whenever in its power will make Indiana a slave State, and forever shut out free labor, freedom of speech, and of the press.

While some Republicans may have separated the issues of free labor and the blessings of a free labor society from the threat to civil and political rights posed by the slave power, Michael Garber never did. Free labor was the foundation of northern society, and was what allowed all the other blessings of republican government to flourish there – free speech, freedom of the press, freedom of religion – when they were suppressed in the South. Michael Garber's argument throughout the 1856 campaign was that the slave power was a threat precisely because it threatened free labor.[33]

The Republican Party's focus upon slavery, which inevitably raised race, class and sectional issues, naturally elicited charges that it was a radical party outside the American tradition, which would tear the country apart if given power. As he did in the 1854 campaign, Garber constantly stove to prove that his party walked in the path of the

[32] *MDC*, 1 September 1856.
[33] *MDC*, 20 August 1856.

Revolutionary fathers, while the Democrats had wondered far off the track. Republicans like Garber insisted that Jefferson and the first Republicans detested slavery and envisioned it dying out.

> Mr. Jefferson and his compeers, the heroes, patriots and sages of the Revolution, and subsequently of the Republican party, were "emancipationists." The framers of the Constitution of the United States deplored the existence of chattel slavery, and all their acts in regard to it contemplated its gradual extinction.

Garber then ticked off the usual Republican list: the northern states eliminated slavery, the framers of the Constitution intended the slave trade to be outlawed after 1808, and Jefferson prohibited slavery in the Northwest Territory. He then compared the new Republican Party to the original one.

> Every action of the Fathers of the Republic shows them to have been emancipationists – anti-slavery men. The Republican party of 1856 does not go so far as the same party did in the early times. Now, Republicans are content to let slavery in those States where it exists remain there, without let or hindrance from them. Then, Republicans were determined to eradicate the anomaly in "the freest country in the world," without reference to any geographical lines.

Not only were the modern Republicans not radical, and thus not to be feared, but Garber had supposedly shown them to be moderate on the slavery issue compared to the original Republican party![34]

Another way Garber countered charges that the Republican Party consisted of mere fanatics was to emphasize the party's broad social base of laborers (farmers and mechanics), businessmen and town leaders. This emphasis is particularly seen in Garber's descriptions of party meetings and rallies. He repeatedly noted the huge flag pole erected on Main Cross Street by the shipyard workers on the Fourth of July. A meeting place for the many Republican rallies that summer and fall, Garber called it a

[34] *MDC*, 1 April 1856.

"Monument to Liberty and Free Labor." Garber also attended and gave detailed descriptions of the many Republican "Basket Meetings" held throughout the county and state. Basically large picnics with thousands in attendance to listen to political speakers, they remarkably resembled revival meetings. Garber also drew attention to the middle class, family orientation of the party by reporting the activities of the various age differentiated Republican clubs formed that summer: the Republican Club for men, the Fremont and Dayton Glee Club for young men, the Grizzly Club for boys, and the Freedom Shriekers for children. And to offset any concerns of lingering nativist sentiment in the party due to its large former Know Nothing element, Garber constantly drew notice to the meetings and rallies of the local German Republican Club.[35]

In the Madison *Daily Courier* of 4 August 1856, on the same page as Garber's comments ridiculing the poor attendance at a Democratic rally, Garber included a short piece on the formation of a Fillmore Club in North Madison. While most Indiana Know Nothing members had fully embraced the Republican Party by late 1855, many in the southern part of the state held out and maintained their tie with the national organization, which was now dominated by men from the southern states. Garber opened the editorial with the confident assertion that "we do not believe the movement will affect the party of freedom in this county or State disastrously." Nonetheless he used three paragraphs to

[35] On Republican Party meetings, see *MDC*, 4, 17 September 1855; 10 March, 30 April, 3 May, 7, 24 July 1856. On Republican rallies, see *MDC*, 20 June, 3, 16, 26, 29 July, 11 August, 10 October 1856. For list of Republican clubs, see *MDC*, 4 August 1856. On German participation in Republican Party see, *MDC*, 10 March, 17-18 July, 19 August 1856. Garber mentions the involvement of the Turners, a type of politically motivated health and fitness club originating in Germany, in the Republican Party in Madison in 1856. Being more liberal – often free thinkers - than average Germans, Turners hated slavery and thus were usually the first in a German community to join the Republican Party; see, Eric Pumroy, "Historical Records of Turners in America," in *Das Ohiotal – The Ohio Valley: The German Dimension*, ed. Don Heinrich Tolzmann (New York: Peter Lang, 1993): 65-75.

explain why "every vote given to Mr. Fillmore is practically given to the Buchaneer candidate." Garber also claimed to smell the presence of Jesse Bright.

