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Historiography of the split in the Democratic-Republican party during the administration of Thomas Jefferson

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HISTORIOGRAPHY OF THE SPLIT IN THE DEMOCRATIC-REPUBLICAN PARTY DURING THE ADMINISTRATION OF THOMAS JEFFERSON

by

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FOREWORD

The period of the 1790's had been a time of trial and adjustment for the new nation. The problems its leaders wrestled with—western lands, finance, foreign affairs, state-federal relations, and so forth—were postponed rather than solved. These same problems were to plague the United States into the 1800's.

Within three years after the ratification of the Constitution two opposing interpretations of the document were being argued. Jefferson and his followers believed the powers of the national government were strictly limited and clearly defined by the Constitution. Hamilton challenged this states-rights view, advocating a strong central government. He argued that the Constitution merely indicated areas of power; that it set forth the ends and that any means not expressly forbidden in the Constitution could be employed in obtaining these ends. The basic division of the 1790's was economic and stemmed from Hamilton's financial plans and the question of foreign affairs, especially the French Revolution. The two factors were not unrelated, for war against England would jeopardize Hamilton's whole financial scheme by drastically
diminishing the expected revenue from the tariff. Hamilton and his group believed the debt was a blessing and should be utilized to lend stability to the new government by giving the moneyed men a vested interest in it, and hence, an interest in its success. The opposition felt that Hamilton was bribing the financial elite and consciously creating a moneyed aristocracy. The division on the administration of western lands was also sharp. Northeastern advocates of a strong central government, for obvious economic reasons, hoped to restrict the sale of public lands in the West. The men living on the edge of the old frontier were impatient to settle these vast uninhabited areas. They had resented England's attempts to control its settlement in colonial days and would tolerate no restrictions by their own government. The issue of the French Revolution also found Americans sharply divided. The Democratic-Republicans felt that the French people were engaged in a noble struggle for liberty. The Federalists viewed the uprising as a threat to order and religion and property. Elsewhere in foreign relations, the West felt travel on the Mississippi and the right of deposit at New Orleans were indispensable to their livelihood. The East did not share this concern with the West and was willing to sacrifice navigation of the Mississippi for other advantages.

Though the Federalists controlled the central
government throughout the 1790's, their popularity fluctuated with each important crisis. Jay's Treaty, for example, was part of this Pandora's box of political troubles and popular oscillations. Although historians of the future were to applaud the treaty as a piece of wisdom and statesmanship, in 1795 it engendered much bitterness and animosity. Federalist popularity reached its lowest point. The only genuine enthusiasm for the treaty came from the West. There the promised evacuation of British troops from the Northwest was received enthusiastically. Westerners believed that the settlement of the West would be speeded and property and lives made more secure once the British were no longer present to incite the Indians. Federalists supported the treaty, in part, from the necessity of salvaging Hamilton's financial policy by preventing war with Britain.¹

On the other hand, Federalist popularity was strengthened by a second foreign episode several years later—the XYZ affair. United States relations with France were quite unsatisfactory at the time Adams assumed the presidency. France regarded Jay's Treaty as an alliance with England. French decrees were being issued to the detriment of American commerce. Three delegates—

John Marshall of Virginia, Elbridge Gerry of Massachusetts and Charles C. Pinckney of South Carolina—had been sent to France in an effort to settle these differences. Talleyrand's agents had specified a large loan for France as a necessary condition for negotiation. Aside from being excessive, the loan was outside the authority of the American delegates and would have been a violation of American neutrality. Marshall and Pinckney returned to the United States indignant. The proposed loan, and the personal bribe which Talleyrand usually expected before negotiating, aroused the nationalism of the American people. Federalist popularity rose to new heights. "Millions for defense, but not one cent for tribute" was on everyone's lips.

American foreign policy was a major cause for internal disagreement within the Federalist party. The Essex Junto faction wished to capitalize on the country's war fever by an open declaration of war on France. Such a move would insure Federalist victory in the approaching presidential election of 1800. Adams, however, had more recent information from William Vans Murray, stationed at the Hague, that France was now desirous of peace and that she would welcome a new mission with dignity and respect. Embittered High Federalists watched the war clouds evaporate as the new mission was appointed, dissolving the campaign issue which was supposed to have carried their
party to victory.²

Domestically, Hamilton's financial program had fostered a spirit of disunion and dissension between the emerging parties. The constitutionality of the Bank of the United States was still being argued. Hamilton's elaborate system of funding and assumption was suspect by Jefferson and the group that wished to keep government simple. The excise tax had aroused much animosity and resulted in the Whiskey Rebellion during Washington's administration.

The Alien, Sedition and Naturalization Acts, which had been passed immediately after the failure of the XYZ mission was announced, were much hated by persecuted, prosecuted Democratic-Republicans. The Virginia-Kentucky Resolutions were passed to answer this immediate grievance. Fear that individual liberty was being trampled upon led Jefferson and Madison to author these resolutions.

Thus, we can readily understand the great importance of the election of 1800. The Federalists sincerely believed that everything good and decent in society was doomed if the Democratic-Republicans emerged victorious. They foresaw the collapse of the infant nation if rule were taken out of the hands of the wiser, wealthier elite.

Democratic-Republican leaders impressed upon the voters that a vote for Jefferson meant a return to simplicity, economy and civil liberties safeguarded by the states. Federalism was symbolized as synonymous with ostentatious display, deficit spending, and the hated Alien and Sedition Acts. The Federalists honestly feared Jefferson. He was suspected of being the author of the Virginia-Kentucky Resolutions and a lover of France. His alleged atheism figured prominently in the campaign. When the worst Federalist fears materialized and Jefferson was elected, the Federalists sought some means of preserving their principles. Retreating into the judiciary, the defeated party appointed important Federalists as judges, including John Marshall as Chief Justice of the Supreme Court.

In retrospect, the Jeffersonian victory does not seem to have been such a revolution after all. It appears today as if Jefferson pursued the moderate course embarked upon by Washington and continued by Adams. Indeed, some historians claim that Jefferson as President "outfederalized the Federalists." Whether this particular interpretation is right or wrong, strong evidence exists in its favor. Part of this evidence is that staunch Democratic-Republicans like John Randolph and John Taylor broke with the administration.

3Henry Adams, History of the United States of America (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1909, III, p. 120, 121.
CHAPTER I

HISTORICAL DISAGREEMENT CONCERNING THE SPLIT IN
DEMOCRATIC-REPUBLICAN PARTY DURING
JEFFERSON'S ADMINISTRATION

The break within the Democratic-Republican party occurred during the administration of Jefferson. Upon this historians are agreed. But the dozens of causes of the split, as presented in textbooks in American history and biographies, attest to the disagreement among scholars regarding its origin.

John Randolph, Jr. of Virginia is recognized as the leader of the faction which bolted from the Democratic-Republican party.¹ This group of insurgents became known as Quids.² The core of the original band of Quids consisted of Randolph and Nathaniel Macon of North Carolina. John Taylor later joined the Quids and became renowned as

¹It is not within the scope or purpose of this thesis to study the number of Congressmen who joined Randolph and/or Taylor, i.e., the numerical extent of the party split (or splinter). This would require a study of congressional voting behavior on major enactments during the Jefferson and Madison administrations.

²From the term tertium quid, meaning a third something or other, a position intermediate between two existing positions.
An examination of modern textbooks reveals the following divergences of opinion regarding the cause of the split.

J. P. Nichols and Roy F. Nichols, *The Republic of the United States*, 1942, state that Randolph and his group denounced Jefferson as a traitor to Republican principles. Randolph and his faction charged that, in his centralizing tyranny and disregard of the Constitution as President, Jefferson had become a Federalist. Whereas Jefferson had once fervently dedicated himself to the strict construction of the Constitution, he now disregarded it at will.3

Jefferson's message to the Eighth Congress on November 8, 1804, can be pointed to in support of his alleged Federalism. The omission of any comment voicing fear that the government was in danger of overstepping the limits of its powers was an ominous sign to men like Randolph. Jefferson merely summarized the foreign situation, the treatment of the Indians, and the favorable financial situation, and concluded with:

> Whether the great interests of agriculture, manufactures, commerce, or navigation, can, within the pale of your constitutional powers, be aided in any of their relations; whether laws

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are provided in all cases where they are want-
ing; . . . in fine, whether anything can be done
to advance the general good, are questions within
the limits of your functions which will neces-
sarily occupy your attention.

