

THE CORPORAL'S GUARD IN CONGRESS

1841 - 1843

---

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of History  
The College of William and Mary in Virginia

---

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Master of Arts

---

By

N. G. Barber

1970

APPROVAL SHEET

This thesis is submitted in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

N.G. Barkin  
Author

Approved, August 1970

M. Boyd Coyner, Jr.  
M. Boyd Coyner, Ph. D.

Stephen G. Kurtz  
Stephen G. Kurtz, Ph. D.

Ludwell H. Johnson  
Ludwell H. Johnson, Ph. D.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The writer wishes to express his appreciation to Professor M. Boyd Coyner, Jnr., under whose guidance this investigation was conducted, for his patient advice and criticism. The author is also indebted to Professor Stephen G. Kurtz and Professor Ludwell H. Johnson for their careful reading and criticism of the manuscript.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

|  | Page |
|--|------|
| ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS . . . . .                                 | iii  |
| ABSTRACT . . . . .   | v    |
| INTRODUCTION . . . . .                                     | 2    |
| CHAPTER I. THE GENESIS OF THE CORPORAL'S GUARD . . . . .   | 3    |
| CHAPTER II. THE CHALLENGE TO PARTY DISCIPLINE . . . . .    | 30   |
| CHAPTER III. THE RESPONSE TO THE 'TERTIUM QUIDS' . . . . . | 55   |
| CHAPTER IV. THE DISINTEGRATION OF THE GUARD . . . . .      | 80   |
| BIBLIOGRAPHY . . . . .                                     | 97   |

## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to explain the action of six representatives in the twenty-seventh congress in supporting the administration of John Tyler in opposition to the party hierarchy dominated by Henry Clay.

Each of these congressmen represented an area where the name of Henry Clay was a liability rather than an asset. Their revolt against the leadership sprang from these circumstances, and, specifically, from the legislative ineptitude of that leadership in the House. The 'revolt' of the Corporal's Guard owed little or nothing directly to the presence of John Tyler in the White House.

The break between Tyler and his party did not so much offer a leader to the Guard, as an opportunity to the party leadership to suppress an incipient revolt in the House. This was accomplished by identifying the rebels as the personal adherents of the President. As party discipline tightened, the Guard were forced to accept that role. Hampered by the administration, and conscious of declining support in their districts, the Guard was doomed to futility in the House. The irony of their predicament was that they had never sought to be the loyal supporters of the President.

THE CORPORAL'S GUARD IN CONGRESS, 1841 - 1843

## INTRODUCTION

This is an analysis of congressional politics. It is not a study of local political conditions, except insofar as they affect the behaviour of the individual members of the Guard in the House of Representatives.

Neither does this attempt to offer a complete interpretation of the political career of any or all of the subjects of this study. Although the first chapter contains a resume of their careers before the Harrison and Tyler administrations, it does not pretend to be more than a resume, undertaken to explain their conduct in the twenty-seventh congress.

There is by now a considerable literature on the subject of John Tyler as President, even enough to make something of a historiographical debate. The subject of the responsibility for Tyler's quarrel with his party is not here at issue. This thesis attempts to explain the development of the Corporal's Guard in the House, and examines the relationship of the Guard with the Whig party and the President. Particular attention is paid to the interaction between those relationships and events outside Congress. What is at issue here is the nature and purpose of the Corporal's Guard.

## CHAPTER I

### THE GENESIS OF THE CORPORAL'S GUARD

The Whig party of the early eighteen-forties was described by an English traveller as "this extraordinary coalition." Among the elements of this coalition he noted the presence of "Virginia theorists nicknamed 'abstractionists', like John Tyler."<sup>1</sup> He might have commented on the contrast between the views of Tyler and those of Henry Clay, the most popular leader of the party in Congress and an advocate of vigorous centralized government. But the contradictory nature of the party could easily be explained in terms of its comparatively recent origins.

The party was essentially paradoxical, containing an uneasy alliance of the opponents of Andrew Jackson. Some Whigs were National Republican in origin, former supporters of John Quincy Adams in the election of 1828. This wing of the party had grown during Jackson's prolonged quarrel with the Bank of the United States. At the opposite end of the political spectrum, a number of conservative Southerners, strict constructionists of the Constitution, had left the Jacksonian party during the Nullification crisis, offended by Jackson's signature of the Force bill, or his high-handed removal of the federal deposits from the Bank of the United States. Others of

---

<sup>1</sup>Thomas Colley Grattan, Civilized America (2 vols., London, 1859), I, 308.

this persuasion had drifted to the Whigs as Martin Van Buren established himself as Jackson's successor.

The succession of John Tyler to the presidency in 1841 was to emphasize the weakness of this coalition, for from this Southern wing of the party came the most determined members of the Corporal's Guard, which provided Tyler's only Whig support in Congress. As the membership of the Guard increased during the first session of the twenty-seventh congress, it came to include two other segments of the party; Anti-Masonry and the personal New England following of Daniel Webster. The internal contradictions of this group are immediately apparent. The Virginia Whigs, represented by Henry A. Wise, Francis Mallory, and Thomas Walker Gilmer, had little in common with Caleb Cushing of Massachusetts, a loyal follower of Daniel Webster. This would be equally true in the case of William W. Irwin, a Pennsylvania Anti-Mason, and George H. Proffit of Indiana.

It is frequently asserted that the common factor uniting these congressmen was loyalty to President Tyler.<sup>2</sup> But the inadequacy of such an explanation is suggested by the fact that the leading members of the Guard were in revolt against the congressional leadership of the party before there was any question of President Tyler vetoing any Whig legislation. The attitude of each member of the Guard towards

---

<sup>2</sup>For an example see O.P. Chitwood, John Tyler, Champion of the Old South (New York, 1939), 235. Several nineteenth century historians saw in the Corporal's Guard the single-minded pursuit of presidential patronage: see Hermann E. Von Holst, The Constitutional and Political History of the United States (7 vols., New York, 1876-1892), VI, 453; Carl Schurz, The Life of Henry Clay (2 vols., Boston, 1887), II, 127. In general, historians tend to judge the aspirations of the Guard as they judge those of John Tyler: the major writing on both sides of this debate is summarized by O.P. Chitwood, op. cit., xiiin.

his party must be explained in terms of his previous career in politics. The part played by these individuals in local and state politics is particularly significant. To some extent their behaviour must have reflected the interests of their constituents. But the most important factors in determining the attitudes of these members were the presidential and congressional elections of 1840 and 1841, which brought the Whig party into power in Washington for the first time. The distinctive local characteristics of these elections were decisive.

The most outstanding of these individuals was Henry A. Wise, who claimed in his reminiscences to have had "the honour to be captain of that distinguished guard."<sup>3</sup> Wise represented the district of Accomac on the Eastern Shore of Virginia. Few seats in the House were as safe as that of Henry Wise. His family had resided in the area since 1635, and immigration since the seventeenth century had largely passed by the area.<sup>4</sup> The loyalty of his constituents was a personal loyalty that owed something to tradition and something to his own remarkable ability as an orator.<sup>5</sup>

Wise was well aware of the need to preserve that loyalty. "No congressional district", he claimed, "was ever more thoroughly canvassed by its representative or better known by him than my district was by me."<sup>6</sup> William B. Taliaferro in later years told

<sup>3</sup>Henry A. Wise, Seven Decades of the Union (Philadelphia, 1872), 192.

<sup>4</sup>John S. Wise, The End of an Era (Boston, 1902), 1-3.

<sup>5</sup>His son later claimed that the diplomatic corps considered Wise the finest speaker in the House at this time. Letter of O. Jennings Wise to Annie Wise, November 16, 1852, in William Adkins, ed., The O. Jennings Wise Letters, 1848-1861, (Bloomington, 1944), 57.

<sup>6</sup>Quoted in Barton H. Wise, The Life of Henry A. Wise of Virginia, 1806-1876 (New York, 1899), 103.

Barton Wise of a local political meeting in Accomac during this period which supporters of Henry Clay attempted to disrupt. By the end of Henry Wise's speech the hecklers were cheering for him.<sup>7</sup> While the story may exaggerate somewhat, it clearly indicates the strength of Wise's position.

Such a solid political base was necessary to support the spectacular changes of allegiance that marked the career of Henry Wise. As a delegate to the National Democratic Convention in Baltimore in 1832, Wise had cast an enthusiastic vote for Jackson, but against his vice-presidential choice, a Northerner, Martin Van Buren.<sup>8</sup> His loyalty to the Democratic party was a personal admiration for Andrew Jackson. This admiration vanished with Jackson's removal of the deposits from the Bank of the United States, and early in 1834 he became one of the most effective members of the opposition while still a freshman congressman. He regarded Jackson's action as a dangerous extension of presidential power, but it is important to note that the constitutionality of various bank schemes did not become the obsessive interest of his political life.<sup>9</sup>

In Van Buren's administration it became a commonplace to refer to Wise as the leader of the opposition.<sup>10</sup> From his retirement, Andrew Jackson wrote to Van Buren of "that notorious scamp, Wise."<sup>11</sup> As the

<sup>7</sup>Quoted in Barton H. Wise, The Life of Henry A. Wise of Virginia, 1806-1876, (New York, 1899), 104.

<sup>8</sup>James P. Hambleton, A Biographical Sketch of Henry A. Wise, (Richmond, 1856), xv.

<sup>9</sup>Edwin P. Adkins, Henry A. Wise in Sectional Politics, 1833-1860, (unpublished dissertation, The Ohio State University, 1948), 18-25.

<sup>10</sup>Adkins, op. cit., 45n.

<sup>11</sup>Letter of Andrew Jackson to Martin Van Buren, March 4, 1839, in John Spencer Bassett, ed., Correspondence of Andrew Jackson (6 vols., Washington, 1933), VI, 5.

presidential election of 1840 approached, Wise had every reason to feel satisfied. He had risen to become the outstanding speaker of the Whig party in the House: his attacks on the subtreasury and on Van Buren personally were widely appreciated. Indeed, he "would choose any decent white man in the nation to be president in preference to Martin Van Buren."<sup>12</sup>

Virginia was represented on the Whig ticket in 1840 by the vice-presidential nomination of John Tyler, a former senator from Virginia with whom Wise does not seem to have been well-acquainted at the time.<sup>13</sup> But after the election Tyler wrote a cordial letter to Wise, commiserating on the loss of Virginia, but congratulating him on the heavy Whig vote in "Wise's district, as par excellence it has been called."<sup>14</sup> In a later letter, Tyler referred to Wise as the "Leader of the House of Commons."<sup>15</sup> As Wise travelled triumphantly back to the final session of the twenty-sixth congress in the winter of 1840, the prospects for his career under the incoming Whig administration in the following year must have seemed particularly bright. He would of course manage the party in the House, and perhaps John Tyler, a useful friend to cultivate, would fulfill a similar role in the Senate.

---

<sup>12</sup>Quoted in Arthur C. Cole, The Whig Party in the South (New York, 1914), 55.

<sup>13</sup>Lyon Gardiner Tyler, Letters and Times of the Tylers (3 vols., Richmond, 1884-1896), II, 596.

<sup>14</sup>Letter of John Tyler to Henry Wise, November 25, 1840, ibid., III, 84.

<sup>15</sup>Letter of John Tyler to Henry Wise, December 20, 1840, ibid., III, 85.

There was at least one Virginia Whig whose support in the House was assured. Francis Mallory, a doctor and gentleman farmer, had represented Norfolk since 1837.<sup>16</sup> His credentials as a Whig were better than those of Wise. As an influential local leader of the anti-Jackson forces in Norfolk in 1831, he had supported Henry Clay for the presidency in 1832.<sup>17</sup> Norfolk was a strong Whig seat: no Democrat had been elected since 1830, and not until 1852 did Norfolk vote for a Democratic presidential candidate.<sup>18</sup> During the first session of the twenty-sixth congress, Mallory had been attending to his personal affairs and the district had been represented by another local Whig, Holleman. When he resigned, a special election was held on December 29, 1840, and Mallory was elected "without any formal opposition."<sup>19</sup>

Mallory must have been well aware of the value of an alliance with Henry Wise, now chairman of the House Naval Affairs Committee, which had indeed been his first committee appointment in 1833.<sup>20</sup> Wise, who "manifested a commendable interest in the commercial prosperity of the sea-port of his native state", was considered a very effective campaigner in Norfolk.<sup>21</sup> The citizens were puzzled by the commercial stagnation of the town when they compared it to northern cities.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>16</sup>Lyon Gardiner Tyler, The Encyclopedia of Virginia Biography (5 vols., New York, 1915), II, 118.

<sup>17</sup>Henry H. Simms, The Rise of the Whigs in Virginia, 1828-1840, (Richmond, 1929), 41.

<sup>18</sup>William S. Forrest, Historical and Descriptive Sketches of Norfolk and Vicinity (Philadelphia, 1853), 394.

<sup>19</sup>Richmond Whig, January 1, 1841.

<sup>20</sup>Barton H. Wise, op. cit., 63.

<sup>21</sup>William S. Forrest, op. cit., 391.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., 404.

Perhaps the naval construction programs advocated by Wise would have been appreciated. Mallory followed Wise to Washington in the new year in the same spirit of optimism.

But at some stage in the first two months of 1841 Mallory and Wise started the quarrel with their party which was to last until Mallory resigned from Congress and Wise became a Democrat. The origins of this disagreement are obscure: Wise himself was later to claim that it arose the moment he met Henry Clay on his return to Washington. As Wise told the story, and as his admirers and biographers repeated it, Clay met Wise in December, 1840. "Well sir," sneered Clay, "is it not to be lamented that old Virginia has gone for Mr. Van Buren, for we will not now be embarrassed by her peculiar opinions!"<sup>23</sup> The earliest occasion on which this anecdote was related by Wise to his electors in Accomac was in September of 1841. In address in 1843, he added that Clay had assured him prior to the election that they were in agreement on all major issues. Wise asked whether he had not "every reason to suppose that Mr. Clay as a gentleman would literally fulfill those pledges."<sup>24</sup> Such an argument could only appeal to the more naive voters of Accomac, but it contained an element of truth. For the initial breach between these Virginia Whigs and their party must have followed the realization that the party program would consist of Henry Clay's 'American system'. Of course the enactment of this program, involving the creation of a national bank and the passage of a protective tariff,

---

<sup>23</sup>Lyon Gardiner Tyler, Letters and Times of the Tylers, I, 600. See also James P. Hambleton, op. cit., xxxiii.