> That the movement, originated in this city recently, ostensibly for Fillmore is a Buchanan movement, is transparent. The Buchananites are now the loudest and most zealous in favor of Fillmore, judging them by their professions. It is well known that the only hope of the Buchaniers in old Jefferson county is based upon this Fillmore movement.

While obviously a bit anxious about the new political group, one column over Garber discounted the threat of two leading Indiana Fillmore men and asserted confidence in Republican victory: "The N.Y. *Tribune* adheres to the opinion that Indiana is a doubtful State, and vastly overrates Hon. G.G. Dunn's influence and that of Dick Thompson. It won't hurt any to work the harder, nevertheless the result will confirm the opinion that Mr. Greeley is a bad calculator."[36]

Just days before the 14 October state and congressional election, Garber reminded his readers of the central issue of the campaign: would the western territories be ruled by southern slavery or northern free labor?

> The issue in this contest, the great issue is, shall "capital own labor or hire it?" Throughout the Southern States capital owns the laborers; throughout the Northern States capital hires labor. The contest now is, whether the system of the South shall be the rule, and extend over the 51,000,000 of square miles of territory yet to be formed into States, or the system of the North shall be the rule, and so extended. In such a contest, where stand the mechanics and laboring men of Madison and Jefferson county? A practical answer to this question will be found stretched from one end of Main Cross st. to the other in the thousands of mechanics and laborers, with their wives and little ones – all schrieking [*sic*] for Freedom to-morrow.

[36] *MDC*, 4 August 1856; see also 14 February, 22 July, 25 September 1856. On the "South American" Party that supported Fillmore in 1856, see Brand, "Know Nothing Party," *Indiana Magazine of History* 18 (September 1922): 266-306; Van Bolt, "Republican Party in Indiana," 203-04, 210-11, 214-15.

In the next evening's paper Garber gave details of the large Republican rally in Madison, estimating its size between seven and eight thousand people. Garber had to believe that deliverance of the Republic was at hand.[37]

Garber's grandiose expectations explain his huge disappointment at the election's results. By Thursday, two days after the election, he could manage to quip: "On Wednesday we wanted to kill some democrats. This morning, if any democrat wants to shoot a Republican we won't charge him a cent to shoot us." But a few lines down, in an article on alleged election fraud in Evansville, Garber's gloom came through: "We have been beaten, badly beaten in this city and county; but we have no such excuse to make for it. The only thing that bothers us is this: how could our friends, as well as ourselves, have been so blind as not to have an inkling of the strength of our opponents?" And in another snippet reporting results from around the state, Garber warned, "our readers must form their own conclusions in regard to the result. We have been so blind in regard to the public sentiment of our own county that we will not attempt to enlighten them."[38]

Once the official results were in, it was evident that Jefferson County had largely voted Republican, but not in the numbers that Garber and party leaders expected. Garber believed that many of the Fillmore supporters who were expected to side with the Republicans in October voted Democrat instead. Whether the case or not, all the state offices and several congressional races went to the Democrats. The Indiana Republicans lost four congressional seats – including the third district, of which Jefferson County was a part – and reduced from a dominance of nine to two seats, to a minority of five to six seats. And perhaps most frustrating of all to Garber, the situation in the state legislature

[37] *MDC*, 9-10 October 1856.
[38] *MDC*, 16 October 1856.

simply flipped – the Republicans gained control of the Senate, but the Democrats regained control of the House. Jesse Bright's removal was not assured.[39]

After a week to assess the results, Garber and Republicans throughout the state redoubled their efforts during the two weeks remaining before the national election on 4 November. Democrat Ashbel P. Willard had won the governors race over Republican Olilver P. Morton by a little less than six thousand votes, so it was hoped this gap could be closed by winning over shaky Fillmore supporters and Democrats that had returned to their party after voting for the Peoples' Party in 1854. Having shaken off his gloom, Garber gave a call to battle: "Work, work then, Republicans, what you have done is only an inkling of what you can do by trying; let there be no relaxation of effort, but work! work!" He also reminded his readers what was at stake.

> It is a contest for the elevation of labor and laboring whitemen. As soon as it is fairly understood, the result will be as decided as when Andrew Jackson contended with organized capitalists in the shape of a U.S. Bank monopoly; then the contest was between the capitalists who owned the U.S. Banks and the people, under the lead of Jackson. Now, the contest is between capital invested in negroes and the people. Then the people had a combination with $35,000,000 to contend against; now they have $900,000,000 to fight; yet success is certain. Work, friends! There is yet time to fight and win a battle.