David Saville Muzzey and John A. Krout, (American
History for Colleges, 1943), indicate that Randolph was
displeased from the beginning with Jefferson's administra-
tion because the president was too conciliatory toward
political opponents in the Northern states. Randolph felt
the Democratic-Republicans should pay as much attention to
the agricultural south as the Federalists had to the com-
mercial North. He resented the presence of New Englanders
in the cabinet, even though they were Democratic-
Republicans. Then, when Randolph conducted the Chase im-
peachment at Jefferson's special request, and was let down
by Democratic-Republican senators, he was through serving
the administration. Randolph then seized upon the West
Florida issue to get revenge.

The impeachment of Supreme Court Justice Samuel
Chase, which Muzzey and Krout suggest as a factor in
splitting the Democratic-Republican party, was part of the
battle being waged for control of the judiciary. John
Marshall, who had been appointed Chief Justice by John

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Adams shortly before his presidential term expired, was a staunch Federalist. Though distant cousins, no love was lost between the new president, Thomas Jefferson, and the new Chief Justice. This animosity was intensified by Marshall's opinion in the case of Marbury v. Madison.

The impeachment of John Pickering, Judge of the United States Court for the District of New Hampshire, was to be the stepping stone to Chase. Pickering had been insane for at least three years, but the Constitution provided no method of removing an officer who had become insane. The Democratic-Republicans ignored the fact of his insanity and found him guilty. Federalists felt that if one justice could be impeached, removal of other justices would quickly follow. The courts would become a tool of the political party in power.

The Democratic-Republicans now sought to remove Associate Justice Samuel Chase from the Supreme Court. Chase had been particularly outspoken in his criticism of the administration from the bench. The Federalists feared that if the Chase impeachment were successful the next victim would be Chief Justice Marshall. Publicly, at least, Jefferson cautiously decided to remain in the background, rather than seem to have a hand in the impeachment.

Eight articles were drawn up by Randolph. The really important article was the last one, which dealt
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with an address Justice Chase had delivered to the grand jury at Baltimore on May 2, 1803. From the bench, he had spoken violently against democracy generally, and against Democratic-Republican policies in particular. In part, his criticism had contained the following words:

The late alteration of the Federal judiciary by the abolition of the office of the sixteen circuit judges, and the recent change in our State [Maryland] Constitution by the establishing of universal suffrage, and the further alteration that is contemplated in our State judiciary (if adopted) will in my judgment take away all security for property and personal liberty. . . . Our republican Constitution will sink into a mobocracy— the worst of all possible governments. . . . The modern doctrines by our late reformers, that all men in a state of society are entitled to enjoy equal liberty and equal rights, have brought this mighty mischief upon us; and I fear that it will rapidly progress until peace and order, freedom and property, shall be destroyed.

Apart from his partisan addresses from the bench, Chase's relentless application of the Sedition Act and the sentencing of Democratic-Republican Fries to the gallows and Callender to jail had not increased his popularity among Democratic-Republicans.

The Democratic-Republican Senate voted to hear the impeachment on March 12, 1804. The trial did not begin until February 4, 1805. A month before the trial, incidentally, the Yazoo Land Fraud case came before the House, and Randolph violently attacked the administration.

When the trial of Samuel Chase came up a few days after the debate on the Yazoo Land Fraud closed, Randolph was physically and mentally exhausted.

The situation in the Senate, when it convened on February 4, required strict party discipline. There were twenty-five Republican Senators and twenty-three votes were necessary to convict Chase. Aaron Burr, Vice President of the United States, was presiding officer at the trial. Burr was then wanted in New Jersey for murder, as a result of the duel in which he had fatally wounded Alexander Hamilton.

The trial centered around the question, "What is an impeachable offense?" The original Republican position was that the Senate might remove, disqualify, or suspend officers at its discretion; impeachment need imply no criminality. Removal of an officer merely indicated that the office could be better filled by someone else. The defense meant to restrict impeachable offenses to criminal acts that could be tried in a court of law.

Luther Martin of Maryland spoke brilliantly for the defense. Randolph's speech defending the Republican position was made less effective by the speech of his associate--Joseph Nicholson of Maryland. As the first speaker for the administration, Nicholson abandoned the Democratic-Republican position, (as used in the Pickering case), stating that Chase's trial was to be conducted as
a criminal prosecution.

The phrasing of the impeachment that was agreed upon was, "Is Samuel Chase guilty or not guilty of a high crime or misdemeanor as charged in the article just read?" Thus, each Senator would have to say that Chase's acts were criminal to find him guilty. The Senate found Chase not guilty on March 1, 1805. The vote was not even close on most of the articles. The prosecution came closest to succeeding on the Baltimore article, where nineteen Democratic-Republicans found Chase guilty—four short of the necessary number.

Oliver Perry Chitwood and Frank Lawrence Owsley, (A Short History of the American People, 1945), indicate three causes for the split. They speculate that Randolph was never comfortable except in opposition. In addition they note that, as Jefferson moved toward nationalism, Randolph and Macon refused to budge from the doctrines of 1798. These authors also believe Randolph's dislike of Madison was significant.

It was understandable that Madison and Randolph could not get along. Madison's character acted as an irritant on Randolph. Madison was cautious; Randolph was


8Oliver Perry Chitwood and Frank Lawrence Owsley, A Short History of the American People (New York: D. Van Nostrand Co., Inc., 1945), 1,
always extreme. Madison saw both sides of any question; there was only one side to Randolph. Madison was small, retiring, modest; Randolph was tall, abrupt in manner, self-asserting. Madison had a taste for secret politics; Randolph loved publicity. 9

Regarding Randolph's personality, the adjective most consistently applied to Randolph is brilliant. Even those historians who treat Randolph unsympathetically concede that he was brilliant. A composite of the various expressions used in describing Randolph affords a general impression of his personality: sarcastic, erratic, eccentric, resentful, ambitious, touchy, master of caustic wit and searing invective, courtly in manner when he chose, eloquent, and dulcet in voice. Henry Adams comments that Jefferson never made an enemy unless he could make at least two friends in doing so, but that Randolph took pleasure in making enemies. 10

Harold Underwood Faulkner, (American Political and Social History, 1948), singles out the Yazoo controversy as the cause of the split in the Democratic-Republican party. 11 The Yazoo controversy was part of the battle

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10 Ibid., III, p. 159.
over states-rights. The history of the case dates back to 1785. At that time, Georgia had sold large tracts of its land (in the present states of Mississippi and Alabama) to four land companies. When the purchasers did not live up to their part of the agreement concerning settlement and improvement of the land, Georgia cancelled the sale. The land was again sold in 1795, at an average of one and a half cents an acre, under conditions of bribery and corruption. An Associate Justice of the United States, James Wilson, was among the speculators who crowded into Augusta. This particular individual bought 750,000 acres. In all, thirty five million acres were sold and only two million acres were reserved for the exclusive entry of the citizens of Georgia. In 1796, a year after the sale, it was discovered that all but one of the legislators voting for the resale of the land had an interest in the new Yazoo companies. A new legislature was elected by an irate populace and the state was forced to rescind its action.¹²

By the time the state revoked the grants, the 1795 purchasers had had time to sell the land at fourteen cents an acre. Much of the land was sold to northerners who were ignorant of the forthcoming rescinding action. In 1798 the territory of Mississippi was created; and in 1802,

during Jefferson's administration, Georgia finally abandoned her western land claims. The northern purchasers had obtained a written opinion from Alexander Hamilton that, regardless of the criminality of the proceedings, a sale under existing law was protected by the contract feature of the Constitution. These speculators now appealed to the federal government for redress.

A commission was appointed by Jefferson, consisting of three Georgians and three cabinet members. The cabinet members appointed were Attorney General Levi Lincoln, Secretary of State James Madison, and Secretary of the Treasury Albert Gallatin. The commission agreed that Georgia should be paid $1,250,000 by the federal government. The commission further stipulated that the proceeds from the sale of five million acres of the land were to go to the stockholders. This commission frankly stated—unlike Hamilton—that the titles of the claimants under the purchase could not be supported. However, since so many of the purchasers had bought in good faith, reimbursement was recommended. There was the additional consideration that continued confusion and litigation would hurt the nation as well as the stockholders. Reimbursement would be both expedient and in the best interest of the

United States, in the opinion of the commission. Jefferson favored the committee's recommendations mainly for political reasons. Such an agreement would gain the support of northern businessmen who had invested heavily in the companies.