<sup>24</sup>"Mr. Wise's speech in 1843", in The William and Mary College Quarterly Historical Magazine, vol. XVIII, no. 4 (April, 1910), 224. The precise nature of these pledges was not specified.

would not have cost either Wise or Mallory their seats. Wise had never opposed the constitutionality of a national bank, and a fairly high tariff was necessary in view of the government deficit. The real cause of Wise's dissatisfaction was that he was faced with a *fait accompli*. He was not, after all, to have the decisive voice in the inner councils of the party. He had been an effective campaigner when the party was in opposition, but it remained true, whether or not Clay pointed it out, that he had not been able to carry Virginia for Harrison.

The realization of his own unimportance may have been a gradual process. It was believed by the press that Wise would be an important figure in the new administration. Perhaps his brilliance in opposition was remembered: certainly his marriage to the daughter of an important Pennsylvania Whig, John Sergeant, had been noted.<sup>25</sup> And one of Andrew Jackson's more perceptive correspondents in Washington was doubting whether "the younger men" would let Henry Clay "seize the rudder."<sup>26</sup>

By early February Wise had realized that Clay was indeed setting the course of the new administration. The Washington correspondent of the Richmond Enquirer described with relish "a high scene in the House of Representatives with some of the sons of the old dominion," in which Wise announced his opposition to any legislation that would so empty the treasury as to ensure a high tariff. Mallory loyally supported Wise in his implicit opposition to one of Clay's most important programs, the distribution of the proceeds of the public lands.<sup>27</sup>

---

<sup>25</sup>Public Advertiser, Feb. 3, 1841, quoted in George R. Poage, Henry Clay and the Dissolution of the Whig Party in 1841, (unpublished dissertation, University of Chicago, 1923), 17.

<sup>26</sup>Justice John Catron to Andrew Jackson, January 3, 1841, in John Spencer Bassett, op. cit., 89.

<sup>27</sup>Richmond Enquirer, February 9, 1841.

Wise had already indicated his opposition to this measure. A few days earlier the Democratic press had printed a letter from Wise to his constituents, explaining his attitude. "Mr. Wise," commented the Enquirer, "means to attach himself to the Republican members of the Whig party . . . and means to separate himself from the Federal Webster portion of that party."<sup>28</sup>

The Whig thanked "the old gentleman . . . for his admission that there are any Republicans in the Whig party," and devoted its editorials in the weeks that followed to a succession of denials that there was any division in the party in Virginia.<sup>29</sup> Yet the Whig itself reprinted an article from the Boston Globe describing a speech made by Mallory shortly after his arrival in Washington, in which he claimed to have been deceived about the views of General Harrison, and publicly attacked his Whig colleagues from the North.<sup>30</sup>

Curiously, it was the defection of Mallory, not Wise, that aroused the greatest alarm in the party press. He was asked to "define his position," and before the end of the month an editorial asked "if he has already 'hacked out of the traces' before the commencement of the administration."<sup>31</sup> That his constituents felt that they could answer that question was obvious when the Democratic convention met to nominate a candidate for the spring elections. The convention adjourned without

---

<sup>28</sup>Henry Wise to his constituents, dated February 2, 1841, published in the Richmond Enquirer, February 6, 1841.

<sup>29</sup>Richmond Whig, February 26, 1841.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., March 2, 1841.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., February 23, 1841.

making any choice, having noted that "the Whigs begin to murmur at the position and course of Dr. Mallory."<sup>32</sup> "Our brethren of the Norfolk district," said the Enquirer, "have determined to start no opposition to the present representative - having full confidence in his constitutional states rights principles."<sup>33</sup>

But the fact that Wise was "playing some queer freaks in the House" did not escape attention. His open hostility towards his party was attributed to Harrison's conspicuous omission of Wise's father-in-law, Sergeant of Pennsylvania, from his new cabinet list.<sup>34</sup> Wise was of course mindful of the congressional elections that were approaching, and he did not forget the necessity of showing an ostentatious concern for his constituents' interests.<sup>35</sup> But the proposed cabinet appointments were an obvious indication of General Harrison's future policies.

One other Virginian politician, the Vice-president-elect, found the cabinet list significant. John Tyler, writing to accept the invitation of his close friend, Thomas Walker Gilmer, to stay in Richmond, added in reference to the cabinet appointments that "your estimate of the great importance of the first step is in every way right." Tyler had no hesitation "in saying that if his [Harrison's]  
cabinet be cast of the proper materials, that from that moment the

<sup>32</sup>Richmond Enquirer, February 27, 1841.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., March 30, 1841.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., March 2, 1841.

<sup>35</sup>Wise published the results of his enquiries into the suspension of payments for federal construction projects in his district in the Richmond Whig, March 16, 1841.

voice of faction will be entirely silenced." At this stage the opinions of John Tyler on cabinet appointments were of little interest to his party, but it is of interest to note that Tyler advised Gilmer in the same letter that "the question of the succession is one to be shunned."<sup>36</sup> Some of Tyler's political friends had apparently already considered the possibility of a states rights Whig as president in 1844. In fact at least one had the foresight to predict his accession before that date.<sup>37</sup>

But the death of President Harrison on April 4 raised Tyler to the presidency before the congressional elections had occurred. It was thought by the New York Evening Signal that this "must make a great revolution in the state of affairs in Washington. It checks at once the ascendancy of the Webster dynasty."<sup>38</sup> This was a great relief to Thomas Walker Gilmer who had for some months been considering the possibility of running for congress in the Albemarle district of Virginia.

Gilmer, who considered Webster a "Federalist of the worst dye," had estimated that no more than a hundred voters in Albemarle would approve of Webster's appointment to the State Department. "It knocks us into a cocked hat in Virginia," he complained in January, and decided that only as a "dernier resort" would he run in Albemarle.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>36</sup>John Tyler to Thomas Walker Gilmer, January 7, 1841, Tyler MSS (Library of Congress).

<sup>37</sup>L. G. Tyler, Letters and Times of the Tylers, II, 9.

<sup>38</sup>Reprinted in the Richmond Enquirer, April 9, 1841.

<sup>39</sup>Letter of Thomas Walker Gilmer to Franklin Minor, January 15, 1841, Tyler MSS (College of William and Mary), printed in part in L. G. Tyler, Letters and Times of the Tylers, III, 89.

It was as a "dernier resort," however, and not as a result of the accession of John Tyler that Gilmer chose to run. His decision to enter national politics grew out of his frustration in state politics. As a leader of the 'strict constructionist' wing of the Jacksonian party in Virginia, he had, like Wise, opposed the vice-presidential nomination of Van Buren, and attempted in 1832 to nominate P. P. Barbour in his place.<sup>40</sup> His disenchantment with the party originated in part in his failure to influence it on this occasion.

The breach between Gilmer and the national leadership of the party became apparent during the Nullification crisis of 1833 when Gilmer attacked the Force Bill as an unconstitutional affront to the principle of States Rights, from the floor of the Virginia House of Delegates.<sup>41</sup> Although equally critical of Jackson's removal of the federal deposits from the Bank of the United States, Gilmer was hardly a supporter of that institution, whose charter he considered unconstitutional.<sup>42</sup> Not until after the 1836 elections did Gilmer and his Virginia supporters become generally identified with the Whig party at the national level.<sup>43</sup>

By then his support had grown in Virginia, and his career had improved. After two terms as Speaker of the House of Delegates, he was elected Governor in a narrow victory over James McDowell in 1840.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>40</sup>Charles Ambler, Sectionalism in Virginia from 1776 to 1861 (Chicago, 1910), 206; Henry H. Simms, op. cit., 45-46.

<sup>41</sup>R. A. Brock, Virginia and Virginians (2 vols., Richmond, 1888), II, 188.

<sup>42</sup>Simms, op. cit., 79.

<sup>43</sup>Ray Gunderson, The Log Cabin Campaign of 1840 (Lexington, 1957), 38; Brock, op. cit., II, 190.

<sup>44</sup>Simms, op. cit., 85.

He claimed to be a reluctant candidate for that office in which he saw himself exposed to the attacks of "uncharitable political hacks."<sup>45</sup> If his reluctance was genuine, it was probably because he was already considering an entrance into national politics. The situation seemed particularly favourable after the Whig presidential victory.

Gilmer could sincerely claim to have been an early supporter of General Harrison.<sup>46</sup> His opposition to Clay's nomination was hardly surprising, and he had pointedly and repeatedly refused to attend any testimonial dinners in honour of Henry Clay.<sup>47</sup> Although he had claimed to have abandoned partisan politics in his "new vocation" as governor, he was clearly considering two alternative paths to Washington early in 1841.<sup>48</sup> One of these was the Albemarle district: the other was the vacant Senate seat.

The Senatorial election in the legislature resulted in an easy victory for William Archer, described by his nominator as a "states right Whig - anti-bank, anti-tariff, anti-internal improvements, anti-distribution at this time, etc."<sup>49</sup> Gilmer saved his dignity by informing the leader of the Whig majority in the legislature that he would not "accept the distinction at the hands of a reluctant

<sup>45</sup> Thomas Walker Gilmer to Franklin Minor, February 12, 1840, Tyler MSS (College of William and Mary).

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Thomas Walker Gilmer to "Gentlemen", February 19, 1840, July 23, 1840, August 7, 1840, Tyler MSS (College of William and Mary).

<sup>48</sup> Thomas Walker Gilmer to R. M. T. Hunter, March 11, 1840, in Charles Ambler, ed., Correspondence of R. M. T. Hunter, 1826-1876, in the Annual Report of the American Historical Association for 1916, (2 vols., Washington, 1918), II, 33-4.

<sup>49</sup> Richmond Enquirer, March 4, 1841.

legislature."<sup>50</sup> But, privately, he found it very mortifying . . . "that my countrymen should take such a determined course of hostility to me."<sup>51</sup> Gilmer carefully drafted a letter which was to appear over the signature of a sympathetic friend in the Charlottesville Advocate, attacking those members of the legislature who did not "carry out the wishes of their constituents who preferred Mr. Gilmer for the Senate."<sup>52</sup>

The final blow to Gilmer's career in state politics was connected with his dispute with Governor Seward of New York, who had refused to return suspected 'slave-stealers' to trial in Virginia. Gilmer in reply refused to surrender a forger indicted in New York. The legislature "came to the conclusion that the Governor acted wrong, and so expressed it in a resolution adopted with singular unanimity."<sup>53</sup>

Gilmer then resigned "to the astonishment of everybody" at a time when fifty Whig members of the legislature were absent, thus giving the Democrats a chance to elect their candidate.<sup>54</sup> The Whigs were able to avert disaster, but it is easy to imagine their feelings for Gilmer. Quite possibly, in view of his relations with the Whig majority in the legislature, Gilmer had timed his resignation with some care.

There was no more than a month remaining before the elections for congress. But Gilmer might feel optimistic in view of his own close ties with Albemarle county. His family had lived in Charlottesville

<sup>50</sup>Thomas Walker Gilmer to J. F. Strother, March 3, 1841, Tyler MSS (College of William and Mary).

<sup>51</sup>Thomas Walker Gilmer to Franklin Minor, March 4, 1841, ibid.

<sup>52</sup>Draft of letter, March 22, 1841, ibid.

<sup>53</sup>Niles Weekly Register, LX, March 27, 1841, 55; Washington Globe, March 24, 1841.

<sup>54</sup>Richmond Whig, March 23, 1841.

since the Revolution, he had edited the only newspaper in the county during the twenties, and had represented the county in the legislature for four terms.<sup>55</sup>

On the other hand, Gilmer was running against James Garland, the incumbent Jacksonian, also a native of the county, who had represented the district in the last three congresses.<sup>56</sup> The district had been strongly Democratic since 1828, when John Quincy Adams had received no more than one fifth of the vote.<sup>57</sup> More important was the fact that the area was traditionally loyal to one of Gilmer's enemies, William C. Rives, who had carried the district in his pocket since his landslide election to the legislature in 1822.<sup>58</sup>

The feud between these two politicians, now both Whigs, dated back to Rives' vote for the Force Bill during the South Carolina nullification crisis. Gilmer, who strongly opposed the bill, felt shocked that his former mentor, whom he had helped elect to the Senate, could so abandon the principles of states rights. As a result, they did not speak to each other for five years.<sup>59</sup>

Rives had also supported Jackson's 'pet bank' scheme, a policy which gave his vengeful colleagues in Virginia a chance to instruct

<sup>55</sup>Edgar Woods, Albemarle County in Virginia (Charlottesville, 1901), 206-7, 99-100.

<sup>56</sup>A Biographical Directory of the American Congress, (Washington, 1965), 930.

<sup>57</sup>Newton Bond Jones, Charlottesville and Albemarle County, Virginia, 1819-1860, (unpublished dissertation, University of Virginia, 1950), 118.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid., 117.

<sup>59</sup>Raymond C. Dingleline, The Political Career of William Cabell Rives, (unpublished dissertation, University of Virginia, 1950), 201, 337.

him out of his Senate seat.<sup>60</sup> On his return to the Senate he attacked Martin Van Buren's sub-treasury scheme, and advocated a continuance of the state bank system. On these grounds Rives and his ally, Governor David Campbell, led a revolt of fourteen members of the Virginia legislature from the Democratic party.<sup>61</sup>

Henry Clay was anxious to acquire the support of these 'conservatives,' and apparently intervened in the Virginia senate election of 1840 to persuade the Whigs to abandon their official candidate, John Tyler, in favour of Rives. According to the legend, a bargain was concluded, involving the vice-presidential nomination for Tyler.<sup>62</sup> Those Whigs who were not prepared to vote for Rives were labelled 'Impracticables.' Gilmer's own attitude towards Rives in this election cannot be established with certainty: there is some evidence that he was supporting Rives.<sup>63</sup>

It can at least be established that the division between the 'Impracticables' and Rives was already narrowing by April. Tyler wrote a cordial letter to Rives shortly after his accession, in which he assured Rives that he would always act on the principles of the 'Virginia School.'<sup>64</sup> Although Wise was still considered an

<sup>60</sup>L. G. Tyler, Letters and Times of the Tylers, I, 485.