But it was obvious that the first election had taken some of the wind out of Garber's sails. If the Republicans had not received the votes of Fillmore supporters in October, or worse yet, if in fact they had, there was simply no way the Republicans would win Indiana in November.[40]

Apparently the thing that most disturbed Garber about the October defeat was the large number of laborers who remained loyal to the Democratic Party despite its exposure as the party of aristocracy. Before the election, on 26 September, in response to seeing a

[39] Thornbrough, *Civil War Era*, 76-78; Van Bolt, "Republican Party in Indiana," 213-14.
[40] *MDC*, 22 October 1856.

rally banner titled "Madison Iron Workers Democratic Association," Garber had written a long editorial detailing how Democratic leadership was consistently failing to act in the interests of workers, and that the Republicans were the true working man's party. Then the election results themselves proved that Democrats, mostly farmers and artisans in rural Indiana, simply were not crossing over to the Republican Party in any strength.[41]

It seems that Garber was starting to suspect that southern sectional loyalty among the residents of southern Indiana, whose origins were overwhelmingly southern, was keeping them from siding with a party that was accused of supporting abolitionism. This thought seems to be behind Garber's long editorial of 30 October, in which he again attempted to demonstrate that the Republicans were the true party of democracy, while the Democrats were the party of privileged aristocracy. Garber traced the history of northern free labor society from its roots in New England, and the history of southern slave society from its roots in Virginia and South Carolina. Then he compared the two.

> A glance at the constitutions and governments of the two sections will show how faithfully the people North and South, dividing on Mason & Dixon's line, have observed the principles established by the first emigrants. The democratic and aristocratic principles have been struggling since for the mastery. A glance at the map will suffice to show the success of the privileged order in the acquisition of territory, as a glance at the statistics of commerce, manufactures and population shows the success of the democratic principle.
> The greatest struggle between the democratic and aristocratic principles will be had on Tuesday next. Buchanan leads the privileged or aristocratic order, while Fremont is the leader of the true democratic self-government principle on the country. Choose ye, fellow-voters, for New England civilization, or for polygamy and feudal semi-barbarism.

For Garber, history spoke for itself, and his argument appealed to common logic. And yet he seems to have been incredibly ignorant of the deep emotional attachment residents of southern Indiana had for their native region, and thus shockingly obtuse to think he

[41] *MDC*, 26 September 1856.

would win them to the Republicans by extolling "New England civilization" while characterizing the South as a land of "polygamy and feudal semi-barbarism." In truth, though a native Virginian, Garber had long since become a "southern man of northern principles," and those "northern principles" were free labor ideology rooted in republican economic theory. For whatever reason, most residents of southern Indiana did not ascribe to Garber's "northern principles" - as illustrated by Garber's exchange with editor John Covington – and Garber would spend the rest of the decade attempting to convert them.[42]

Garber appears to have known defeat was imminent when on 3 November he stated that "the time for argument has passed in this canvass. Those who won't see that in voting for Buchanan they vote to extend slavery, facts will be lost upon." As it turned out, Jefferson County went for Fremont, but again, not as large as Garber had hoped. Jefferson County was one of only a few southern Indiana counties to give a plurality to Fremont, and it was the only one of the several traditionally Whig counties fronting the Ohio River to do so. Statewide, Buchanan won by a little over twenty four thousand votes. Two days after the election, Garber made clear what he believed was the cause of the Republican defeat.

> The gentlemen who engineered the Republican party in Indiana are clever, estimable men, every one of them; but as political leaders they are imbeciles. With superior numbers, the best cause, and the major part of the enthusiasm throughout the canvass, their party is beaten. They have been out-generaled in every particular. They reversed the principle of having the heaviest battalions concentrated at the point of attack.

[42] *MDC*, 30 October 1856. Nicole Etcheson, *The Emerging Midwest: Upland Southerners and the Political Culture of the Old Northwest, 1787-1861* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996). Etcheson contends that most people of upland southern heritage, which was virtually everyone in southern Indiana, considered southern Democrats to be disunionists and Republicans to be abolitionists, and thus strongly favored the concept of non-intervention (popular sovereignty) advocated by Steven Douglas as a way to avoid siding with either group.

> Southern Indiana was indubitably the Republican missionary field. How was that field worked? Rather how was it not worked! It was given up to the combined enemy without a struggle.
> But what are we to do – what can be done without leaders? In answer to that question we have only to say, You see what has been done with the present leaders; it could not have been worse done without leaders. If more fortunate men cannot be found in the Republican ranks, better to be without leaders, or hire some from the Republicans of some of the other States.

Obviously, 1856 was a very, very bitter defeat for Michael Garber.[43]

Never one to skulk when there was work to do, within days Garber was thinking about the next battle. In fact, Michael Garber never stopped thinking about battle, for he believed that constant struggle was the inevitable price required of free men to maintain their republic in a corrupt world.