Randolph violently opposed any settlement on what he considered to be moral grounds. He opposed the measure, according to Faulkner, because he believed it to be a political deal favoring northern land speculators. Further, the fraudulent nature of the claims did not entitle the stockholders to reimbursement. On December 30, 1803, Randolph offered a resolution excluding the claimants from any share in the proposed settlement. Two months later, he withdrew his resolution to issue a series of declaratory resolves affirming the right of the state of Georgia to rescind the grants. The fundamental issue, to Randolph, was states-rights v. national power.

Randolph received most of his support from southerners, and he was successful in preventing approval of the agreement. Time and time again Randolph was able to prevent any settlement of these claims. Indeed, the matter was not finally resolved until 1814, after Randolph

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15Faulkner, p. 164.
was out of Congress. John Marshall had, by this time, utilized an opportunity to declare the Georgia act nullifying the 1795 grants unconstitutional as a violation of contract, in the case of Fletcher v. Peck in 1810.

Leland Baldwin, (*The Stream of American History*, 1952), states that Randolph supported the Republicans only so long as they maintained Virginia's ascendance. Since Virginia's ascendance depended upon strict construction of the Constitution, Randolph was a strict constructionist. He felt that the failure to find Supreme Court Justice Chase guilty, caused by defection in Democratic-Republican ranks, indicated that the party had passed under northern and western domination and sold out its principles. Randolph was an aristocrat who hated any hint of equality and frowned upon the democratic West. The failure of the impeachment led Randolph to organize the Quids. The additional factor of Randolph's love of opposition is mentioned by Baldwin.¹⁶

Harry J. Carman and Harold C. Syrett, (*A History of the American People*, 1952), attribute the break in the Democratic-Republican party to Randolph's extreme stand on states rights. Charging that Jefferson had joined the opposition, Randolph organized the minority group

John Randolph's stand on states rights, which Carman and Syrett believe sufficiently explains the break, can be noted early in his Congressional career. Within a few months after the opening of the Seventh session, Randolph was opposing legislation on the grounds that it violated the rights of states. When a bill came up authorizing the corporation of Georgetown to construct a dam from Mason's Island to the shore of the Potomac, to improve navigation, Randolph reported against it. The Potomac was the joint property of Maryland and Virginia, and he felt that Congress had no jurisdiction. Further, the tax would be oppressive and unequal, because all property of Georgetown would not be equally benefited, Randolph reasoned.

John D. Hicks, *The Federal Union. A History of the United States, 1952*, declares that Randolph split the party over the Yazoo controversy and "other differences." The faction which Randolph led charged that Jefferson had forgotten the states rights doctrines of 1798 and had in

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reality become a Federalist.\(^{19}\)

Robert Riegel and David Long, (The American Story, 1956), assert, briefly, that Randolph attacked Jefferson because he was no longer Republican, but Federalist. John Taylor deserted Jefferson because he could no longer be considered a true liberal.\(^{20}\) No amplification is offered to explain these terms.

Samuel Eliot Morison and Henry Steele Commager, (The Growth of the American Republic, 1956), contend that the secret message to Congress in December, 1805, over the Florida issue, was the signal for a schism in the Republican party. The issue caused Madison to lose the support of John Taylor and to make an enemy of Randolph. They also indicate that Randolph was unhappy with Jefferson's federalism.\(^{21}\)

The Florida issue to which Morison and Commager make reference had its origin in the Louisiana Purchase. When Louisiana was purchased in 1803 the boundaries were left vague. A few months later, Livingston and Monroe, both in Europe, were insisting that West Florida was part


of the purchase. They advocated occupancy. However, Jefferson and Madison preferred to see if they could induce Spain to yield.

But Talleyrand assured the Spaniards that he had given the United States only what France originally held—and this included only the territory west of the Mississippi and the River Iberville. He flatly denied that any part of West Florida was involved. The negotiators (Livingston and Monroe) felt it wise to drop the matter of West Florida, in view of Spanish opposition and lack of French support. Congress, however, did not hesitate to legislate on the assumption that West Florida was part of the United States. On November 30, 1803, Randolph introduced a bill which directed that the ceded territories "and also all the navigable waters, rivers, creeks, bays and inlets lying within the United States which empty into the Gulf of Mexico east of the River Mississippi, shall be annexed to the Mississippi district." Congress passed the bill and Jefferson signed it on February 24, 1804. This was a slap in the face of France and Spain, both of whom had declared that West Florida was not a part of the sale.

War with Spain and/or France seemed a likely possibility as this government pursued a public policy of

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force. The Spanish minister at Washington, Marquis d'Yrujo, had tried to persuade his government to accept the cession of Louisiana, but became angered himself at the determination of the American government to include the Floridas. In Madrid, Pinckney was adopting a very strong tone. He threatened war if we did not get an immediate answer on the right of Americans to ply the rivers passing through West Florida. Spain demanded he be recalled after he advised Americans in Spain to leave. Monroe was sent to Spain to repair relations. He arrived on January 2, 1805, and persuaded Pinckney to stay on. Then the two issued another ultimatum demanding the cession of the Floridas and Texas to the Rio Grande. Monroe demanded his passports and was granted them. Meanwhile, America learned that France would side with Spain if there were a rupture.

After Jefferson's re-election, he issued a public message that was war-like in tone. He reiterated our grievances against Spain. She had refused to ratify the convention for the payment of old spoliations and had refused to draw the boundaries on Louisiana. She had even raided our borders. Monroe's negotiations had not gone well. Jefferson noted that France had sided with Spain at every turn. He said,

Some of these injuries may perhaps admit a peaceable remedy. Where that is competent it is always the most desirable. But some of them are
of a nature to be met by force only, and all of them may lead to it. I cannot, therefore, but recommend such preparations as circumstances call for. 23

However, Jefferson revealed his true policy by sending a second, secret message to Congress in which he said, "Formal war is not necessary—it is not probable it will follow; . . . the course to be pursued will require the command of means which it belong to Congress exclusively to yield or to deny." 24 Randolph, to whose committee the message had been referred, went to the president to find out what the message meant. Jefferson revealed that he desired Congress to secretly appropriate $2,000,000 for the purchase of Florida.

Randolph opposed the secrecy of the message, as well as its policy. The money should have been asked for officially, he felt. He was angered, further, because the war-like tone Jefferson had assumed in his public message would be to Madison's advantage, as the public favored strong action. When Congress seemingly overruled the boldness of Madison and Jefferson, and instituted milder measures, Congress would be acting against public opinion.


But even if the money had been asked for officially, Randolph would have been opposed, as he felt the measure sounded like bribery after the total failure of previous negotiations. He felt it would be better to settle for an exchange of territories with Spain and if that failed—force. It seemed to Randolph that Jefferson was willing to employ dishonorable tactics to gain his ends.

When the Ways and Means Committee met on December 7, 1805, Chairman Randolph denounced the message, saying he saw nothing in the message that could be construed as a request for money. The knowledge that the $2,000,000 was to go to France as a bribe made it impossible for Randolph to support the request. Barnabus Bidwell of Massachusetts was the only member of the committee on whom Jefferson could depend to support the administration. He was the only member of the committee who favored the grant on the strength of Jefferson's message. After the Ways and Means Committee reported unfavorably, Jefferson asked Joseph B. Varnum and Bidwell to draw up a resolution to put before the House, which was passed immediately.

Wesley M. Gewehr, Ed., (American Civilization. A History of the United States, 1957), makes the following observation: "The real cause of Randolph's running fight with the administration was that he saw in its policies an abandonment of the theories expressed in the Virginia and Kentucky Resolutions of 1798—principles which their very
authors were now betraying. Nothing specific is stated in this volume; and the reader, apparently, is allowed to form his own judgment from this vague generalization.

Richard Hofstadter, William Miller, and Daniel Aaron, (The United States. The History of a Republic, 1957), believe that Randolph split the Republican party over the fight against compensating the Yazoo claimants. Randolph insisted that the precious rights of the sovereign state of Georgia had been forfeited, with Jefferson's connivance, to the benefit of northern speculators. They note that Randolph was supported by the die-hard states-rights Republicans whose philosophy Jefferson himself had buttressed with the Kentucky Resolutions of 1798. They note that Jefferson was no stickler for states-rights or for a narrow interpretation of the Constitution where America's expansion was concerned, as he was to make abundantly clear in the purchase of Louisiana. (They neglect to point out that there was no Democratic-Republican split on the issue of purchasing Louisiana).