<sup>61</sup>Howard Braverman, 'The Economic and Political Background of the Conservative Revolt in Virginia', in the Virginia Magazine of History and Biography, LX, no. 2, (April, 1952), 283.

<sup>62</sup>See Benjamin Perley Poore, Perley's Reminiscences of Sixty Years in the National Metropolis (2 vols., Philadelphia, 1886), II, 273, and Henry A. Wise, op. cit., 158, for the legend: questioned by O. P. Chitwood, op. cit., 162n.

<sup>63</sup>Raymond C. Dingleline, op. cit., 357, 377. Lyon Gardiner Tyler, op. cit., I, 591, states that Gilmer remained hostile to Rives.

<sup>64</sup>John Tyler to William Rives, April 9, 1841, Tyler MSS (Library of Congress).

'Impracticable,' there is no reason to believe that the hostility between Rives and Gilmer was still so great as to endanger the Albemarle election.<sup>65</sup>

Gilmer nevertheless viewed the approaching election with some alarm. His platform was published in the Whig on April 14, too late, he feared, to circulate through the district in time. The platform opposed a national bank, but otherwise was studiously vague, appealing most notably for Democratic support. His friends advised him that he would do better to avoid discussing the "questions of the day." As it happened, family illness prevented any campaigning at all. Gilmer, who privately regarded Democratic votes as essential, was particularly irritated by the offer of his opponent to withdraw his nomination provided that Gilmer did the same.<sup>66</sup>

As it happened, neither Gilmer nor any other member of the Guard had any reason to fear the outcome of the election. Gilmer had a majority of 274 votes in a poll of only 753. Mallory was elected with no formal opposition, although it seems that the behaviour of the Democrats made little difference in Norfolk itself, where the Whig candidate for the House of Delegates gained a sweeping victory. Wise was also elected without opposition.<sup>67</sup> His opponent had only consented to run while under the impression that Wise had retired. When he discovered that this was not the case, he withdrew.<sup>68</sup> Compared with

<sup>65</sup>Washington Globe, April 29, 1841, listed Wise as 'Impracticable'.

<sup>66</sup>Thomas Walker Gilmer to G. Stillman, April 13, 1841, in Tyler's Quarterly Historical and Genealogical Magazine, VII, no. 2, (October, 1925), 105-106.

<sup>67</sup>Richmond Enquirer, April 27, 1841.

<sup>68</sup>Ibid., April 23, 1841.

such Clay Whigs as Alexander Stuart who had a majority of ten votes, the Corporal's Guard seemed to hold some of the safest Whig seats in Virginia.<sup>69</sup>

But it was a very satisfactory election for the Whigs in Virginia: they had made a net gain of two seats in the House.<sup>70</sup> John Tyler wrote to ask Wise to congratulate John Minor Botts, later to be a bitter political enemy, on his success in the important Richmond district.<sup>71</sup> But was it a personal victory for the new administration of John Tyler, or a victory for the legislative program of the national Whig party? The Enquirer was careful to list Mallory and Gilmer as "States Rights Anti-Bank Republicans," with the members of the Democratic party. This was, of course, only a subterfuge to disguise the defeat that its party had suffered. Wise, who could hardly be listed among the Democrats, was described under a separate heading as "Anti-Distribution, Anti-Tariff, and for a National Bank only upon certain conditions."<sup>72</sup>

Even the Whig had its doubts about the meaning of the election. It was not, for example, prepared to claim that the late election had been a mandate for a national bank.<sup>73</sup> The doubts of the Whig press centered on Mallory, Wise, and Gilmer, whose party orthodoxy had to be defended frequently.<sup>74</sup> It remained a fact that those three members of the

<sup>69</sup>Richmond Enquirer, April 27, 1841.

<sup>70</sup>Richmond Whig, May 11, 1841.

<sup>71</sup>John Tyler to Henry A. Wise, April 28, 1840, Tyler MSS (Library of Congress).

<sup>72</sup>Richmond Enquirer, April 27, 1841.

<sup>73</sup>Richmond Whig, May 11, 1841.

<sup>74</sup>Lynchburg Virginian, reprinted in the Richmond Whig, May 7, 1841.

Corporal's Guard, however secure their electoral bases might seem to be, had imposed rigid limitations on their adherence to the Whig party. The alternatives that would face them in Washington were limited to two: either they could abandon their party and thus maintain their seats, or they could support their party and run the risk of losing their seats in 1843. The fact that it was impossible to estimate how many voters would be alienated by a display of orthodox Whiggery in congress made the dilemma no less acute.

Henry Wise cannot have imagined that the situation of the Whigs in Virginia was unique. But he could surely not have expected to find an ally from such a state as Indiana, and least of all in the person of George H. Proffit. Wise would naturally expect to find allies among the states rights Whigs of the South. As it happened, George Proffit was closer to a Southern Whig than the other later members of the Corporal's Guard.

For Proffit had been born in Louisiana, and had moved to Indiana as a young man.<sup>75</sup> He remained "a true Southerner . . . [who] cares more for his hunting, fishing and horse racing than for his business."<sup>76</sup> His greatest interest in Indiana was in fact the removal of the remaining Indian tribes. During the early thirties he had been an Indian agent for the state government, and in 1837 he had escorted the first emigrating tribe of Pottawattomie Indians out of the state to the area assigned to them in Nebraska territory.<sup>77</sup> He settled in Dubois

---

<sup>75</sup>A Biographical Directory of the American Congress, 1484.

<sup>76</sup>Kate Milner Rabb, ed., A Tour through Indiana in 1840: the Diary of John Parsons of Petersburg (New York, 1920), 348.

<sup>77</sup>Introduction to 'Journal of an Emigrating Party of Pottawattomie Indians in 1838', in Indiana Magazine of History, XXII, no. 3, (September, 1925), 315.

county, became the most prosperous merchant in Portersville, and served five terms in the legislature.<sup>78</sup>

In the legislature Proffit acquired a reputation both as a speaker in favour of vigorous internal improvements programs, and as a loyal Whig. He seems to have been particularly strongly opposed to the leading chartered bank of the state, a Democratic creation. This placed him high in the favour of local Whigs.<sup>79</sup> In 1839 Proffit was rewarded for his loyalty in the legislature and given the Whig nomination for the first congressional district. He was running against a popular incumbent Democrat, Robert Dale Owen, and his victory was very narrow.<sup>80</sup> It was also a victory against a Democratic trend which produced a Democratic majority in the state legislature.<sup>81</sup> Only two out of the seven members of the Indiana delegation in the House of Representatives were Whigs.<sup>82</sup>

The nomination of Harrison in 1840 offered the Indiana Whigs an opportunity to regain their ascendancy. Henry Clay's support had always been weak in Indiana.<sup>83</sup> Proffit flooded the state with campaign biographies of Indiana's Favorite Son, all mailed under his congressional

<sup>78</sup>George R. Wilson, "George H. Proffit: His Day and Generation," in Indiana Magazine of History, XXIII, no. 1, (March, 1922), 1-5.

<sup>79</sup>James Blake to John Tipton, January 18, 1838; John W. Davis to John Tipton, December 4, 1838, in Nellie Armstrong and Dorothy Riker, ed., The John Tipton Papers (5 vols., Indianapolis, 1942), III, 506, 774.

<sup>80</sup>Robert Dale Owen, 'Recallings from a Public Life: Western People and Politicians Forty Years Ago', in Scribner's Monthly, XV, (November, 1877), 255-263.

<sup>81</sup>Dorothy Riker and Gale Thornborough, ed., Indiana Election Returns, 1816-1851, (Indianapolis, 1960), xxiii.

<sup>82</sup>John Spencer Bassett, ed., Correspondence of Andrew Jackson, V, 19n.

<sup>83</sup>Ray Gunderson, op. cit., 43.

franking privilege. He was the most effective of all the Whig campaigners in the presidential election, and grateful local politicians feted him with open-air barbecues after the election was won.<sup>84</sup>

Harrison's coat tails were strong enough to reverse the recent tide of Democratic victories. In 1840 and 1841 the Whigs regained control of the state legislature and captured four-fifths of the congressional seats. The loss of one seat was apparently due to the fact that four Whig candidates ran in the fifth district.<sup>85</sup>

Proffit's own district had produced one of the smallest majorities for Harrison in the state.<sup>86</sup> But in his re-election campaign Proffit was facing a weaker opponent than Owen: the Whig press felt confident that Proffit would "beat him by about fifteen hundred votes."<sup>87</sup> His majority was no more than half that size, but decisive enough.<sup>88</sup>

The Whig party in Indiana was generally disorganized and factional: the leading Whig newspaper in the state had felt that victory was by no means assured.<sup>89</sup>

Although Proffit could feel that he had played an important part in creating and maintaining the Whig victory, more than one sign suggested that the future was uncertain. The party had been elected on a program of continued and extensive internal improvements, yet, as the Democrats pointed out, Indiana was heavily in debt and the value of

<sup>84</sup>Kate Milner Rabb, ed., op. cit., 322-324.

<sup>85</sup>Fort Wayne Sentinel, April 24, 1841.

<sup>86</sup>Indianapolis Indiana Journal, November 28, 1840.

<sup>87</sup>Ibid., March 13, 1841.

<sup>88</sup>George R. Wilson, op. cit., 21.

<sup>89</sup>Indiana Journal, April 24, 1841.

its state stocks was declining.<sup>90</sup> Secondly, Harrison, whose popularity had carried the Whigs into power at other levels of government, was now dead. It seemed quite possible that the Democrats would shortly return to power: even Proffit's own area, Dubois county, had remained Democratic in successive elections since 1839.

It was a strong possibility that unless he was given the attention that his campaign services to the party deserved, his own seat might well be in danger. Also he could feel that a party dominated by Henry Clay would be of little value to the Whig party in Indiana. George Proffit arrived in Washington a potential, not an actual, rebel. He had but one attitude in common with Wise, Mallory, and Gilmer, apart from his distrust of chartered monopoly banks. He could not accept the leadership of Henry Clay.

Perhaps to a lesser extent, this would also be true of the most obscure member of the Guard, William W. Irwin, a freshman congressman from Pittsburgh. His career in local politics dated back to the early days of anti-masonry in Pennsylvania. A member of the Allegheny county committee of the party in the early thirties, he had later represented the county on the state committee. He was considered an extreme anti-mason, and, although a close friend of Governor John Ritner, was not an influential voice in the party while the alliance with the Whigs was maintained.<sup>91</sup> It is hardly surprising if his career in Congress was not that of a conventional Whig.

During the years after the election of Governor Ritner in 1835,

<sup>90</sup>Vincennes, Indiana, Western Sun and General Advertiser, March 6, 1841.

<sup>91</sup>Charles M. Snyder, Pennsylvania Politics, 1833-1847: The Jackson Era (unpublished dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1950), 121.

Irwin continued his career in local county and borough politics which culminated in his election as Mayor of Pittsburgh in 1840.<sup>92</sup> Allegheny county was a stronghold of anti-masonry.<sup>93</sup> At the state level, however, these were years in which the Democrats regained power, and the alliance of Whigs and anti-masons became increasingly difficult to maintain, as many Whigs came to resent the dictatorial leadership of Thaddeus Stevens. This division became apparent in 1839, when the two parties held rival nominating conventions in the state. The anti-masons nominated General Harrison for the Presidency, the Whigs nominated Henry Clay.<sup>94</sup> The national nomination of Harrison was thus a victory for the anti-masons in Pennsylvania. As far as Irwin was concerned, this meant that he was, like Proffit, a supporter of William Harrison but not of Henry Clay.

Harrison had aroused great enthusiasm in Pittsburgh, where the local Tippecanoe Club had organized the campaign, including an open-air meeting attended by thousands, which was addressed by John Tyler.<sup>95</sup> Irwin, as Mayor, does not seem to have taken an active part in the proceedings. In January of 1841 his term of office ran out, and his successor as the anti-masonic candidate polled almost four times as many votes as the Democratic candidate. The anti-masons captured as a matter

---

<sup>92</sup>A Biographical Directory of the American Congress, 1108.

<sup>93</sup>Sister Mary Theophane Geary, A History of Third Parties in Pennsylvania, 1840-1866 (unpublished dissertation, The Catholic University of America, 1938), 24.

<sup>94</sup>Henry R. Mueller, The Whig Party in Pennsylvania, (New York, 1922), 60.

<sup>95</sup>Frank W. Stonecipher, 'Political Campaigns of the 1840s', in the Western Pennsylvania Historical Magazine, XXXV, no. 2, (June, 1952), 67-68.

of course four-fifths of the seats on the Common Council.<sup>96</sup> The congressional election seems to have caused little excitement, and Irwin's most exacting task before the election was to appear on the committee which welcomed Harrison as President-elect to the city.<sup>97</sup>

There can be no doubt that Irwin held a safe seat as long as he remained an anti-mason. But in practical terms the policies that he should support as an anti-mason were little different from those that Henry Clay proposed. It was Governor Ritner who had provided the Bank of the United States with a state charter and launched extravagant schemes of internal improvements that had placed the state in acute financial difficulties.<sup>98</sup> A Bank Bill or a Distribution Bill, which would provide the necessary revenue could hardly be opposed by an anti-mason, and a tariff was considered Pittsburgh's most pressing need.<sup>99</sup>

On the other hand, the alliance between the anti-masons and the new administration had grown weaker. The failure of President Harrison to appoint Stevens to his expected cabinet position as Postmaster-General was a major disappointment.<sup>100</sup> The Harrison majority in the state in 1840 had been extremely small anyway, and over half the congressmen elected in 1841 were Democrats. The coalition had only just managed to recapture control of the legislature in 1840.<sup>101</sup>

<sup>96</sup>Pittsburgh Gazette, January 13, 1841.

<sup>97</sup>Ibid., January 27, 1841.

<sup>98</sup>Sister Mary Theophane Geary, op. cit., 7.

<sup>99</sup>Pittsburgh Gazette, April 17, 1841.

<sup>100</sup>Sister Mary Theophane Geary, op. cit., 18.

<sup>101</sup>Henry R. Mueller, op. cit., 66, 69; The Madisonian, November 3, 1840.