> The battle has been fought, the Republicans beaten – it is not so easy to say who has been victorious. What's to be done now? Commence the fight anew. The contest for Freedom commenced about the time God hardened Pharaoh's heart; it has continued since, and is destined to continue so long as tyranny, slavery exist in the world. We fight on, fight ever for the inalienable rights of the freemen of the Union, for the dignity of labor, and against all privileged orders in the Republic.[44]

[43] *MDC*, 6 November 1856; Thornbrough, *Civil War Era*, 76; Elmer Duane Elbert, "Southern Indiana Politics on the Eve of the Civil War, 1858-1861" (Ph.D. diss., Indiana University, 1967), 221.
[44] *MDC*, 6 November 1856.

Conclusion

"It is with considerable pride we can look back over our course for seven years, fighting up the rugged steep of RIGHT – fighting against corruption, money and Bright – until we finally have gained the summit, and firmly planted the standard of Democratic Republicanism." – Michael C. Garber, Madison *Daily Courier*, 1 May 1856.

The life and writings of Indiana editor Michael C. Garber are a useful window into the early 1850s, a critical period of American history. Besides being a fascinating character in his own right, Garber lived through and even witnessed a host of important political events and left a daily record of his reflections upon them in the Madison *Daily Courier*. Most significantly, Garber's writings address the various reasons he bolted from the Democratic Party in 1854, and contributed to organizing the fusionist Peoples' Party and then the Republican Party. A detailed study of Michael Garber's reflections upon the turbulent events of the early 1850s should assist in the refinement of historical interpretations of both political realignment and the formation of the Republican Party.

After forty years of historical debate over the causes of political realignment in the 1850s, and the character of the early Republican Party, two interpretations currently reign. Eric Foner restated, with modifications, the traditional view that political realignment was caused by sectionalism produced by the debate over the extension of slavery into the western territories. This debate reached a crescendo with the Kansas-Nebraska Act in 1854, which destroyed the second political system and gave birth to the coalition that became the Republican Party. While their motives did vary, northern critics of slavery expansion primarily coalesced around the free labor ideology. They believed that the free labor system of the North granted individuals the opportunity to rise

economically and socially according to their abilities. They also feared that slavery expansion into the territories would make free labor untenable there, and possibly throughout the nation as well. Passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act convinced free labor ideologists that slaveholders were determined to expand slavery into the West, and spurred them to organize a political party to stand against slaveholders and for the interests of free labor.

Michael Holt and William Gienapp insist that ethnocultural issues - temperance, nativism, anti-Catholicism – mortally wounded the second party system which was then destroyed by the sectional hostilities unleashed by the Kansas-Nebraska Act. They consider the Know Nothings the most significant northern party of the mid-1850s because they combined temperance, nativism, political reform, as well as slavery restriction. They claim the Republican Party became dominant in the North only after shrewd political maneuvering and several sensational events in 1856 attracted voters away from the Know Nothings. In the election of 1856 the Republicans used traditional republican rhetoric warning of threats to individual liberties to focus the northern electorate against the Slave Power, that is, southern slaveholder aristocrats who exercised undue control over the federal government to the determent of northern citizens.

While these two explanations of political realignment and Republican Party origins are commonly considered exclusive, this study argues that both interpretations in fact derive from the same source, and that the writings of Michael Garber provide evidence for this claim. As has been demonstrated, Michael Garber's thinking was consciously rooted in a Jeffersonian tradition of republican political economy. Republican economic theory rested upon the twin pillars of the labor theory of value and

the critique of the political economy of aristocracy. Foner's formulation of free labor ideology fully embraces both of these concepts. Free labor ideologists' belief that laborers should receive the fruits of their labor originated in the labor theory of value; their fear that slavery expansion would undermine free labor society originated in their assumptions about the pernicious workings of the political economy of aristocracy. Garber, as has been illustrated, extensively expressed both of these concerns throughout the early 1850s.

The other component of republican political economy, republican political theory, revolved around the concepts of self-government, individual rights and liberties, fear of concentrated power, and hatred of political corruption. Holt and Gienapp's interpretation of the Slave Power encompasses these ideas. The Republican Party attracted northern voters by claiming that their political rights and liberties were threatened by the corrupt political machinations of slaveholders concentrated in the Democratic Party. This study has likewise illustrated that Garber fully believed in the existence of the Slave Power – "slave oligarchy" he preferred to call it – and denounced it vociferously in the *Courier*.

Michael Garber was both an adherent of free labor ideology and an advocate of the slave Power thesis because both concepts were ultimately anchored in a Jeffersonian tradition of republican political economy that held aristocracy as the source of all political and economic corruption. For the first forty years of his life Garber considered the Jefferson – Jackson party tradition to be the political expression of this anti-aristocratic stance. By 1854, Garber was convinced the Democratic Party had betrayed that tradition, and thus helped establish a party that would embody the principles of republican political economy. Garber's Jeffersonian republican worldview explains his

move to the Republican Party while claiming that he had not changed his foundational principles. Michael Garber became a Republican, in order to remain a republican.

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