T. Harry Williams, Richard N. Current and Frank Freidel, (A History of the United States, 1959), observe


that Randolph turned against Jefferson, "accused him of acting like a Federalist instead of a states rights Republica," and became a fanatic on the subject of the Yazoo land claims.27

William E. Dodd, (The Life of Nathaniel Macon, 1903), covers a wide range of possible factors, including the Yazoo Land Fraud, the successorship, the Chase impeachment, and the Florida situation. He indicates that Randolph was jealous of Madison; and that Macon, under the influence of Randolph, came to believe Madison was improperly connected with the Yazoo Land Fraud. Further, Macon was unhappy over the impeachment program of the administration. Dodd states that Macon would have preferred to let the Supreme Court destroy itself by partisan decisions rather than become involved in impeachments. Macon's dissatisfaction with the administration is evidenced, Dodd feels, in his opposition to a claim presented to the lower

House asking fourteen thousand dollars for repairs on the furniture of the President's household. Adams's friends had presented the same claim, Dodd points out, and Macon had lashed out against it as extravagant.

Dodd asserts: "That this split in the ranks of the dominant party was due in the first instance to the disagreement about the successorship . . . is quite probable; yet the impeachment disaster seems, at least so far as Randolph was concerned, to have been its immediate cause."²⁸

Dodd states that Randolph lost influence after the failure of the Chase impeachment and blamed the administration for his own errors. Dodd believes that, because Randolph was aiming at the presidency, this loss of influence rankled.

Regarding the Florida situation, Dodd believes that after Jefferson asked for the two million dollars to purchase Florida and Randolph's committee refused to report favorably, Jefferson turned to Joseph B. Varnum of Massachusetts, Macon's competitor for the Speakership. Jefferson asked Varnum and Barnabas Bidwill of Massachusetts to prepare a resolution granting the appropriation. Thus, the breach was widened.

Macon, like Randolph, was beginning to drift away

from the administration in the spring of 1804. Dodd cites a letter written by Macon to Monroe in November of 1803 as evidence that Macon was displeased with the state department, i.e., with its head, Madison. The particular part of the letter quoted concerns the West Florida negotiations: "The whole transaction is generally well received and popular; though it is due to truth to say that some of your friends would rather the two millions of dollars appropriated at the last session of Congress should have been otherwise applied."29 Thus Mr. Dodd has covered a wide range of multi-reasoned explanations for the split.

Dick Robins Anderson, (William Branch Giles: A Study in the Politics of Virginia and the Nation from 1790 to 1830, 1914), notes that Randolph was expressing his disappointment of the new administration within a few months after Jefferson was elected for his first term. Then, the decision to pay witnesses for the defense, and the ultimate failure of the Chase impeachment, led Randolph to lash out against the administration.

According to Anderson, another bone of contention was Madison. His active support of the claimants in the Yazoo Land Fraud had caused Randolph to lose confidence in his integrity. Anderson writes:

Desertion of the pure Republican doctrines of 1798 had made it impossible for John Randolph

29Ibid., p. 198.
uncompromising, radical, vaunting in his purity and his untarnished Republican faith handed down from the days of the prophets of that doctrine, to countenance Madison's successor to Jefferson's office.30

Albert Beveridge, (The Life of John Marshall, 1919), also places the split early. In referring to the Chase impeachment, he says, "Moreover, Randolph had [already] broken with the Administration and challenged Jefferson's hitherto undisputed partisan autocracy. This was the first public manifestation [however] of that schism in the Republican Party which was never entirely healed."

William Cabell Bruce, (John Randolph of Roanoke 1773-1833, 1922), summarizes some of the various interpretations concerning the split. One ascribes the estrangement to the circumstance that Bidwell and not Randolph was selected to transmit Jefferson's secret intentions regarding the Florida purchase to Congress. Another was the rejection of Randolph for an English mission (particularly after Christopher Clark and other Virginia colleagues in the lower House had applied for an appointment for Randolph.) He repeats the interpretation about the break stemming from Randolph's defeating Jefferson in a game of

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chess.

Bruce, however, believes the real and fundamental reason for the break is to be found in the differing philosophies of the two men and in Randolph's personality. He says:

There is evidence tending to prove that, shortly after the first triumph of the Democratic party, Randolph was restive under the commanding leadership of Jefferson, and disposed to reserve for himself a degree of independence and initiative incompatible with the measure of deference due by a party leader in the House to a President of the same party as himself. 32

He adds that Randolph grew impatient with the Democratic-Republican party shortly after Jefferson's election because he believed that, as a majority party, it was not living up to the principles it propounded as a minority group. Acknowledging the contribution of Randolph's personality to the rupture, Bruce says:

Accompanied as his severe conceptions of public duty and his doctrinaire notions of State sovereignty were by an overbearing will, a pugnacious temper, an impatient and intolerant disposition and a sarcastic tongue, a breach sooner or later, between him and his Northern followers, and as a further result, between him and Jefferson and Madison and even Gallatin, for whom he entertained a great admiration, was inevitable. 33

Bruce observes that Randolph's personality was more suited

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33 Ibid., I, 272.
to leadership of an opposition party than of a dominant party. As a majority leader in the house, he was an object of fear rather than of affection to fellow Democratic-Republicans. Finally, Bruce states that Randolph's leadership was doomed from the time he delivered his "brilliant but intemperate" speeches in the Yazoo debate of 1805. His disappointments over the Chase trial and the English Mission and his speech on Gregg's Resolution only served to accelerate his loss of leadership.

Gregg's Resolution for the non-importation of British goods was based on Jefferson's theory of economic coercion. The impressment of American seamen had been a problem for a number of years. In 1805, another blow was struck at American commerce by a British decision. In the case of the Essex, which had stopped at Salem on its way from Spain to Havana, the ship was condemned on the grounds that the final destination was the determining factor. Since half of American export trade was carried on in these broken voyages which the British had declared illegal, the United States sought a remedy to counteract the damaging decision by restricting British imports. Gregg's Resolution was defeated, however; partly through the efforts of Randolph. The bill that was passed, the Non-Intercourse Act, was even less harsh. Restrictions were placed on only an enumerated list of British goods. Randolph denounced it as a half-way measure. Either we should ignore British
impressment of American seamen, or resort to war, he felt. The measure was defeated. However a less restrictive Non-Intercourse Act was passed.

Henry H. Simms, *Life of John Taylor: The Story of a Brilliant Leader in the Early Virginia State Rights School*, 1932, offers a different reason for the split. He ascribes the break to Randolph's and Taylor's dissatisfaction with administrative policy towards England. Simms states that the real break in the party came late in 1806. James Monroe and William Pinckney—by consciously not following their instructions—had negotiated a treaty with England. The treaty had no provisions in regard to impressments, and compensation for seized cargoes, but did embrace moderate concessions in regard to West Indian trade. However, England indicated that she would not observe the treaty unless America would give assurances of resistance to the Berlin Decree. Mr. Jefferson did not even bother to submit the treaty to the Senate.

John Taylor recognized the imperfections of the treaty, but thought it should have been accepted, as it would have paved the way for adjustment of English-American difficulties. The British situation had been unsatisfactory for some time. British warships were standing off the New York harbor in what amounted to an actual blockade. American ships were searched for contraband and American seamen were impressed. When, in 1807,
the Embargo Act was passed, a Monroe movement assumed formidable proportions in Virginia. Consequently, his friends charged that the treaty had been rejected by Jefferson solely to aid Madison's chances for the presidency. After 124 Democratic-Republican members had met in January, 1808, in a legislative caucus in Richmond, and had named an electoral ticket favoring Madison, fifty-seven members held a second caucus which endorsed Monroe. They drew up an address pointing out that there was imminent danger of war, and noted that Monroe, "by reason of his experience abroad, and in terms of his more resolute firmness, was better fitted to meet this crisis, and keep peace, than was Madison."34

In the past fifteen years most biographers seem to lean more and more to the Florida issue as the immediate cause of the split. Cresson, Kirk, Schachner, Brant and Walters, writing between 1946 and 1957, all emphasize it; though they disagree on whether the Florida issue is of symbolic or fundamental importance. W. P. Cresson, (James Monroe, 1946), returns to a single-cause rather than a multiple-cause explanation of the break. He lists the Florida question as the sole cause of the breach. Regarding the disagreement over the appropriation of the two

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million dollars, he states, "For the first time, Jefferson was forced to listen not only to a frank criticism of his policy, but also to what was the first utterance of beginning revolt within his hitherto completely controlled Party."  