Finally, John Tyler as President aroused more apprehension than enthusiasm. The Pittsburgh Gazette assured its readers that they had nothing to fear from him as far as the tariff was concerned.<sup>102</sup> "It is understood," the Gazette claimed hopefully, "President Tyler no longer regards himself as a Virginia politician."<sup>103</sup> Irwin could hardly have foreseen that he was to be the loyal supporter of such a President.

Caleb Cushing could also have had little direct interest in the new President. Apparently he had no more than a casual social acquaintance with John Tyler.<sup>104</sup> Since 1835 he had represented Newburyport, Massachusetts, in Congress.<sup>105</sup> He owed much of his strength in this district to the influence of Daniel Webster: he had long been identified as Webster's acolyte.<sup>106</sup> In return for Cushing's support, Webster was accustomed to campaign for him.<sup>107</sup> So long as Webster remained in the cabinet, Cushing had little choice but to support the President. Ironically, Webster was to remain in the cabinet so long that he would ultimately endanger Cushing's chances of re-election.

Cushing had enthusiastically supported Harrison's campaign, and had himself received a handsome majority in the congressional election

<sup>102</sup>Pittsburgh Gazette, April 8, 1841.

<sup>103</sup>Ibid., April 12, 1841.

<sup>104</sup>Claude M. Fuess, The Life of Caleb Cushing, (2 vols., New York, 1923), I, 290.

<sup>105</sup>A Biographical Directory of the American Congress, 768.

<sup>106</sup>Ray Gunderson, op. cit., 21.

<sup>107</sup>Charles Francis Adams, ed., Memoirs of John Quincy Adams (12 vols., Philadelphia, 1874-7), X, 352.

in 1841.<sup>108</sup> He was a loyal member of a state delegation that included only one Democrat, and he had no quarrel with the legislative program of Henry Clay. But as an equally loyal supporter of Daniel Webster he could not accept the leadership of Henry Clay. In common with all the other members of the Guard, he found the possibility of Henry Clay's nomination in 1844 an alarming prospect.

It was this negative attitude towards Henry Clay's ambitions that provided a basis for the Corporal's Guard. The opposition of Henry Wise to Henry Clay arose partly from conflicting ambitions, and partly from the circumstances of Wise's own career in congressional politics. Mallory followed his lead because thus he would be serving the interests of his district and his own chances of re-election, quite apart from the fact that Wise was a popular campaigner in Norfolk. But Mallory's opposition was by no means determined before he arrived in Washington: the Whig leadership could surely have offered more substantial appropriations for Norfolk, with a greater chance of success than those proposed by Wise as Chairman of the Naval Affairs Committee.

Gilmer, like Wise, was the prisoner of his own past career and particularly of the attitude he had adopted during the recent election. He could hardly support Henry Clay's program and hope for re-election.

This was not the case as far as Proffit, Irwin, and Cushing were concerned. While each was disposed to resent and fear an attempt by Henry Clay to assert his personal leadership over the party, each could equally well have voted for his program.

There need not have been a Corporal's Guard at all. The three Virginia Whigs might simply have remained silent and voted against

---

<sup>108</sup>Claude M. Fuess, op. cit., I, 280.

measures unpopular in the state. They would thus avoid facing the dilemma of their position, for the party was not so highly disciplined that it could mount a campaign against members with irregular voting records. The other three members of the Guard would not even have committed that sin.

The existence of the Guard can only be explained in terms of the situation in the House itself: the skill and ambition of Henry A. Wise was matched only by the inept performance of the party leaders.

CHAPTER II  
PARTY DISCIPLINE CHALLENGED

During May of 1841 the members of the newly elected Congress were arriving in Washington. The mood was one of "anxiety for the special session, everybody speculating and nobody knowing anything that is to happen."<sup>1</sup> For the first time there was a Whig administration in the White House and a Whig majority in Congress. The great experiment was about to begin, and it was scarcely surprising that, with so many new faces on the floor, lines of communication inside the party were inadequate. It was even suggested that there should be a weekly social gathering so that the Whigs might meet each other.<sup>2</sup>

Henry Wise was no better prepared for the session than Clay's lieutenants. During the winter he had been discussing possible Bank plans with James Allen, editor of the Madisonian, and also with Beverley Tucker, whose plan included provisions for ratifying conventions in each state. Although Wise politely told Tucker that he was "taken with your plan," he did not arrive armed with an alternative to Clay's scheme.<sup>3</sup> There was perhaps some consultation between Gilmer and Tyler on the subject. Gilmer hinted to a friend that the President had told him "a good deal about his views," but Gilmer felt that he was "not at

---

<sup>1</sup>Thomas Walker Gilmer to Franklin Minor, May 25, 1841, Tyler MSS (College of William and Mary).

<sup>2</sup>Arthur C. Cole, op. cit., 83.

<sup>3</sup>Henry Wise to Beverley Tucker, May 5, 1841, Tucker MSS.

liberty to break the seals, least said soonest mended."<sup>4</sup>

Not until a few days before the session commenced did Tyler ask Wise to produce an alternative to the Bank plan proposed by the Secretary of the Treasury. Wise produced the plan too late to serve as a substitute.<sup>5</sup>

Although Wise and Gilmer were establishing their own lines of communication with the President, there was as yet no sign of any conflict between the President and Clay's supporters.<sup>6</sup> The only action that Tyler had yet taken to assert himself was his decision not publicly to limit himself to one term.<sup>7</sup> He was considered an enigma by the most experienced observers. Francis Blair felt that, whatever Tyler's principles might be, he would "resign all to the audacious depravity of the political blackleg."<sup>8</sup> The most that could be said, despite Gilmer's conspiratorial claims, was that there were differences between Tyler and Clay, but that these were probably negotiable.

On May 27 Wise called on Clay to find out whether his own differences with Clay were negotiable. Perhaps he hoped that the accession of John Tyler, or the Whig gains in the Virginia congressional elections, might have raised his standing in the party. If so, he was disappointed. As Wise described the scene, Clay was insulting. The

---

<sup>4</sup>Thomas Walker Gilmer to Franklin Minor, May 25, 1841, Tyler MSS (College of William and Mary).

<sup>5</sup>George R. Poage, op. cit., 69.

<sup>6</sup>Harriet A. Weed, ed., Autobiography of Thurlow Weed (Boston, 1883), 507.

<sup>7</sup>Duff Green, Facts and Suggestions (New York, 1866), 140.

<sup>8</sup>Francis Blair to Andrew Jackson, April 4, 1841, in John Spencer Bassett, ed., op. cit., 98.

passage of the Distribution Bill, he was informed, would necessitate a cut in expenditure on fortifications. This was certainly a blow at Virginia, where considerable fortification work was in progress, and at Wise's own interests as Chairman of the Naval Affairs Committee. So was the announcement that slaves might not be included in the calculations for the apportionment of the proceeds of the public lands. The meeting ended with a mutual, if polite, declaration of war.<sup>9</sup>

Wise regarded this scene as Clay's declaration of war on the administration, and told Beverley Tucker to "regard Clay as the opposition to Tyler's administration ultimately." Clay, he explained, was "madly jealous enough of Tyler's running for a second term to make it a point now to drive him to a veto."<sup>10</sup> Wise had no reason to assume that Clay saw him as Tyler's representative, but was presumably hoping to acquire Tyler's support through the influence of Beverley Tucker.<sup>11</sup>

On May 31 the special session commenced with many members still absent. The strategy that Wise would follow throughout the session was marked out within the first few days. To the many inexperienced members of an unorganized party he would offer his experienced leadership as an alternative to that of Clay's lieutenants. He would also indicate that he was the personal spokesman of John Tyler in the House. His appeal would be aimed particularly at Southern members of the party.

<sup>9</sup>Henry Wise to Beverley Tucker, May 27, 1841, quoted in Lyon Gardiner Tyler, Letters and Times of the Tylers, II, 67.

<sup>10</sup>Henry Wise to Beverley Tucker, May 29, 1841, Tyler MSS (College of William and Mary).

<sup>11</sup>George R. Poage, op. cit., passim, accepts that Clay was from the start of the session intending to force Tyler to a veto.

His first move was to stand for election as Speaker. This was more symbolic gesture than serious hope, for he gained only eight votes. These included Gilmer and Mallory, Taliaferro, a Virginia Whig, and two other Southern Whigs. The disorganized state of the party is suggested by the fact that he also gained the vote of Allan Gentry of Tennessee, an orthodox Clay Whig, who was to become one of Wise's most bitter opponents. Despite the overwhelming victory of the Clay candidate, John White of Kentucky, Wise had at least made his gesture. He had even gained the vote of one Southern Democrat who was not a freshman.<sup>12</sup> Perhaps the Southern Democrats might be induced to abandon a leadership that was oriented towards Van Buren.

A second chance presented itself when the House formally moved that the President be informed that his message was awaited. With unnecessary emphasis Wise pointed out that John Tyler was the President and not the Acting President.<sup>13</sup> Although there was no established precedent, few were interested in debating the question. But Wise had established himself as the champion of the President.

By now it was traditional that on the first day of each session John Quincy Adams presented a resolution to rescind the "gag rule." This gave Wise an opportunity to reveal the third aspect of his strategy. This, he pointed out in reply to Adams, was not a case of the South suppressing free speech, but of the North trying "to oppress the South."<sup>14</sup> Wise "would not, dared not, yield one inch of ground

---

<sup>12</sup>Congressional Globe, (27th. Congress, 1st Session, Washington, 1841), X, 2.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., X, 4. Only Adams seriously disagreed with Wise on this point.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., X, 16.

ever occupied by the South on this question."<sup>15</sup> The debate continued to occupy the attention of the House until June 7. Conducted almost entirely between Adams and Wise until then, it irritated Clay's lieutenants to the point at which Thomas Marshall of Kentucky publicly wished that "the gentleman from Massachusetts and the gentleman from Virginia had been left out of this house."<sup>16</sup>

Not until June 17 was the question finally settled.<sup>17</sup> By then it had certainly achieved its purpose: Wise had pointed out the most highly respected Whig in the North was an abolitionist. There were some signs that the implications of his argument were not lost on Southern Whigs. Proffit, for one, had come forward. Abolitionism, he claimed, was the work of a secret papal bull issued by the See of Rome at the instigation of the British government.<sup>18</sup> This was not the first sign of his sympathy for the policies which Wise advocated. Proffit had spoken in support when Wise had called for a Bank plan from the President rather than from a committee of the House.<sup>19</sup> The committee would have been dominated by Clay supporters, and Wise would naturally have preferred the initiative to come from the White House, possibly in the shape of Tucker's plan.

There had been no other obvious recruits apart from Proffit, although a few Southern Whigs, such as Julius Alford of Georgia, had

---

<sup>15</sup>Congressional Globe, X, 28.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., X, 61.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., X, 63.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., X, 38.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., X, 21.

made brief speeches in support of Wise.<sup>20</sup> Nevertheless, the debate was a great success. At one point Adams' motion had passed the House. Wise fainted, and was carried off the floor.<sup>21</sup> In this dramatic manner the danger to the South was illustrated. More important was the fact that for over two weeks the House had achieved almost nothing, and the impotence of the majority leadership had been demonstrated. The Whig press was full of complaints. "The people are tired of speeches and discussions of points of order," announced the Indiana Journal, "they want action, prompt energetic ACTION."<sup>22</sup>

The Intelligencer was alarmed, and hoped "the party will not divide itself and go to buffet to gratify the wishes of its deadliest enemies."<sup>23</sup> Wise had already written to that paper to urge the Whig party to "unite in a sincere support of John Tyler."<sup>24</sup> This could only be done if Clay's legislation was blocked in Congress, and Wise was having some success in achieving that purpose.

Despite the efforts of Wise and Gilmer, who had spoken only once, the House had made a little progress. Committee appointments had been announced, revealing some attempt by the Speaker to placate as many as possible. Gilmer, for example, had a place on the Committee of Ways and Means, Wise was chairman of the Naval Affairs Committee, which also included Mallory. Proffit, curiously, was placed on the Committee on Foreign Affairs, rather than Roads and Canals.

<sup>20</sup>Congressional Globe, X, 59.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., X, 42, 43.

<sup>22</sup>Indiana Journal, June 26, 1841.

<sup>23</sup>National Intelligencer, June 26, 1841, quoted in Edwin Payne Adkins, op. cit., 78.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., June 18, 1841, quoted in Edwin Payne Adkins, op. cit., 79.

Irwin was placed on the Committee on Roads and Canals, but not Manufactures. In view of the impending tariff legislation, this can scarcely have pleased the representative from Pittsburgh. Both present and future members of the Guard could feel slighted. Even Cushing had only one appointment, to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.<sup>25</sup> With the exception of Gilmer, no member of the Guard sat on a committee concerned with the major legislative program of the session.

The House had also received the President's Message.<sup>26</sup> A cautious document, it recommended and promised approval of "any constitutional measure" to replace the sub-treasury.<sup>27</sup> A tariff which would not break the compromise act, and the distribution of the proceeds of the public lands were also suggested.<sup>28</sup> Although this was basically Clay's programme, some Whig papers found the message too cautious. It was regretted that Tyler "did not clearly express himself in favour of a National Bank and a high Protective Tariff."<sup>29</sup>

The various measures mentioned in the message were rapidly referred to their respective committees during an interlude in the gag rule debate, with the single exception of the fiscal measure.<sup>30</sup> As the House debated the twenty-first rule, the Senate was repealing the sub-treasury act, a necessary preliminary to the passage of a bank bill.

<sup>25</sup>Congressional Globe, X, 36-37.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., X, 5-8.

<sup>27</sup>James D. Richardson, ed., Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents, 1789-1897, (10 vols., Washington, 1907), IV, 39.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., IV, 37-50.

<sup>29</sup>Indiana Journal, June 12, 1841.

<sup>30</sup>Congressional Globe, X, 21.

In the course of the debate, Rives admitted at the insistence of Democrats that he wished the bill repealed to allow the deposits to be returned to state banks.<sup>31</sup>

This was a crushing blow to Clay, for without Rives' vote he would be unable to obtain a majority for the bank bill.<sup>32</sup> It had previously been thought that Rives was prepared to accept a bank. The article headed 'Mr. Rives in favour of a National Bank' in the Richmond Star had aroused some interest.<sup>33</sup> Even Rives' own organ had claimed he would vote for a bank.<sup>34</sup> Rives made his statements in the Senate as equivocal as possible: he wished to offend neither Clay, who had helped elect him, nor the Virginia legislature, which would hardly accept the type of bank which Clay preferred. Through all the debates on the Bank bill later in the session, Rives shifted uncomfortably from one to the other horn of his dilemma.