Russell Kirk, *Randolph of Roanoke*, 1951, agrees with Cresson:

But the break came soon; not on a question of political theory, however, but on one of political morality—the Florida question. Disgust with the policies of the Republican administration doubtless had its part in strengthening the conservative tendencies already to be seen in Randolph's course.  

He thus places the break in April, 1806, when Randolph denounced the Florida negotiations.  

It was upon this point of rigid construction of the federal compact, . . . that Randolph must have separated from the party of Jefferson even had there been no Yazoo debate, no Florida affair, no embargo; for those issues passed away, and Randolph was not reconciled to the Jeffersonian body; the difference was more fundamental.  

Nathan Schachner, *Thomas Jefferson, A Biography*, 1951, makes reference to other interpretations of the break, especially the Yazoo land fraud. But Schachner's

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37Ibid., p. 175.  

38Ibid., p. 54.
own opinion was that "the secret message [regarding Florida] precipitated the quarrel, with dangerous consequences for the future."\(^3^9\)

Irving Brant, (James Madison, Secretary of State, 1800-1809, 1953), believes Randolph's antagonism toward Madison led him to desire to break with the administration and for this purpose he seized upon the Florida negotiations as an issue. Brant states, in reference to the Florida situation: "It was not the Jefferson administration, but the one he saw rising beyond it, that John Randolph wanted to crumble down, and for that purpose one issue was as good as another."\(^4^0\) When Jefferson requested the appropriation for the two million dollars, Brant asserts that Randolph opposed the request to attack Madison and benefit Monroe. Brant also believes that the Yazoo issue—like the Florida issue—had been seized upon by Randolph to attack Madison.\(^4^1\)

Raymond Walters, (Albert Gallatin, Jeffersonian Financier and Diplomat, 1957), states that the break was caused by the Florida negotiations. He hints of other


\(^4^1\)Ibid., p. 240.
troubles, for he comments: "The trouble with Randolph of Roanoke was inextricably interwoven with Jefferson's determination to gain Florida; but even if Florida had never existed, Jefferson—and hence Gallatin—would have had difficulties with the Virginia Congressman."^42

Though some of the more recent biographies seem to lean toward the West Florida question (Cresson, Kirk, Schachner, Brant, Walters) as the real reason for the split—or as simply an issue utilized by Randolph for breaking with Jefferson—there is really little agreement among historians concerning when and why the break developed in the Democratic-Republican party. Conflicting dates ranging from 1800 to 1808 are cited. Some historians indicate a single cause for the break. Others contend that two or three factors were prominent. Still others indicate a divergence of opinion on the subject and provide a summary of other works before presenting their own view.

For the purpose of summary, the following is a listing of explanations presented by historians in the textbooks and biographies surveyed in this chapter:

1. The failure of the trial of Supreme Court Justice Samuel Chase.

2. The payment of witnesses appearing at the trial of Supreme Court Justice Samuel Chase.

3. Randolph's clinging to strict construction of the Constitution to preserve the ascendance of Virginian aristocracy.

4. Randolph's belief that the Republican party had passed under northern and western domination.

5. Randolph's extreme stand on states rights.

6. Randolph's belief that Jefferson was becoming a Federalist.

7. Jefferson's movement toward Nationalism, while Randolph and Macon refused to budge from the doctrine of 1798.

8. Taylor's belief that Jefferson could no longer be considered a true liberal.


10. The administration's departure from simplicity.


13. Randolph's lack of confidence in Madison after his support of the Yazoo Fraud case claimants.


15. Randolph was best fitted for a role in opposition.

16. Intimate personal reasons.

17. The Yazoo Land Fraud.

18. The secret message on the Florida issue.

19. The question of morality on the Florida issue.

20. Randolph's rejection for a foreign mission.
21. Revelation of a state secret to some members of the House and not to Randolph.

22. The failure of the Chase impeachment and Randolph's subsequent loss of influence.

23. The differing philosophies of Randolph and Jefferson.

24. Randolph's opposition to the Gregg Resolution.

25. Randolph's dissatisfaction with the administration's British policy.


27. Taylor's distaste of administration financial policies.

28. Randolph's determination to oppose the administration unless he was made sole government leader in Congress.

29. Randolph's having beaten Jefferson at a game of chess.
CHAPTER II

VIEWS OF NINETEENTH CENTURY HISTORIANS CONCERNING THE SPLIT IN THE DEMOCRATIC-REPUBLICAN PARTY DURING JEFFERSON'S ADMINISTRATION

How did nineteenth-century historians—closer to the "scene" and less sophisticated—view the break? An examination of their selected works yields findings similar to those of modern scholars regarding the split.

One of the very earliest historians whose book touches upon this question—and therefore of great interest—is George Tucker, \textit{(The Life of Thomas Jefferson, Third President of the United States, 1837)}. The author characterizes the Quids as a party consisting principally of members of the Virginia delegation, all of whom were personally intimate with John Randolph. Tucker suggests a number of possible explanations for the split in his biography of Jefferson. He emphasizes Spanish foreign affairs and the related secret message. In dealing with the secret message that was referred to the Committee of Ways and Means, Tucker states that Randolph "now first
exhibited as a member of the opposition." Tucker says that Randolph criticized Jefferson because the president had not asked for an appropriation and was taking no responsibility for such a course. In addition, the money constituted a bribe to France to bully Spain. Most important, Randolph felt such an unneutral course would result in trouble with Great Britain.

Tucker suggests that Randolph's personality was a significant factor in the split. Randolph's personality rendered him unsuited for leadership of a majority party in Congress. Tucker characterizes him as "overbearing and dictatorial with his associates" and "more an object of fear than affection." He states:

His talents and temper were indeed more fitted for attaining distinction as a censor, than as a supporter of measures. When, therefore, by the revolution of political power, he was thrown into the majority, and was called upon to defend the administration against the attacks of an able and vigorous opposition, he found himself in a wrong position, and out of his proper element.

Tucker supports his case by relating an anecdote which he feels proves that Randolph was out of his element as majority leader. He recalls that Randolph had once read to a friend, George Hay, and himself, a passage from a

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novel of Goodwin's. The passage described the triumphs of a leader of the opposition. Randolph's remarks led both of them to believe, Tucker states, that Randolph was longing for the "good ole' days" when he, too, had been a leader of the opposition.

In relating the incident of the refusal of Jefferson to appoint Randolph as minister to England, Tucker states that Christopher Clark applied to Jefferson for an appointment for Randolph, thinking such a position pleasing to Randolph, as he frequently spoke of voyaging to Europe. But neither Jefferson nor Madison felt Randolph could be trusted to obey his superiors, and the application was sought in vain. Randolph had no part in applying for the position, Tucker believes, and may have been unaware of the application. However, Randolph soon found out about the refusal and the action stung as deeply as if he had personally requested the position. Tucker continues: "He was soon afterwards found in the ranks of the opposition . . . and a large portion of the public had no hesitation in referring his change to his resentment . . ."

Touching upon the bearing of the successorship in causing the split in the party, Tucker states that "it was one of the effects of the schism in the republican party, if it were not indeed a moving cause" to push Monroe for

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5Ibid., pp. 207-208. 6Ibid., p. 208. 7Ibid., p. 228.
the presidency. According to Tucker, it was not until Madison and Monroe were reconciled by Mr. Jefferson that the Quids were broken as a party.

Jefferson's view of the split is given in a letter which he wrote to a friend, Colonel Nicholas, which Tucker quotes:

His course has excited considerable alarm . . . Mr. Randolph's popular eloquence gave him such advantages as to place him unrivaled as the leader of the House; and though not conciliatory to those whom he led, principles of duty and patriotism induced many of them to swallow the humiliations he subjected them to, and to vote as was right, as long as he kept the part of right himself. The sudden defection of such a man could not but produce a momentary astonishment, and even dismay; but, for a moment only. The good sense of the House rallied around its principles, and without any leader, pursued steadily the business of the session, did it well, and by a strength of vote which has never before been seen.

Jefferson concludes his observations by predicting that Randolph will join with the Federalists in the end.

In summary, Tucker states that there were three parties—Federalist, Quids, and Administration—in the House by the end of the Ninth Session on April 21, 1806. The Quids, according to Tucker, wished the United States to side with England, and "made the querulous and jealous temper exhibited by Spain the pretext for furthering their more important purpose." Further, Tucker feels that Randolph's personality and his love of opposition made it

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8 Ibid., 229. 9 Ibid., p. 225.
impossible for him to lead a majority in Congress. The quarrel over the successorship should not be overlooked, in Tucker's opinion. Finally, Jefferson's rejection of Randolph for a foreign mission merits consideration.

Lemuel Sawyer, *Biography of John Randolph, 1844*), discusses many of the same factors that Tucker dealt with—Randolph's love of opposition, the rejected foreign mission, the secret message. He omits reference to the quarrel over the successorship, while he introduces Gregg's Resolution as a factor in splitting the party. Sawyer is in agreement with Tucker on Randolph's taste for opposition. He comments that after the political revolution in which John Adams was overthrown and the Democratic-Republicans established in power "the work of destruction now commenced, and in that business Mr. Randolph was said to be more fitted and expert, than in the opposite one of building up." Concerning the rejection of Randolph for a foreign mission, Sawyer notes that a paper called "The Expositor" stated that an embassy had been sought for and refused.

Sawyer relates that Gregg's resolution for the non-importation of goods from Great Britain and Ireland was seized upon by Randolph as an excuse for bolting from his party. He further states that there had been no indication or warning of the rupture before Randolph delivered

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a speech against the resolution on March 5, 1806.11 Sawyer believes the secret message was the real reason for the split. The "secret" of the two million had not been entrusted to Randolph; rather, Barnabas Bidwell had been chosen to introduce the measure in the House and Randolph's vanity had suffered. "I am well assured," Sawyer asserts, "from those that ought to know, . . . that to this source alone may be ascribed the anger of Mr. Randolph against his late friends."12

Hugh A. Garland, in a biography very partial to Randolph, (The Life of John Randolph of Roanoke, 1850), contends that his influence was being destroyed through the jealousy of lesser men. As Garland presents the issue, one sees the strain of high morality and incorruptibility running throughout the entire history of the split in the Democratic-Republican party. He says: "Mr. Randolph was one that never could tolerate corruption in public men. He was unsparing in his denunciations of them. This was the cause of the growing discontent, and the desire to throw him off as a leader."13 Garland pinpoints the Yazoo fraud—"the culmination of the fight against corruption"14—as the affair which turned Congress

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14 Ibid., 67.
into a hostile group against Randolph. In narrating the events of the Yazoo affair, Garland relates that Randolph had been in Georgia at the time the state legislature had issued the grants; that he had been deeply stirred by the episode; and that he now opposed reimbursement of the speculators on moral grounds. Since some government officials, including the postmaster-general, were linked with the fraud, animosity toward Randolph developed.

Randolph is quoted as saying, "There is a most excellent alkali by which to test our principles. The Yazoo business is the beginning and the end, the alpha and omega of our alphabet. With that our differences began, and with that they will end; . . ." A second measure which Garland insists Randolph fought because of his high moral standards was the request for money in the secret message—an appropriation of two million to bribe France! Upon discovering this painful bit of information, Randolph departed from Madison, who was then Secretary of State, with the exclamation "Good morning, sir! I see I am not calculated for a politician." Garland continues:

For having ventured to suggest a plan of action different from that which seemed to be favored by the Executive, he was denounced by his old friends, his motives calumniated, and he was charged with a design of pulling down the present administration.  

15 Ibid., I, pp. 227-228.  
16 Ibid., I, p. 217.  
17 Ibid., I, p. 252.
Garland feels that Gregg's Resolution also was significant in estranging Randolph from his party. He states: "This was an important crisis. . . . This was the beginning of a series of measures that separated Mr. Randolph from his old political associations . . ."\(^{18}\)

In relating the struggle over the successorship, Garland informs us that Randolph could not support a man—Madison—whom he knew to have advocated an even stronger central government with even weaker state governments at the time of the framing of the Constitution. He lost confidence in Madison completely after his support of the appropriation to bribe France, Garland continues. Garland views the consistency of Randolph's political life as another factor in bringing about the split. He states: "Mr. Randolph never deviated from those principles he professed, while in a minority; his party, in many instances, had departed from them; he undertook the ungracious task of holding up to view their own dereliction."\(^{19}\)

If Randolph had become disillusioned with his party, fellow party members were also tiring of him. Garland relates that Randolph was the victim of an organized attack. When Congress adjourned in March of 1805 the postmaster-general, whom Randolph had attacked over the Yazoo affair, toured the New England states to organize an anti-Randolph party.

\(^{18}\)Ibid., I, p. 236.  \(^{19}\)Ibid., I, p. 253.
Again in April, 1806, during the final adjournment of the legislature, Randolph was attacked from the floor by three men: one of them intoxicated (Findley); another a relative of the president (Thomas Mann Randolph, son-in-law); the third, James Sloan, read a speech against Randolph. Garland suggests Randolph's personality contributed to his unpopularity. He states, for instance, that his acts on the Spanish issue did not offend men so much as his sarcastic manner.

Joseph Glover Baldwin, (Party Leaders, 1855), recognizes the same factors his predecessors felt important—the Yazoo affair, the secret message, the successorship, the foreign mission, the love of opposition, and Randolph's personality. However, his chief concern is with Randolph's personality and his political theory. He dismisses the rumor of Jefferson's refusal to give Randolph an appointment as minister to England as a cause of the split. Baldwin declares that the refusal may have increased the vehemence of his opposition, but that it did not induce the course he took. He feels sure Randolph acted from conviction. Baldwin repeats Garland's charge that a systematic attack had been made on Randolph at the close of the Ninth Session in 1806. Baldwin recognizes that disagreement over the successorship existed; but dismisses it as a factor in splitting the party, as the split had already occurred. Baldwin reveals that Randolph
early took a stand against the administration. His attack on the Yazoo Fraud earned him much hatred and the issue of Spanish foreign relations and the secret message alienated Randolph from the party. When the session was over, Randolph had preserved his independence, but lost his following.

Baldwin examines the role of Randolph's personality in effecting a break in the ranks of the Democratic-Republican party. He agrees that Randolph was regarded "more with fear than love." The masses, he states, believed that Randolph's talents were not those which could build up or sustain a party; that he could only tear down the work of others. Baldwin acknowledges that one can cite no measures Randolph fathered as monuments; one can only point to the heaps of rubbish he left. His was a negative, not a positive approach. Witness the measures he opposed because they conflicted with his principles: the Embargo and any restrictions on commerce; war with England, or any offensive war; banks; the tariff; internal improvements; the Missouri Compromise or any Missouri restrictions; all foreign alliances; the Panama Mission; the Proclamation and Force Bill. Jefferson's first term as president ended with Randolph still the leader of the House, but very much disliked. Baldwin

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thinks that Randolph was a poor party leader because he did not know how to handle men.

Baldwin characterizes Randolph as representing a phase of the constitutional period:

On several accounts John Randolph may be considered as among the representative men of our country—as belonging to and representing a phase of the period of the Constitution, and of that immediately succeeding; as a representative of the political-republican, and the social-aristocratical spirit; . . . as a Virginia Conservative, abounding in love for his native state, and an unreasoning devotion to her interests, . . . resisting all change and innovation in her organic law and ancient policy, and—cherishing sectional prejudices as virtues. 21

Baldwin contends that Randolph's chief virtue was consistency. He believed him the most consistent of all politicians ever, and he cites his record of opposition as evidence. Baldwin insists:

He was a State-Rights man, and, therefore, a Republican. He was, by conviction, prejudice, and impulse, a strict constructionist. He opposed the idea of a great central power, which was to govern Virginia. He was, therefore, opposed to the Constitution; but the Constitution having been established, he endeavored so to construe it, and so to have the government it made administered, as to prevent the existence of this power; at any rate, to avoid any accession of power to the national government. He believed . . . that the Federal Government, was meant to be, or ought to be, construed as a limited agency, for a few, general simple, external objects, and interstate purpose; and that any power beyond these was an usurpation upon the rights of the states . . . 22

Thus, we see that the factor of states rights looms large,

21Ibid., p. 138. 22Ibid., p. 169.
in Baldwin's opinion, in explaining the party split.