The likelihood that the Bank bill would die before it reached the House must have been an encouraging prospect for Wise and Gilmer. The House was debating the Distribution bill, and Wise took the opportunity to announce that he "was well aware that he differed from members of his party on the subject of a National Bank, tariff, and distribution." He added that the party had not been elected in the South on the program now before congress. The "Southern gentlemen attached to the Whig party" had "advocated the doctrines of the South."<sup>35</sup>

<sup>31</sup>Congressional Globe, X, 25.

<sup>32</sup>Henry Clay admitted this in the Senate, July 27, 1841, ibid., X, 254.

<sup>33</sup>Reprinted in the Indiana Journal, May 29, 1841.

<sup>34</sup>The Madisonian, April 20, 1841.

<sup>35</sup>Congressional Globe, X, 135.

Wise was still attempting to divide the party on sectional lines. His opposition had broadened to include the entire Whig program as a result of the difficulties it was encountering.

There can be no doubt that the party leadership was alarmed. A clumsy attempt to appease - or subdue - Gilmer had been made when he was named chairman of a Select Committee on Retrenchment.<sup>36</sup> Its task was supposedly to report on the subject of excess expenditures in the congressional accounts. His appointment may have been made in the spirit of irony, for he was the only member to have had the bad taste to attack a pension bill for the widow of the late President Harrison.<sup>37</sup> Whatever the reason for this move, it did not stop Gilmer from a lengthy attack on the distribution bill.<sup>38</sup> The only real point to the speech was a remark that "no man is more the friend of the present chief magistrate than I am." This irrelevant remark was followed by the statement that he had "no new parties to form," and belonged to no man.<sup>39</sup>

These last remarks must have seemed disingenuous, for there were some signs that support for Tyler was growing as the Bank bill stagnated in the Senate, where Rives was adding a succession of amendments.<sup>40</sup> In the House, Cushing had produced an incoherent appeal for unity "to the Whig party, to the friends of the Administration." He recognized no other administration in the United States at this time,

<sup>36</sup>Congressional Globe, X, 83.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., X, 73, 74.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., X, 136-139.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., X, 138.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., X, 144.

he announced, than that of John Tyler.<sup>41</sup> This was presumably the view of Daniel Webster. It seemed possible that the two extremes of the party, New England and Virginia, might lead an exodus from the party.

Wise redoubled his attack on the distribution bill in a speech on July 5th., "bawling against the bill for three hours according to John Quincy Adams."<sup>42</sup> This was probably foolish strategy if he wished to attract Southern Whig support. With the exception of North Carolina, which had no debt, and Georgia, which had a very small one, all the Southern states had large debts which necessitated an increase in revenue from some source.<sup>43</sup> Perhaps the most urgent need was felt by Indiana: Wise could not expect to consolidate his alliance with Proffit on this issue.<sup>44</sup> But Wise was joined in his opposition by the same Georgia Whig, Alford, who had voted for him as speaker.<sup>45</sup>

The following day the bill was pushed through to its final passage. Interestingly, Proffit attempted to add a minor amendment, but was shouted down. Nevertheless, he voted for the bill as might be expected from an advocate of internal improvements. So did the two future members of the Guard from the North. But the Georgia delegation, all Whig, voted solidly against the bill. They were joined by three North Carolina Whigs, though none from Virginia apart from Mallory, Wise, and Gilmer. These defections cut the Whig majority down

<sup>41</sup>Congressional Globe, X, 62.

<sup>42</sup>Charles Francis Adams, ed., op. cit., X, 496; Congressional Globe, X, 150.

<sup>43</sup>London Times, July 17, 1841.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., July 26, 1841; Reginald C. McGrane, Foreign Bondholders and State Debts (New York, 1935), 7.

<sup>45</sup>Congressional Globe, X, 150.

to eight votes.<sup>46</sup> At last it seemed that the Southern Whigs were beginning to desert the party, probably out of fear that distribution would drain the Treasury and necessitate a high tariff.

Georgia, it might be expected, would remain in opposition now. In local state politics the party was known as the 'States Rights' party, and it had only joined the Whigs at the national level with the nomination of General Harrison and John Tyler. The presidential ticket had been described by the party press as "Virginians by birth, Southerners by birth, education, and sympathy."<sup>47</sup> The logic of Henry Wise's strategy was beginning, it seemed, to bear fruit.

To introduce a bill authorizing a treasury loan into the House the next day was a masterpiece of bad timing. It was also a singularly ill-framed piece of legislation, and only half the issue ever found a market.<sup>48</sup> As it was, Proffit immediately moved to strike out the enacting clause.<sup>49</sup> Wise and Gilmer, speaking in favour of Proffit's motion, pointed out that this bill would have been unnecessary without distribution, and was certainly unwise in view of the depressed condition of other government stocks.<sup>50</sup>

"Did it every occur to you," asked Gilmer a few days later, "that it is a very difficult thing at this moment to state what is and what is not an administration measure?" His thoughts wandered from the loan

<sup>46</sup>Congressional Globe, X, 156.

<sup>47</sup>The Southern Recorder, May 5, 1840, quoted in Paul Murray, The Whig Party in Georgia, 1825-1853 (Chapel Hill, 1948), 90.

<sup>48</sup>Davis R. Dewey, The Financial History of the United States, (12th. edition, New York, 1939), 234-5.

<sup>49</sup>Congressional Globe, X, 161.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid., X, 175, 179.

bill as he considered the "safe and advantageous position" of the President. "The people are the President's party. He has no business with a party here." For no apparent reason, he asked, "Why must the spectre of abolition rise in our path at every turn?" He attacked Cushing, who had not mentioned the subject, as an abolitionist.<sup>51</sup>

Although Gilmer's approach seems somewhat crude, and particularly foolish in giving offense to Cushing, it seems to have persuaded the leadership to cut off debate by bringing the bill to an immediate vote. Gilmer, Mallory, and Wise were the only Whigs to vote against it.<sup>52</sup> Proffit's earlier annoyance had subsided. He was probably unimpressed by Gilmer. Certainly, he had as yet shown no interest in John Tyler. The situation was a little discouraging. The Whig press was still able to dismiss any rumors of the formation of a third party, and cite the "harmonious action" on the loan bill.<sup>53</sup>

Wise and Gilmer were clearly pinning their hopes on Clay's bill establishing a Bank of the United States which had not yet passed the Senate. In essence, the bill re-created the second Bank of the United States. As the House waited for the bill in the latter part of July, the question of the tariff was raised. John Winthrop, from the Committee on Manufactures, asked that a select committee on the tariff be appointed to take evidence on the subject during the recess.<sup>54</sup> Wise and Gilmer led the opposition. "Distribution is used as a pretext for a loan, and a loan is used as a pretext for high duties,"

<sup>51</sup>Congressional Globe, X, 180.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., X, 191.

<sup>53</sup>Richmond Whig, July 13, 1841; ibid., July 16, 1841.

<sup>54</sup>Congressional Globe, X, 237.

said Gilmer.<sup>55</sup> Wise "sprang upon it with the fury of an enraged tiger . . . in a bitter and malignant attack upon Nisbit of Georgia," according to John Quincy Adams.<sup>56</sup>

According to Adams, Wise feared that the Georgia delegation would "flinch upon the tariff subject" and had chosen Nisbit "whom he knew he could bully and browbeat with impunity to whip them all in."<sup>57</sup> It was obviously a difficult task to keep the Georgia delegation in a state of rebellion.

But on August 2nd. the Bank bill finally reached the House. Proffit immediately made it clear that he insisted on a full debate on the bill.<sup>58</sup> Ignoring this request, Sergeant passed a resolution to cut off debate in less than a week.<sup>59</sup>

This was clearly the breaking point for Proffit. A few minutes later, he rose to "express his views independent of party trammels," a remark which indicated his opinion of the management of the bill. His views on the bill were hardly in line with those of the Virginians, for his opposition was to Rives' amendment which limited the branching power of the bank. He rightly termed the amendment a "perfect humbug," for it did not require the assent, but only allowed the dissent of the states. He wanted a bill with unconditional branching powers. In anti-climax, he ended by admitting that he would vote for the bill in any shape.<sup>60</sup>

<sup>55</sup>Congressional Globe, X, 257.

<sup>56</sup>Charles Francis Adams, ed., op. cit., X, 511.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid., X, 511-12.

<sup>58</sup>Congressional Globe, X, 283.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid., X, 294.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid., X, 295.

Wise and Gilmer must have been particularly pleased by the "perfect humbug" remark, for it pointed out that the bill did not really satisfy the states rights objections to the bank. The veto for which they now hoped would be the more certain. "Tyler only desires Clay's bill to come to him so that he might kill it without a moments hesitation," Wise had confidently written.<sup>61</sup> To Gilmer, Proffit's dissatisfaction with his party would confirm his opinion that "the tendency every day here is to divide according to the old Republican and federal divisions, as everybody will see."<sup>62</sup>

Both spoke against the bill, and then sat confidently back to await the expected veto. This would act as a catalyst in the redivision of parties. After the "tornado" of the veto "a calm sunshine will ensue by the light of which you and I and everyone may tell a Federalist from a Republican as far as he can be seen."<sup>63</sup> Since an anti-mason could not be readily classified as a Republican, Gilmer does not seem to have noticed that, in the final vote on the Bank bill, the Guard had been joined by William Irwin.<sup>64</sup>

Pittsburgh noticed, however. A public meeting was held in the Old Court House a week later to discuss the conduct of their representative.<sup>65</sup> Irwin had published his defense two days previously, in which he stated that he had "been compelled to separate

<sup>61</sup>Henry Wise to Beverley Tucker, July 11, 1841, quoted in L. G. Tyler, Letters and Times of the Tylers, II, 52.

<sup>62</sup>Thomas Walker Gilmer to Franklin Minor, August 7, 1841, ibid., II, 706.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid.

<sup>64</sup>Congressional Globe, X, 303.

<sup>65</sup>Pittsburgh Gazette, August 13, 1841.

from a portion of my political friends" because he believed the compulsory branching power was unconstitutional.<sup>66</sup> His constituents decided that no hasty judgement should be passed on him.<sup>67</sup>

Irwin's motives are difficult to assess. His sudden distrust of the Bank may have been due to the current crisis in Pennsylvania politics over the affairs of the second Bank of the United States. The liquidation of the Bank early in September was to damage the anti-masonic party in the fall elections.<sup>68</sup>

Like Proffit, Irwin had been consistently ignored by the party. He had not gained a seat on the Committee on Manufactures, his resolutions calling for federal funds for steamship lines on the Ohio, Mississippi and Missouri had been laid on the table,<sup>69</sup> and his own amendment to the Bank bill had been shouted down.<sup>70</sup> Irwin may have moved towards the Corporal's Guard in part at least because the party had not taken care of his interests.

There was no reason to believe that Irwin had adopted Virginian objections to the Bank because he shared Gilmer's unusual views on the nature of political parties. It was not Irwin's vote, but the expectation of a veto that led the usually taciturn Mallory to denounce a few days later "the course of the majority in this hall tyrannical and

<sup>66</sup>Pittsburgh Gazette, August 12, 1841.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid., August 16, 1841.

<sup>68</sup>Henry R. Mueller, op. cit., 72.

<sup>69</sup>Congressional Globe, X, 247. Irwin's amendment to the naval appropriations bill to provide for a new naval depot and coal depots on the Ohio and Mississippi was also defeated. Pittsburgh Gazette, July 29, 1841.

<sup>70</sup>Congressional Globe, X, 303.

oppressive beyond all endurance," until he was shouted down by cries of "Order!, Order!"<sup>71</sup>

In preparation for the imminent veto, Wise had been trying for some time to mobilize public opinion in support of the President. Beverley Tucker had written a series of letters which Wise hoped to publish in the Madisonian. Allen, the editor, refused to publish them without Tyler's approval. Tyler, to the extreme annoyance of Wise, suggested that Rives approve them first. Wise quarrelled with both Tyler and Allen objecting to having his "conduct and opinions referred to Mr. Rives."<sup>72</sup> It was probably these letters that were published over the signature of "A State Rights Man at Washington" in the Enquirer during the latter part of August.<sup>73</sup>

No incident could more clearly reveal the ineffective nature of Wise's strategy. He was not working in close co-operation with Tyler or Rives, and to reach the public he was forced to use the Democratic rather than the administration press.<sup>74</sup>

On August 16th., the veto message was received by the Senate to the accompaniment of hisses from the gallery. Gilmer did not regard it as a great victory in itself. "The test of this administration turns on his

<sup>71</sup>Congressional Globe, X, 323.

<sup>72</sup>Henry Wise to Beverley Tucker, July 31, 1841, Tucker MSS.

<sup>73</sup>Richmond Enquirer, August 13, 24, 27, 31, 1841. The authorship is suggested by the fact that Tucker had written four letters; these articles could not have been written by a Democrat, for they attacked the sub-treasury scheme, and called for bipartisan support for President Tyler.

<sup>74</sup>There were already administration papers opposing Clay and supporting Tyler; see the New York Herald, June 12, 1841, quoted in John P. Kennedy, A Defense of the Whigs (New York, 1844), 106.

cabinet and his measures," he wrote. "If they are bad we are no worse off by being in opposition."<sup>75</sup> As this indicates, Gilmer did not see his own interests as identical with those of Tyler. For in the same letter he wrote that he had previously "had a scheme" which the Virginians in Congress would have contributed to promote. "That iron is not now hot," he added sadly, "perhaps it never was . . ."