J. C. Hamilton, (History of the Republic of the United States, 1864), attributes the break exclusively to Jefferson's unwillingness to assume responsibility for the course he wished to pursue in obtaining Florida. 23

James Parton, (Famous Americans of Recent Times, 1867), contends that the break was a sudden event. He asserts that Mr. Randolph led the Republican party in the House of Representatives for six years and during that time supported every measure of the administration. Then, "In the spring of 1807, without apparent cause, he suddenly went into opposition, and from that time opposed the policy of the administration,—the whole of it." 24

Parton reviews the rumors of the day concerning the split—Jefferson rejecting Randolph for a proposed foreign mission; Randolph's jealousy of Madison, whom Jefferson was grooming for the presidency; Jefferson's revelation of a state secret to some members of the lower house and not to Randolph; and even the rumor that the breach was attributed to Randolph's beating the president at a game of chess.

Parton's own opinion is that Randolph's support of


24 James Parton, Famous Americans of Recent Times (Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1867), p. 199.
Jefferson's administration was unnatural from the beginning. Randolph was forced to side with France because of his party connections, when he could not help but be in sympathy with England. Parton says, "There was not in his whole composition one republican atom," but that he came early under the influence of Thomas Jefferson and was led to champion the people's cause for a time. It was Randolph's aristocratic nature that played a part in the split. Parton states: "Obviously, an antique of this pattern was out of place as a leader in the Republican party."

The author concludes that "The immediate occasion of the rupture was, probably, Mr. Jefferson's evident preference of James Madison as his successor. We have a right to infer this, from the extreme and lasting rancor which Randolph exhibited toward Mr. Madison, who he used to say was "as mean a man for a Virginian as John Quincy Adams was for a Yankee." He sums up the differing philosophies of Randolph and Jefferson as follows:

Jefferson was a States' Rights man, and a strict constructionist, because he was a republican; Randolph, because he was a Virginian. Jefferson thought the government should be small, that the people might be great; Randolph thought the government should be small, that Virginia might be great.

25 Ibid., p. 188. 26 Ibid., p. 201.
27 Ibid., p. 201. 28 Ibid., pp. 190-191.
Edmund Quincy, *Life of Josiah Quincy, 1867*, relates that the small faction of Quids had quarreled with Jefferson, not over principles, but over the spoils of victory. Quincy indicates that Randolph was appointed Chairman of the Committee of Ways and Means only with the cooperation of the Federalists. During the Eighth Session, Quincy states, "The Federalists, by agreement among themselves, abstained from making any party demonstrations of their own, and contented themselves with following the lead of Randolph."^29^  

Henry S. Randall, *The Life of Thomas Jefferson, 1871*, too, covers the foreign mission Jefferson withheld, the disagreement over the successorship, and the secret message. The foreign mission which both Jefferson and Madison considered Randolph unfitted for is brushed aside, however, as an "imputed proximate cause"^30^ for Randolph's defection from the administration. Randall notes that even though a later administration pursued a different course, the ultimate result was the same.\(^31\) The enthusiasm for Monroe for president was occasioned more to

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^31^ Randall here refers to Randolph's appointment as minister to Russia during the presidency of Monroe.
oppose Madison than because of any genuine feeling for Monroe. This issue is dismissed by Randall as a measure of the Quids and not a cause of their formation. Randall agrees that Randolph quarreled openly with the administration over the secret message, objecting to Jefferson's unwillingness to assume responsibility for the course he advocated secretly. However, Randall feels that Randolph had been uncomfortable in his position as majority party leader for some time. He feels that opposition was more to his taste than constructive party harmony. Randall charges that love of opposition was a disease with Randolph. As evidence, he offers a sampling of the political figures Randolph admired and later abandoned. Headed by Jefferson, the listing includes Madison, Monroe, Andrew Jackson and Henry Clay. He remained loyal to Macon and Henry Tazewell and some few others; but, had one of them been elected president, Randall theorizes that Randolph would probably have denounced him within six months of his inauguration.

Randall introduces the significance of the conflict between Jefferson's practical politics and Randolph's theoretical politics. Both men were in favor of simple, pure republican forms in government, Randall states; but they differed in political views because Randolph's democracy was largely theoretical. Randall intimates that Jefferson was forced to abandon his theoretical politics
because it was unworkable, whereas Randolph could afford the luxury of clinging to these theories because he was never forced to test them. 32

James Parton, (Life of Thomas Jefferson, 1874), states that Randolph went into opposition solely because Jefferson withheld the appointment for a foreign mission. He commends Jefferson for his refusal to appoint persons to office having no qualifications except conspicuous partisanship. 33

Henry Cabot Lodge, (Life and Letters of George Cabot, 1877), recognizes John Randolph as the ringleader of the revolting faction. Jefferson, he explains, was the party:

He had found it demoralized, disorganized, without aims and without principles. He had breathed into it the breath of life, he had given it objects and principles, and he had led it to victory; but he had gathered no leaders into his ranks . . . Such parliamentary ability as there was in his party, his crushing despotism drove into revolt; . . . Jefferson cut off the heads of all the tall poppies, and so devoid of leaders was the compact and devoted majority in Congress, that they could not repel the assaults of the handful of Federalists and of their former ally, John Randolph. 34

Richard Hildreth, (The History of the United States of America, 1880), in reporting the events of the Ninth

32 Ibid., p. 156


Congress, relates that Randolph was reappointed chairman of the Committee of Ways and Means on December 2, 1805, but that the majority of the northern Democrats refused any longer to acknowledge him as a leader. Matthew Lyon (previously from Vermont) of Kentucky, James Elliot of Vermont, William Findley of Pennsylvania, and Barnabas Bidwell of Massachusetts were among those of his own party who had become disgusted with Randolph when his acrid remarks began to be directed against northern Democratic-Republicans rather than Federalists. Nor was Randolph happy over the situation. Hildreth states:

Disappointed at Jefferson's backwardness in supporting his radical measures, and at the influence over the president evidently exercised by Granger and other Northern Democrats, Randolph was in a very sore and dissatisfied state, of which palpable indications very soon appeared.35

Hildreth believes that party harmony had been shaken by the impeachment of Chase and that the proposed Yazoo compromise was further weakening it. His refusal to cooperate on the Spanish message reflected Randolph's soured state of mind from the Yazoo and Chase episodes. After the appropriation had been fought over and Randolph had lost to Bidwell, open warfare existed between him and the administration.

John T. Morse, (Thomas Jefferson, 1891), looks

upon Randolph's break with the Democratic-Republican party as a sudden thing. He declares that the administration was surprised when Randolph, as chairman of the Ways and Means Committee, failed to bring in a favorable report on the secret message and recommended war with Spain. Morse is convinced of the sincerity of Randolph's disagreement with the administration. He states that Randolph's conduct

... was not the outgrowth of selfish disappointment, but of a genuine and honest dissatisfaction with the career of the administration. Randolph was really a purist in politics, as Jefferson had professed to be... A Republican triumph was to inaugurate a golden age of virtue. He had been slow to awake from his delusion and to acknowledge that his idol was adopting the ways of all politicians and that the business of government was conducted now much as it had been in the bad days of Federalism.36

James Schouler, (History of the United States of America, under the Constitution, 1894), presents a one-sentence summary of Randolph's failing with men: "He applied the vitriol when honey was needful."37 Schouler places Randolph's influence in the House at its zenith in the winter of 1804-1805. Then, during the Ninth Session, Randolph failed to support the administration on the


Spanish issue; and, with the introduction of Gregg's Resolution, was heaping abuse upon the administration. Schouler declares that this can only be accounted for as a case of wounded self-esteem. He argues:

Such a diatribe from one who for years had been accustomed to commend Republican principles, and who was instrumental in the practical legislation under which the Louisiana purchase was lately consummated, could not be ascribed to a well-matured conviction of the public interests. His own ideas concerning the policy towards Spain and Great Britain which the times demanded were too freakish for a principle of opposition, and we perceive rather a spiteful obstruction of the Executive wishes.

Schouler offers two possible explanations for Randolph's injured feelings. "Perhaps an Executive favor was refused," he suggests, alluding to the rejection of Randolph for the English mission. Or, "perhaps Executive communication was made with his committee over his head," referring to the selection of Bidwell to carry out the wishes of Jefferson regarding the Spanish secret message.

The division of opinion over the successorship shows the true scope of Randolph's defection, Schouler states. He cites a rumor current at the time as proof. Randolph had asked when Monroe would be back from Europe, saying he hoped it would be before the next presidential

\[38\text{Ibid., p. 112.} \quad 39\text{Ibid.; 107} \quad 40\text{Ibid.; 112.} \quad 41\text{Ibid.}\]
election. Jefferson responded that if the next president came from Virginia, he expected that Madison would be the choice of the people. Randolph retorted that he doubted this; further, he wanted no more milk-and-water presidents. 42

Henry Adams, one of our greatest historians, (History of the United States of America, 1889-1911), dismisses the proffered foreign mission as a symptom and not a cause of Randolph's quarrel with the administration.

With reference to the Spanish secret message, Adams states:

The 'two million' transaction was one of the least defensible acts of Mr. Jefferson's administration; but this does not affect the fact that Randolph was merely using it . . . in order to carry out an attempt at political assassination. His deepest passions were not roused by the 'two million job,' but by Madison's influence. From the first this domination had galled him; in the Yazoo contest it strove to defeat him on his own ground; . . . 43

Adams indicates that Randolph had quarreled with the branch of his family to which Jefferson was closely allied and his private feelings stood in the way of personal attachment.

Concerning genuine disagreement over principles, Adams states that Randolph had been steadily coming closer to a quarrel with his party leaders for years. Adams

42 Ibid. 112.
states that little sympathy existed between Randolph and Jefferson even before the Chase impeachment: "He was striving, as he believed, to drag them back to their purer principles of 1800; they were pleasantly drifting with the easy current of power. The rupture was a mere matter of time." Adams pinpoints the split as occurring in April of 1806, and credits Randolph with a following of twenty-seven Democratic-Republicans at that time.

Adams summarizes the party split in a number of questions. Among them:

1. Did or did not Randolph go with his party in disregarding its own principles down to the moment when he became jealous of Madison's influence?

2. Was the Yazoo compromise a measure so morally wrong as to justify the disruption of the party?

3. Had he reason to think Monroe a safer man than Madison?

4. Had he not reason to know that Mr. Jefferson himself, and Mr. Gallatin, were quite as responsible as Madison, for that strange amalgamation which he complained of?

5. In summary: Was Randolph capable of remaining true to any principle or any friendship that required him to control his violent temper and imperious will?

Thus, the listing of reasons for the break in the Democratic-Republican party grows even longer with the

\[ ^{44} \text{Ibid., p. 193.} \quad ^{45} \text{Ibid., p. 204.} \]
study of early works. The listing at the end of Chapter I can be expanded to include Jefferson's stifling of all potential leaders, an idea advanced by Lodge; and the gap between Jefferson's practice and Randolph's theory, a theory suggested by Randall.
CHAPTER III

OBSERVATIONS

The phrase "continuous rewriting of history" generally means that each generation reinterprets the past to suit contemporary ideas. But it also carries with it the implication of further research in order to correct previous errors. Sometimes performance falls far short of these ideals. It seems more likely, at times, that old lies are set in modern type, perhaps in an easier-to-read double column text, and parade in the more modern garb as truth. Outfitted in a modern format with its implication of revision and additional research, the old lie becomes even more firmly entrenched. Its repetition in a new book is frequently its passport to acceptance. With the 'if you see it in the Times, it must be so' spirit, the uncritical reader—very likely the student—accepts the fact because he has seen it in a book. Unfortunately, repetition of the same fact in a second book establishes its validity in the mind of the reader. The uncritical reader is likely to assume that repetition establishes validity.

The particular case of the causes of the split in
the ranks of the Democratic-Republican Party in the first decade of the nineteenth century vividly demonstrates this. No new research, apparently, has been done in this area in at least the last half century. Nineteenth century historians never did agree on which factors were most significant in effecting a break—or even which facts are to be credited. The purported refusal of Jefferson to offer Randolph a mission to England is a good example of this. Many of the earlier writers expressed doubt over the validity of the facts. Tucker, Sawyer and Baldwin all relate the episode with a great deal of uncertainty regarding its actual occurrence. Later authors seem to lose sight of this and, assuming the event occurred, argue only over whether the refusal was significant in bringing about a split.

The Spanish issue furnishes another example. Hildreth says the Spanish issue did not cause the break, that disagreement in this area reflected an already existing break, and Henry Adams concurs. Yet Hamilton lists the issue as the sole cause of the break, and Randall and Tucker emphasize this factor. In still another instance, men like Baldwin and Randall are convinced that disagreement over the successorship did not cause the break. Yet Schachner believes the antagonism of Randolph toward Madison, and Randolph's opposition to Madison for the presidency, figure prominently in interpreting the break.
Even when two authors agree on the incident causing the break, they find the incident significant for different reasons. Schachner, Garland, Baldwin, Hildreth, Schouler, and Adams all discuss the Spanish issue. Schachner believes that the Spanish issue was pounced upon by Randolph as an excuse to get at Madison. Garland looks upon the Spanish issue in terms of morality. He says Randolph could not approve of the appropriation because it was to be used to bribe France. Baldwin says Randolph objected not on moral or political grounds, but because he felt Jefferson was shirking responsibility. Hildreth sees Randolph's objections in the Spanish issue as a case of spite, resulting from the Chase and Yazoo episodes. Schouler believes Randolph's opposition stemmed from injured feelings; that Randolph objected merely because Jefferson had told Bidwell and not him of his intentions. Adams attributes Randolph's objections in the Spanish issue to the fact that Madison was involved in it.

Doubt, disagreement, and confusion surround the date of the split. Hildreth views the event as a gradual thing, with the union between Randolph and his party having been weakened by the Yazoo and Chase episodes and becoming final after Randolph had lost the Spanish issue. Parton says the split was entirely unforeseen and entirely without warning and without cause, occurring after Jefferson and Randolph had worked closely together for six years.
Garland feels the break began with the Yazoo fraud, and that by March, 1805, there was an organized attack against him. Parton dates the split as taking place in the spring of 1807. Sawyer is more precise: March 5, 1806.

It would seem that the most modern element in twentieth century works is the style. Whether the author wrote in the graceful and flowery style in vogue a century ago or the direct simple style of today, the content is remarkably similar. Twentieth century authors whose works were studied appeared to be less violent on the subject of Randolph than those writers closer in time to him. There was less obvious partisanship. Such detractors as the nineteenth century biographer, Sawyer, were not found among the twentieth century authors selected. Nor do we find anyone as partial to Randolph as Garland, whose work was published seventeen years after Randolph's death. Indicative of the general tone of the work is his conclusion:

That innumerable funeral bells were not tolled, and eulogies pronounced, and a monument was not erected to his memory in the capitol of his native State, is because Virginia has not yet learned to 'understand' and to appreciate her wisest statesman, truest patriot, and most devoted son.1

That is not to say that twentieth century authors are rigorously impartial; rather that they are more likely to

present the appearance of impartiality. For instance, Williams, Current, and Freidel, in their text, use the term fanatic to describe Randolph. Gewehr colors his account by stating that Jefferson and Madison were betraying the principles expressed in the Virginia-Kentucky Resolutions; not that Randolph felt they were betraying them, but that they were betraying them.

A number of earlier authors, including Sawyer, Schouler and Quincy, questioned the sincerity of Randolph's political opposition to Jefferson. Sawyer believes it was a matter of spite and Schouler labels it a case of wounded self-esteem. Morse, on the other hand, is convinced of the sincerity of Randolph's action.

There was unanimous agreement on Randolph's leadership of the dissenting faction. Earlier authors had mentioned other individuals, such as John Taylor, Nathaniel Macon, and Joseph Nicholson in connection with the split, but most of the later authors relate the break solely in terms of Randolph.

Indicative of the confusion surrounding the split and pointing up the need for further research are the findings of the three 1952 history texts used in the survey. Each of the three authors approaches the problem using a different emphasis. Baldwin finds Randolph's preoccupation with Virginia's ascendance of the greatest significance. Randolph's strict constructionist views stem from this, he
feels, and this too is what made the failure of the impeachment significant. Carman and Syrett relate the story of Randolph's break solely in terms of states'-rights. Hicks emphasizes the Yazoo Land Fraud. Clearly a need exists for basic research in this area. Interpretations of the split are contradictory and mutually exclusive. This study indicates that historians seem content to repeat without analysis the work of others.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