Irwin, like Gilmer, expected a 'tornado' to occur. As he wrote in his local newspaper, the veto would be followed by the resignation of the cabinet, and "Mr. Tyler will be sustained by many of both parties."<sup>76</sup> Some press opinion agreed that the resignation of the cabinet was inevitable, and in Virginia it was thought that Wise, Gilmer, Mallory, and Rives would be appointed.<sup>77</sup>

The expected dissolution of the party did not occur. The cabinet did not resign until the second veto, and the final weeks of the session saw a series of crushing reverses for the Guard, who, since Henry Clay's speech in the Senate on the veto, had acquired their title.<sup>78</sup> A barrage of press abuse was directed at them. Gilmer, who claimed in his defense of the veto that he spoke for the people of his district, who agreed "with the president not the dictator," was informed by the Charlottesville Advertiser that he did not speak for more than one twentieth of the Whigs in the district.<sup>79</sup> The New York Star explained that the reason for the

<sup>75</sup>Thomas Walker Gilmer to Franklin Minor, August 16, 1841, Tyler MSS (College of William and Mary).

<sup>76</sup>Pittsburgh Gazette, August 18, 1841.

<sup>77</sup>Richmond Whig, August 24, 1841.

<sup>78</sup>George R. Poage, op. cit., 180.

<sup>79</sup>Reprinted in the Richmond Whig, August 31, 1841.

"apostasy" of these "quasi Whigs" was that "Wise is a defeated candidate for Speaker and Proffit an applicant for charge d'affaires at any place."<sup>80</sup>

The 'tornado' was being released on the heads of the Corporal's Guard. The veto had been a test of party discipline, and the party was more united than the Guard had realized or feared. The unity of the party became apparent in the passage of the second bank plan, the Fiscal Corporation Bill. It seems to have been largely a demonstration of unity, for the bill was unchanged except in title, and the Whig party voted to cut off discussion of the bill at the end of the second day of debate.<sup>81</sup> The Guard voted against this measure. Cushing, who had been remarkably silent since his early appeal for unity, was absent when the vote was taken. There was as yet only one speech to connect him with the Guard.

In the brief debate on the bill, Proffit came into line with Wise, Gilmer, and Irwin in his opposition to the branching clause.<sup>82</sup> This was an amazing reversal of his previous position, and it can only be attributed to the results of the August elections in Indiana. The Democrats had gained a decisive majority in the lower house of the Indiana legislature, giving them a majority on joint ballot over the Whig senate.<sup>83</sup> As one Democratic paper had announced, "Indiana will apply the veto as far as a branch in this state is concerned, if

<sup>80</sup>Reprinted in the Richmond Whig, August 27, 1841.

<sup>81</sup>Congressional Globe, X, 363.

<sup>82</sup>Ibid., X, 371.

<sup>83</sup>Washington Globe, August 13, 1841; Indiana Journal, August 13, 1841.

Mr. Tyler don't."<sup>84</sup> The Whig press was quite sure that Proffit's "sudden mutation" was proof that he was "looking out for number one."<sup>85</sup> John Quincy Adams thought that he was making a "complete somerset over to Democracy" in his speech on this bill, and concluded that this move reflected the election results.<sup>86</sup> It was not yet apparent that he had joined the Guard, only that he had publicly abandoned Henry Clay.

While the election results explain the timing of his move, it must also be emphasized that he was already deeply dissatisfied with his party. As a local paper, which did not yet "give him up as lost," explained, "his conduct was in a great degree attributable to his own friends" - He had been placed in the front ranks of the party in the campaign, and was now forced to take a back seat.<sup>87</sup> Proffit had complained when he was unable to get an appropriation for Indian removals that "the nearest and dearest interests" of the people of Indiana "were thrust aside!"<sup>88</sup> His pride and his chances of re-election were being damaged by the blunders of an inexperienced leadership.

Irwin, for his vote on the Fiscal Corporation bill, was repudiated by his district. The party organization announced through the local newspaper that Irwin had "misrepresented the wishes of a large majority of his constituents." The notice added that "we see no grounds for

<sup>84</sup>Fort Wayne Sentinel, August 1, 1841.

<sup>85</sup>Richmond Whig, August 27, 1841.

<sup>86</sup>Charles Francis Adams, ed., op. cit., X, 540.

<sup>87</sup>Indiana Journal, September 10, 1841.

<sup>88</sup>Congressional Globe, X, 343.

an explanation which will satisfy those who gave him their votes."<sup>89</sup>  
 There was a gloomy finality to this statement: without the anti-masonic nomination re-election would be impossible.

Both Irwin and Proffit were moving further away from their party, but they had not yet identified themselves with the President. Neither had Mallory: he had merely denounced the leadership of the party. He repeated his point in a letter to the official party organ, in which he said he would never be "manacled as a tool to execute the orders of any party leader."<sup>90</sup> Thus even after the first veto, Tyler had only two apparent 'supporters' in Congress. Cushing was silent and Proffit, Irwin, and Mallory confined their remarks to attacks on the party leadership rather than invocations of the President's name.

Even the party press occasionally wondered "how Mr. Wise and Mr. Gilmer can defend the President. They have opposed nearly every measure which he supports."<sup>91</sup> Their most bitter attacks had been on the loan bill and the distribution bill, both measures which Tyler had cheerfully signed. It is quite apparent that not a single member of the Corporal's Guard had any overriding interest in playing the role of the defender of an accidental president. This role was more or less thrust upon them.

It was thrust upon them by a concerted attack on the part of Clay's lieutenants during the remaining two and half weeks of the session. It required some provocation by various loyal Whigs. Bryan Owsley of

<sup>89</sup>Pittsburgh Gazette, August 31, 1841.

<sup>90</sup>National Intelligencer, August 26, 1841, cited in Edwin Payne Adkins, op. cit., 79.

<sup>91</sup>Richmond Whig, September 3, 1841.

Kentucky made the first move when he introduced two constitutional amendments into the House. The first limited the President to one term, the second provided that a veto could be reversed by a simple majority of each House. Disappointingly no member of the Guard spoke on the subject, and it was quietly abandoned.<sup>92</sup>

Two days later, on September 9, the President's veto of the Fiscal Corporation Bill reached the House.<sup>93</sup> To ensure that the Guard rose to the occasion, the Whig spokesman was Edward Stanly of North Carolina, who had already had one heated and very personal argument with Wise on the floor earlier in the session.<sup>94</sup> Stanly succeeded in provoking Wise into physical violence. As Stanly sat at his desk, Wise walked over, and slapped him "pretty severely with his open hand."<sup>95</sup> Landaff Andrews of Kentucky seized the opportunity and moved that Wise be expelled from the House. This was perhaps too extreme, and the House instead appointed a committee to investigate the incident. The next day the affair was dismissed.<sup>96</sup>

But it had served its purpose in arousing the Guard to action and emphasizing that the party would no longer tolerate any rebels. Proffit, at least, reached that conclusion and spoke at length the next day in defense of the President. To sarcastic questioning by Marshall of Kentucky, Proffit admitted that, as far as the President was concerned, he did not "pretend to be an exponent of his particular views." He

<sup>92</sup>Congressional Globe, X, 438.

<sup>93</sup>Ibid., X, 444.

<sup>94</sup>Ibid., X, 62.

<sup>95</sup>Ibid., X, 445; Bayard Tuckerman, ed., The Diary of Philip Hone, 1828-1851, (2 vols., New York, 1889), II, 88.

<sup>96</sup>Congressional Globe, X, 446.

announced his membership in the Corporal's Guard, "if the member from Virginia would permit him," and he would "march as the humblest member of the forlorn hope."<sup>97</sup> When the news of this speech reached Indiana, the Whig press with some reluctance decided that "we will have to give up this gentleman."<sup>98</sup>

The Whig party, led significantly by three members from Kentucky, had managed to place their rebels, Proffit and as he described them, "the gentlemen with whom I am proud to act," in an altogether new position. Once they had been rebels against the party leaders, protesting against a program for which many Whigs were not necessarily enthusiastic. That had not been a weak position, given the political skill of Henry Wise. His aim had been summarized by "a voice" which interrupted one of Wise's endless speeches with the laconic comment, "It is all to kill time."<sup>99</sup> Wise's skill, and the incompetence of Clay's lieutenants, had at moments, such as the gag rule debate and the passage of the distribution bill, shown signs of success. But somehow the Clay Whigs had managed to pass their legislation, and the party had not reached the point where frustration made them look for alternative leadership.

Now the Corporal's Guard were indeed the defenders of the "forlorn hope." Successive vetoes had given the party the opportunity to identify, in a simultaneous attack, John Tyler and the Corporal's Guard. Henry Clay's speech and the name he provided for the malcontents had given the party and the press their cue. Proffit and his description of

---

<sup>97</sup>Niles Weekly Register, LXI, 92-93.

<sup>98</sup>Indiana Journal, September 17, 1841.

<sup>99</sup>Congressional Globe, X, 333.



the Guard as "the political friends of the President" had completed the process.<sup>100</sup> The party, which had not been able to confront such a subtle attack as that of Wise, could unite in the face of the veto power, the exercise of which they had attacked so strongly during Jackson's presidency. Essentially, the change in the position of the Guard was that from an offensive to a defensive position.

Henry Wise realized after the second veto that his political future would depend on Tyler. "I mean anyway to go along with Tyler," he wrote to Beverley Tucker on August 29th.<sup>101</sup> As his unenthusiastic tone suggests, he had little alternative.

There was always the possibility that the Democratic party might adopt Tyler, whatever their past differences with him, and in the process rescue the careers of the Guard. A leading Democratic paper had recently suggested that its party would "take Captain Tyler, and under his lead drive back the dictator."<sup>102</sup>

There was also the curious incident related by one Washington correspondent in his memoirs, which involved a speech delivered by Senator Arthur Bagby of Alabama, a Democrat and a former Virginian. The speech was announced as an analysis of the failure of the Whig party, and the Guard attended en masse, seated prominently in the Senate gallery, only to hear Mr. Bagby ask whether his party would accept "the meanest renegade" that ever left "the most corrupt party that was ever

<sup>100</sup>Niles Weekly Register, LXI, 92-93.

<sup>101</sup>Henry Wise to Beverley Tucker, August 29, 1841, quoted in L. G. Tyler, Letters and Times of the Tylers, II, 90.

<sup>102</sup>Richmond Enquirer, August 27, 1841.

formed." The Guard, "sadly disappointed, one by one, silently stole away."<sup>103</sup>

It might well be that the Guard, if they attended, and if they were disappointed, would have left separately. For among those listed as present was Caleb Cushing, who had not yet publicly declared his faith in President Tyler. This decision was now confronting him, as Webster, his political patron, had not resigned from the cabinet with the other loyal Whigs. Cushing was faced with the alternative of his party or his patron. In the House he could not delay the decision very long. He had gone so far as to vote for the passage of the Fiscal Corporation Bill over the veto.<sup>104</sup> Party loyalty could go no further without risking his position in Webster's good graces. As it happened, he did not make his decision before the adjournment.

For the party, the session had not been totally in vain. They had at least been able to turn the vetoes to advantage, and rid the party of its malcontents. From now on, any member of the party who acted with Wise, Gilmer, or Proffit was automatically a member of the Corporal's Guard. It remained only to read the President officially out of the party. This was done in a suitably dramatic manner at a large meeting of Senators and Representatives in front of the Capitol. An address was drawn up, denouncing Tyler as unworthy of the people's confidence.<sup>105</sup>

But Wise did not believe that he was permanently cut off from the party. He wished to "part friendly" with some of the cabinet, and after the announcement of the new cabinet he claimed that "they are in fits

<sup>103</sup>Benjamin Perley Poore, op. cit., II, 280-281.

<sup>104</sup>Congressional Globe, X, 449.

<sup>105</sup>O. P. Chitwood, op. cit., 249.

now, not we, that Tyler could so soon nominate so strong a cabinet."<sup>106</sup> There was still a strategy, but Tyler was now the key figure. The desire that Wise expressed to "get rid of" Webster suggests that the new political alignment was still to be Southern.<sup>107</sup> It also suggests that little importance was attached to the possible adherence of Caleb Cushing.

Hope still survived. But Wise did not seem to realize that his altered position in the House made any hope of creating a new party in the twenty-seventh congress a very unrealistic scheme. That his hopes were centered there rather than in the country was suggested by his reluctant refusal of Tyler's offer of the Navy Department.<sup>108</sup> This was probably the most serious mistake that Wise made, but hardly a surprising one. His whole experience had been in the House as a leader of the opposition, frustrating the legislative program of the majority party. The choice that he now made was decisive in terms of his career. In avoiding the unfamiliar ground of the executive branch at this point, he chose to be forever a congressman. He also revealed the inflexibility of his strategy: though all the signs so far pointed elsewhere, he could only look to the South for his new party.

The crucial question for all the members of the Guard now was the reaction of their constituents. As the recess began, the Guard returned to their districts to face either the abuse or the applause of the voters. On that question would depend their attitudes during the succeeding session of Congress.

---

<sup>106</sup>Henry Wise to Beverley Tucker, September 11, 1841, Tucker MSS.

<sup>107</sup>Henry Wise to Beverley Tucker, August 29, 1841, quoted in L. G. Tyler, Letters and Times of the Tylers, II, 90-91.

<sup>108</sup>Ibid.

## CHAPTER III

### THE RESPONSE TO THE TERTIUM QUIDS

The members of the Guard needed to find the answers to two questions in their districts. The first of these was the question of their own popularity among the voters, the second was the larger issue: would John Tyler, as the administration press claimed, be able to "reorganize the masses anew - produce an extraordinary excitement throughout the country" to found a new party?<sup>1</sup>

For there could be no question now that strong support in the country would be needed to create the new political alignment. In Virginia it was recognized that a third party, nicknamed the "tertium quids," was in the making, and "efforts are making to connect the President to it."<sup>2</sup> As it happened, John Tyler in his "new organization" was looking for former Jackson men who had become disillusioned for "very much the same reasons" as he had.<sup>3</sup> Virginia was therefore the most important state both for the President and for the Guard.

Henry Wise was able to return to his constituents with a certain amount of patronage.<sup>4</sup> The Whigs of Accomac were anyway "torpid," and

---

<sup>1</sup>New York Herald, June 12, 1841, quoted in John P. Kennedy, op. cit., 106.

<sup>2</sup>Richmond Whig, August 31, 1841: for the origin of the nickname see Richmond Whig, August 27, 1841.

<sup>3</sup>John Tyler to Hugh Legare, n.d., Tyler MSS (Library of Congress).

<sup>4</sup>Congressional Globe, X, 229, 232.

"ready to see the fruits of that glorious victory blighted by schemers and speculators," according to an indignant correspondent of the Whig.<sup>5</sup> But they did publish a letter to Wise, claiming to be "anxious that your equivocal position should be defined, and that by yourself."<sup>6</sup>

Wise was able to do this in "a most satisfactory interview" with his constituents at Northampton Courthouse.<sup>7</sup> In this speech he declared that he would not co-operate with the Democrats, and "was no third party man."<sup>8</sup> In a sense he was sincere, for he hoped to destroy the Clay Whigs as a national party. He was also able to write various letters defining his position.<sup>9</sup> As far as his district was concerned, the simple fact was that "he was able to take any side of any question or no side of no question, and still be elected."<sup>10</sup>

Mallory had benefited from his alliance with Wise, for he had been able to secure a considerable amount of patronage for the Norfolk naval yard.<sup>11</sup> His district was in an uproar, however. A protest meeting had been held in his absence, late in August in Norfolk, followed by similar events in Portsmouth and Elizabeth City county in September.<sup>12</sup> Although

<sup>5</sup>Richmond Whig, October 15, 1841.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., October 5, 1841.

<sup>7</sup>Richmond Enquirer, November 23, 1841.

<sup>8</sup>Richmond Whig, November 30, 1841.

<sup>9</sup>John P. Kennedy, op. cit., 118-119.

<sup>10</sup>Richmond Whig, December 3, 1841.

<sup>11</sup>Benjamin Perley Poore, op. cit., II, 293.

<sup>12</sup>Washington Globe, August 31, 1841; Richmond Whig, August 24, September 13, 1841.

he defended his actions in the press, he cannot have viewed the future with confidence.<sup>13</sup> The Whig claimed, without any rebuttal from the Democratic press, that "this district is true to the great Whig principles."<sup>14</sup>

In Albemarle, parties were "said to be in a strange tangle."<sup>15</sup> Gilmer had returned home before the end of the session to speak at a meeting in Charlottesville at which he was read out of the party "by a vote nearly or quite unanimous."<sup>16</sup> It was followed by the immediate nomination of a new Whig candidate, with whom Gilmer held an all-day debate on November 1st., "a day long to be remembered by the ex-Governor for the total discomfiture he met with on his own native soil."<sup>17</sup>

Unappreciated by the Whigs, Gilmer turned briefly to the Democrats, voting for the candidate of that party in the elections for the House of Delegates.<sup>18</sup> He accepted an invitation to a public dinner given by the Democrats of Nelson county in his honour towards the end of October, and seemed to have "thrown himself openly and unreservedly into the arms of Loco Focoism."<sup>19</sup>

The Enquirer was only too happy to encourage the Guard, printing the proceedings of public meetings in support of the President, and

<sup>13</sup>Richmond Whig, October 1, 1841.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., August 17, 1841.

<sup>15</sup>Richmond Enquirer, September 7, 1841.

<sup>16</sup>Richmond Whig, September 10, 1841.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., November 9, 1841.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., October 8, 1841.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., December 3, 1841.

claiming that "the landmarks which have divided parties in the last few years are fast disappearing."<sup>20</sup> Whether or not the Guard was naive enough to believe that they, rather than the Democratic party, would be the ultimate beneficiaries of this process is less sure. It remained true that in two cases out of three, their seats were seriously jeopardized.<sup>21</sup>

In Pittsburgh the situation was equally serious. The anti-masonic press did agree to print Irwin's defense of his conduct, but added that if anything this placed him in an even worse light.<sup>22</sup> In their opinion, the country was "miserably disgraced in the person of its chief magistrate."<sup>23</sup> But, if anti-masonry seemed to shut the door in Irwin's face, the fall elections suggested that another might open. Although Allegheny county voted for the anti-masonic candidate for governor, the state senator representing the party in that county won by only a single vote.<sup>24</sup> Perhaps the Democratic nomination might be open if Irwin was particularly energetic in looking after Pittsburgh's interests in Congress. For the first time since 1838 it seemed that the Democrats might gain the seat.<sup>25</sup> This could be Irwin's salvation if he were to

<sup>20</sup>Richmond Enquirer, September 10, 1841.

<sup>21</sup>Gilmer may have had it in mind to resign if he could gain the Senate seat, which he had earlier heard "from several quarters" was his for the asking. Letter of Thomas Walker Gilmer to Franklin Minor, August 16, 1841, Tyler MSS (College of William and Mary).

<sup>22</sup>Pittsburgh Gazette, September 14, 1841.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., September 16, 1841.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., October 21, 1841.

<sup>25</sup>Charles McCarthy, The Anti-masonic Party, a Study of Political Anti-masonry in the United States, 1829-1840, in the Annual Report of the American Historical Association for 1902 (Washington, 1903), I, 423.

follow the advice recently offered by the state legislature to press for a high tariff.<sup>26</sup>

"The fate of Proffit," said the party press with some satisfaction, "is said to be sealed."<sup>27</sup> And the local Democratic press said that the Whigs' "idol one short year ago" was now "upon the stool of repentence."<sup>28</sup> But the party could ill afford to jettison its most effective campaigner after the recent disasters at the polls. The party press suggested that "we all know that he will spring back again if he can."<sup>29</sup> The last phrase was presumably italicized as a grim warning. Certainly there was little hope for Tyler in Indiana, although a 'Veto Whig' had recently run successfully for the state senate.<sup>30</sup> Proffit's position was therefore the most desperate of all, and it would be very difficult for such a proud man to humble himself in front of the congressional leadership.

To offset this rather gloomy situation at home, the Guard, or rather Tyler, had gained a new recruit in the recess. Caleb Cushing had finally resolved his dilemma and produced an address to his constituents, "principally designed to vindicate the course of Mr. Webster in separating from his colleagues of the cabinet."<sup>31</sup> Cushing blamed the legislative debacle of the special session on "the irresponsible hands of ONE MAN behind the scenes."<sup>32</sup> The "counter-manifesto"

<sup>26</sup>Frank W. Stonecipher, 'Pittsburgh and the Nineteenth Century Tariffs', in the Western Pennsylvania Historical Magazine, XXXI, no. 3, (December, 1948), 91.

<sup>27</sup>Richmond Whig, December 3, 1841.

<sup>28</sup>Fort Wayne Sentinel, October 9, 1841.

<sup>29</sup>Indiana Journal, October 1, 1841.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., September 17, 1841.

<sup>31</sup>Washington Globe, October 5, 1841.

<sup>32</sup>Niles Weekly Register, LXI, 111; John P. Kennedy, op. cit., 84.

as Benton called it, attacked the "caucus dictatorship" in extravagant language, praising the "patriotism and ability" of the Secretary of State.<sup>33</sup> Cushing may not have been an unexpected ally for the Guard, but he can hardly have been welcomed eagerly at the time, even by Tyler. It was thought at the time that Tyler had wished to dispose of Webster with the other members of the cabinet.<sup>34</sup> The Corporal's Guard was now complete, united initially in their opposition to Clay, now united in their dependence on Tyler.

The President was now prepared to admit to an interest in re-election.<sup>35</sup> One independent observer thought that "should Tyler pursue a straightforward course he might have some chance of a nomination, but his attempt to form a third party . . . will inevitably fail."<sup>36</sup> Andrew Jackson would not have agreed to this. Viewing the Whig reverses in the New York state elections, he decided that "providence by taking away General Harrison has saved the Union," presumably for the Democratic party.<sup>37</sup> The fall elections were highly

<sup>33</sup>Thomas Hart Benton, Thirty Years View (2 vols., New York, 1854-6), II, 359.

<sup>34</sup>George Bancroft to Martin Van Buren, February 21, 1842, in Worthington C. Ford, ed., the Van Buren Bancroft Correspondence, 1830-1844, in the Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society, XLII, (June, 1909), 391.

<sup>35</sup>Abel Upshur to Beverley Tucker, December 12, 1841, quoted in Lyon Gardiner Tyler, op. cit., II, 247.

<sup>36</sup>R. K. Cralle to John C. Calhoun, October 8, 1841, in Chauncey S. Boucher, ed., Correspondence Addressed to John C. Calhoun, 1837-1849, in the Annual Report of the American Historical Association for 1929, (Washington, 1930, I, 162.

<sup>37</sup>Andrew Jackson to Martin Van Buren, November 25, 1841, in John Spencer Bassett, op. cit., v, 128.

favourable to the Democratic party, throughout the country.<sup>38</sup> But this could be viewed as a judgement on the Whig party rather than the administration.

Tyler certainly seems to have viewed events in this light as he prepared for the new session. The first task was to organize the administration press in Washington. The Madisonian, whose editor, Allen, had long been the admirer of Rives, was approached. He seems to have been considering the sale of the paper, an event which now proved unnecessary until the end of the administration.<sup>39</sup> Horace Greeley had apparently been approached by "high sources" to come to Washington to take charge of the paper and "thereby save the Whig party."<sup>40</sup>

If Allen had been considering selling to the Clay organization, he did not inform Tyler, who approached him through Wise. By the end of September the paper was "the official organ" and now "enjoying the Executive patronage." Allen was reconciled to Wise, who now finally had a sure outlet to the press.<sup>41</sup> Wise was also tutoring Tyler in the use of diplomatic patronage. Tyler had shown signs of appointing as minister to Mexico a "notorious bootlicker of your political enemies and mine," as Wise described him to Beverley Tucker.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>38</sup> Horace Greeley, Recollections of a Busy Life, (New York, 1868), 160; Oscar Doane Lambert, Presidential Politics in the United States, 1841-1844, (Durham, 1936), 49.

<sup>39</sup> Benjamin Perley Poore, op. cit., I, 290.

<sup>40</sup> Horace Greeley to Thurlow Weed, December 7, 1841, quoted in Harriet A. Weed, ed., op. cit., 468-469.

<sup>41</sup> John Tyler to Henry Wise, September 27, 1841, in the William and Mary College Quarterly Historical Magazine, XX, no. 1, (July, 1911), 7.

<sup>42</sup> Henry Wise to Beverley Tucker, January 8, 1842, Tucker MSS. The reference was to Waddy Thompson.

As the Captain of the Guard and the President moved into a closer relationship through mutual necessity, the members of the twenty-seventh congress were returning to Washington. The Guard would now be the administration party, and theirs would be the task of guiding legislation through the House. The most important item would be the Exchequer, Tyler's solution to the bank problem, drawn up during the recess after extensive consultations.<sup>43</sup>

Ironically, at the moment when he was most needed, their only ally in the Senate, Rives, was disengaging himself from the administration. There was clearly no future for him as a Conservative: his ally Nathaniel Tallmadge was now dependent on the grace and favour of Weed and Greeley, who had persuaded the Whig legislature to re-elect him earlier in the year.<sup>44</sup> Before the session started, Rives declared himself "willing to co-operate with the Whigs, upon Republican Whig principles."<sup>45</sup> This was presumably a polite way of saying that he was a Whig, provided that there was no question of a bank. He went so far as to describe the distribution bill as "great."<sup>46</sup> Throughout the session, his attitude was to puzzle the party press. "He chooses to invest himself in mystery," it was at last decided.<sup>47</sup>

<sup>43</sup>John Tyler to Littleton Tazewell, November 2, 1841, Tyler MSS (Library of Congress).

<sup>44</sup>G. G. Van Deusen, William Henry Seward (New York, 1967), 60; John S. Jenkins, A History of the Political Parties in the State of New York, (Auburn, 1849), 428.

<sup>45</sup>Washington Globe, December 13, 1841.

<sup>46</sup>Richmond Whig, February 18, 1842, quoting speech of November 16, 1841.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., July 1, 1842.

The opposition press came much nearer the mark in describing Rives' attitude to Clay and Tyler as the intention to "throw them both overboard, unite with the Whig majority, and leave the country."<sup>48</sup> He was to be little use to the Corporal's Guard. The session opened with most of the Guard uncertain of their support at home, lacking even one ally in the Senate, forced to entrust their political future to John Tyler, a President without a party. As the Mobile Register pointed out, "the Administration party . . . will be held together by the cohesive power of executive patronage."<sup>49</sup> Wise had already learned that the President did not even know how to use that.

As soon as the House was organized, the new recruit to the Guard discovered his altered status. Cushing found that he had been replaced as Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee by John Quincy Adams. To complicate matters, Cushing had just joined Proffit, Wise, and Gilmer in defense of the gag rule.<sup>50</sup> His sudden change of heart on the subject must have embarrassed him when he approached Adams to explain "that as a friend of the administration of John Tyler, he felt bound to adhere to the station of chairman."<sup>51</sup> Adams, unfortunately, did not share his viewpoint.

John Tyler's first annual message asked Congress for a further Treasury note issue, admitted that the tariff might need to be raised slightly, did not mention the problem of the Compromise in

<sup>48</sup> Washington Globe, December 13, 1841, Rives' biographer does not consider that he was any longer connected with Tyler or the Guard, Raymond C. Dingleline, op. cit., 406. See also Rives' speech on the Exchequer Bill, December 29, 1841, Congressional Globe, XI, Appendix, 75-7.

<sup>49</sup> Quoted in the Richmond Enquirer, October 5, 1841.

<sup>50</sup> Congressional Globe, XI, 2.

<sup>51</sup> Charles Francis Adams, ed., op. cit., XI, 35.

relation to the tariff, and promised a bank plan.<sup>52</sup> It was an innocuous document that left the initiative, except in the case of the bank, with Congress. The Madisonian claimed that "tens of thousands . . . among the ranks of the Democrats" received it with enthusiasm.<sup>53</sup> Congress did not, merely referring that portion of it which had reference to a bank to a select committee. The Guard voted against this resolution en bloc.<sup>54</sup>

When the members of the Committee were announced, it was found to include Cushing, Gilmer, Wise, Proffit, and Irwin. The five members of the Corporal's Guard were balanced with a nice respect to party by two Whigs and two Democrats.<sup>55</sup> "Could there be a more appropriate and respectful reference than to a majority of the President's own friends?" asked a hostile newspaper.<sup>56</sup> The most ingenious aspect of this coup was that six of the Committee were "known to be in favour of a Bank of the United States . . . Then the President's plan will be voted down by his own friends."<sup>57</sup>

Nevertheless, the administration press claimed to have "reason to believe that the bill furnished by Secretary Forward will be regarded as another Compromise Act and passed by a patriotic instead of a party vote."<sup>58</sup> But the Guard kept the bill bottled up in the Select Committee for as long as possible, either because they could not decide

<sup>52</sup>James D. Richardson, ed., op. cit., IV, 74-89.

<sup>53</sup>Madisonian, December 15, 1841.

<sup>54</sup>Congressional Globe, XI, 12.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid., XI, 13.

<sup>56</sup>Richmond Whig, December 17, 1841.

<sup>57</sup>Madisonian, December 15, 1841.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid., December 24, 1841.

what to do with it, or, as Greeley believed, because "Tyler's Virginia animals don't want the Fiscality passed." He thought the Guard wished it defeated so that they could argue in the future that they did have an alternative, which had been rejected without trial. "Of course Clay, Cost Johnson, Botts, Maynard, etc., will walk right into the trap."<sup>59</sup>

Horace Greeley may have exaggerated the subtlety of the Guard's tactics. Whatever those were, it became clear that the Select Committee on Finance was regarded as a method of killing the plan when a resolution was adopted depriving the Committee of any power except to deal with the plan of finance.<sup>60</sup> There was, it seemed, only one suggestion in the Message which the party was prepared to consider seriously.

This was the tariff situation, on which the Committee on Manufactures had been instructed to take evidence during the recess.<sup>61</sup> To Irwin this was the vital measure, and it was to grow in urgency during the session. In Pennsylvania in 1842 twenty blast furnaces were forced into bankruptcy, and under the reduction of the tariff due that summer, the duty on coal would be reduced from one dollar, sixty-eight cents a ton to forty cents.<sup>62</sup> To Pittsburgh, the protection on coal and iron which had not been offered by the revenue act of the previous session, was essential.

<sup>59</sup>Horace Greeley to Thurlow Weed, December 15, 1841, quoted in Harriet A. Weed, ed., op. cit., 470.

<sup>60</sup>Congressional Globe, XI, 24.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid., X, 237.

<sup>62</sup>Malcolm R. Eiselen, The Rise of Pennsylvania Protectionism (unpublished dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1932), 136, 137.

Irwin rose early in the session to call "upon the Southern Whigs to fulfill the pledges made by their brethren of the North, East, and West."<sup>63</sup> For Irwin, this was a new departure: it was the first time that he had led a debate, and he found himself speaking against Robert Barnwell Rhett. Irwin's local newspaper, which had not been impressed by his gift of numerous copies of the President's Message, reprinted this speech in full.<sup>64</sup> Unfortunately, a Whig paper thought that "in the present state of our currency, it is folly to think of giving prosperity to the country by tariff laws."<sup>65</sup> Irwin's vote against the bank still counted heavily against him.

Early in January, a resolution from the Committee on Manufactures calling for a tariff law was passed. Wise attacking this as "a bold and undisguised step towards protection," revealed the sectional division which existed in the ranks of the Guard.<sup>66</sup> Their conflicting attitudes towards the bank problem had already drawn the attention of Clay's lieutenants, as the composition of the Select Committee had shown. A third indication of weakness was suggested by the vote on a resolution to receive abolition petitions. Irwin was in favour of the motion, Cushing absent.<sup>67</sup>

The Whig party was prepared to take full advantage of these weaknesses. Stanly, whose potential for irritating Wise seems to have

<sup>63</sup>Congressional Globe, XI, 26; Appendix, 38-39.

<sup>64</sup>Pittsburgh Gazette, December 17, 1841; January 4, 1842.

<sup>65</sup>Pittsburgh Manufacturer, January 22, 1842, quoted in Eiselen, op. cit., 139.

<sup>66</sup>Congressional Globe, XI, 101.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid., XI, 105.

been realized, was fond of asking for the report of the Select Committee, with the assurance that "the nation felt a deep interest in the matter, and so did the House."<sup>68</sup> In this manner the weakness of the defensive position of the Guard was frequently brought to their attention.

But the greatest weakness of the Guard was the fact that they were in a position to be held responsible for the President's action, and for the greatest liability of all, the Madisonian. Greeley, while in Washington, had extracted a promise from Cushing that the paper would adopt a subdued tone. But, as its editorials showed, the opposite was true. "Look at the editorial drivel," complained Greeley, "We are an unfortunate party!"<sup>69</sup> "The President is not without a party," the paper claimed, "but rapidly winning the admiration of his countrymen."<sup>70</sup> Meetings throughout the country in favour of Tyler were reported as "a spontaneous movement of the sovereign people."<sup>71</sup> Wise seems to have actually placed some faith in these reports, writing that "Tyler is daily gaining strength . . . but in the country [rather] than in Congress."<sup>72</sup>

Certainly, Tyler was not gaining strength in Congress, where the Whig party repeated its strategy of proposing a constitutional amendment to limit the President to one term.<sup>73</sup> This was too obvious a trap for

<sup>68</sup>Congressional Globe, XI, 72.

<sup>69</sup>Horace Greeley to Thurlow Weed, December 15, 1841, quoted in Harriet A. Weed, ed., op. cit., 470.

<sup>70</sup>The Madisonian, January 21, 1842.

<sup>71</sup>Ibid., January 27, 1842.

<sup>72</sup>Henry Wise to Beverley Tucker, January 15, 1842, Tucker MSS.

<sup>73</sup>Congressional Globe, XI, 89.

for the Guard to fall into, for it would acknowledge that the ambitions which the party attributed to Tyler were in fact true.

Accusations that the President was "wooing a certain damsel called Locofocoism . . . with all those winning and almost irresistible blandishments which a gentleman of the Old Dominion knows so well how to employ," did draw the Guard to an impassioned defense of Tyler.<sup>74</sup> For to acknowledge that the President, and thus themselves, had abandoned the party would doom them in Congress to futility. There was no hope of attracting Democratic support after that party's gains in the recent elections: inside congress the Democratic party was well-organized and optimistic.<sup>75</sup> The Guard therefore walked into the trap laid for them. When Wise demanded proof of these accusations, he was shown the leading editorial of that morning's Madisonian, stating that Tyler was no Whig.<sup>76</sup> Wise was defending a President who could allow his official organ to destroy the last tenable position of his allies in the House. But the Guard had no viable alternative: they had to defend an almost hopeless cause.

Urged on by Marshall of Kentucky, who was able to deny that he thought they were "the keepers of the President's conscience" or "ex officio his cabinet," Proffit blundered into a defense of the Madisonian. "Yes, he would look to the people, to the people!" He then drew unwitting attention to the internal weakness of the Guard. When they expressed their sentiments freely, they were told "Oh, the Guard

---

<sup>74</sup>Congressional Globe, XI, 113.

<sup>75</sup>Francis Blair to Andrew Jackson, January 1, 1842, John Spencer Bassett, ed., op. cit., v, 133.

<sup>76</sup>Congressional Globe, XI, 114.

differ." Lamely, he concluded that "if they did, it was a proof of their honesty."<sup>77</sup> Laughter greeted this remark, for Proffit, as in the previous session, had placed his friends in the exact position required by the Whig party.

The little business conducted by the House during the spring of 1842 proved that the Guard did indeed differ. Cushing and Irwin voted against the repeal of the Bankrupt Act, the rest of the Guard in favour.<sup>78</sup> When Wise attacked as "culpably negligent" the first Auditor of the Treasury, recently removed by Tyler, Irwin defended him "as a Pennsylvanian."<sup>79</sup> While Mallory was arguing the superior advantages of the Norfolk naval yard, Cushing cut him short with a motion to improve commerce with the French West Indian colonies.<sup>80</sup> When the reductions in the army appropriations bill were under debate, Cushing made a three hour speech in opposition to these economies. 'Retrenchment Gilmer' spoke for an hour in reply. "Civil war in the Corporal's Guard," commented Adams in his diary.<sup>81</sup>

Adams had reason to feel slightly bitter about the Guard, for he had been the object of their attack on the one occasion in this session on which the Guard acted on the offensive. Even then, there was only an illusion of unity. The occasion arose when Adams presented a petition praying for the dissolution of the Union. Wise, followed by Gilmer, moved a resolution of censure on Adams.<sup>82</sup> Clearly Wise was utilizing the tactics that had seemed so promising in the debate

<sup>77</sup>Congressional Globe, XI, 114.

<sup>78</sup>Ibid., XI, 140.

<sup>79</sup>Ibid., XI, 327.

<sup>80</sup>Ibid., XI, 509.

<sup>81</sup>Charles Francis Adams, ed., op. cit., XI, 163.

<sup>82</sup>Congressional Globe, XI, 168.

over the gag rule in the previous session. Wise possessed one advantage in that Adams had clearly succeeded in shocking the House. But Adams, an equally brilliant tactician, immediately noted that Gilmer "thought proper to play second fiddle to his colleague from Accomac." Gilmer was drawn into a lengthy denial: "he played second fiddle to no man."<sup>83</sup>

The initial shock had died by the time that Gilmer had finished his speech, and even Irwin and Cushing voted unsuccessfully to lay the resolution on the table.<sup>84</sup>

Wise, in a speech that lasted for two days, made use of the most extravagant language. Adams was even criticized for abandoning his father's party. With illustrations drawn from current abolitionist journalism, Wise detailed at length the exact nature of the conspiracy against the South.<sup>85</sup> Understanding his purpose, John Minor Botts questioned the wisdom of censuring Adams when Tyler's cabinet, he claimed, included at least one "undisguised advocate of the immediate dissolution of the Union."<sup>86</sup> Wise had been outmaneuvered again, and the nature of the debate had been changed. Wise found himself defending not the South, but the President.

The debate returned to the censure motion the next day, and continued to occupy the House for the next two weeks. While most of attack took place in the House, there was also a furtive move in the Committee on Foreign Affairs to remove Adams as chairman, involving Rhett, Hunter, and of course Cushing. Proffit and Gilmer spent much of

<sup>83</sup>Bayard Tuckerman, ed., op. cit., II, 112.

<sup>84</sup>Congressional Globe, XI, 169.

<sup>85</sup>Ibid., XI, 171-182.

<sup>86</sup>Niles Weekly Register, LXI, 373. This was taken by Wise as a reference to Abel Upshur.

the Committee meeting in whispered consultation outside the door.<sup>87</sup>  
 "Adams," wrote Gilmer, "is much scared, and begins to fear we shall  
 censure or expel him." In the Committee, Gilmer added, "we think of  
 deposing him as chairman."<sup>88</sup>

In his naive optimism, Gilmer underestimated Adams. When Adams  
 suddenly called for a vote on the issue, the Committee did not depose  
 him, for Cushing lacked the courage to support Gilmer.<sup>89</sup> And on the  
 floor of the House, Adams accused Gilmer of holding a caucus, or  
 "secret conclave beneath this hall" after the original resolution had  
 been offered. While the House laughed at his evident discomfiture,  
 Gilmer claimed "not to know what the gentleman means by a caucus."<sup>90</sup>  
 Adams said the whole affair was planned by the members of the Guard,  
 and the House voted on February 7th. to lay the censure motion on the  
 table, a resolution proposed by Botts and voted for by Irwin and  
 Cushing.<sup>91</sup>

The incident had been a disaster for the Guard, and the resignation  
 of Gilmer and Proffit from the Committee was accepted by the House  
 without comment.<sup>92</sup> The New York Courier found it "especially ridiculous  
 for Mr. Wise and his friends the Nullifiers to affect such spasmodic  
 horror at the idea of dissolution."<sup>93</sup> Even as he defended the South,  
 Wise had been interrupted by a Clay loyalist, Thomas Arnold of

<sup>87</sup>Charles Francis Adams, ed., op. cit., XI, 71.

<sup>88</sup>Thomas Walker Gilmer to Mrs. Gilmer, January 31, 1842, Tyler MSS  
 (College of William and Mary).

<sup>89</sup>Congressional Globe, XI, 208.

<sup>90</sup>Ibid., XI, 208.

<sup>91</sup>Ibid., XI, 215.

<sup>92</sup>Ibid., XI, 222.

<sup>93</sup>Quoted in the Richmond Enquirer, February 8, 1842.

Tennessee, who wished to know if the new political alignment he sought would place Wise at the head of "the old Loco Foco party."<sup>94</sup> The tactic that had seemed so shrewd no more than eight months ago was now a little obvious. Moreover, it did not take into account the fact that the Corporal's Guard extended beyond the South.

As the representatives of the administration, the Guard could hardly attract any support without some positive measures. On February 18, Gilmer finally produced his Retrenchment report. From the care which he took to have this printed for his constituents, it would seem that he regarded this as his great work of the session.<sup>95</sup> Although it had precedence over other House business, it was promptly dismissed in favour of various minor pension bills.<sup>96</sup> Not until a week later did the subject come up for debate, and it was Irwin, who was a member of the Committee, and Cushing who objected to items in the resolutions.

Wise loyally supported the resolutions, which included one that would have placed all official notices and advertisements in the newspaper which had the largest circulation in each state and the District of Columbia. Since this would have been a serious blow to the Madisonian, it may be assumed that that organ, which still claimed that the "Organization of Another Party" was occurring, was now regarded as of little value by the Captain of the Guard.<sup>97</sup>

<sup>94</sup>Congressional Globe, XI, 183.

<sup>95</sup>A copy printed for circulation in the Albemarle district, with a note to that effect in the handwriting of Thomas Walker Gilmer is among his correspondence, Tyler MSS (College of William and Mary).

<sup>96</sup>Congressional Globe, XI, 251.

<sup>97</sup>Madisonian, January 31, 1842.

The debate on these resolutions continued intermittently into March, the only other item of importance being a further Loan Bill, passed by a strict party vote.<sup>98</sup> The administration press affected to see "the dawning of a better day" in the vote on the bill, possibly because the House had passed a bill which the President might be expected to sign.<sup>99</sup>

During March and April no other bills passed the House. Instead the members occupied themselves with various routine measures which allowed time for a prolonged attempt to break down the irrepressible self-confidence of Henry Wise. Even the Democratic press noticed the "abuse which this gentleman is now receiving from his quondam friends."<sup>100</sup> Wise was of course the key figure, the most experienced and effective member of the Guard. Stanly, as before, was the chief spokesman of the regular Whig party. He attempted to illustrate the variety of views among the members of the Guard by reading extracts from some of the early speeches of Proffit, "with whom the gentleman from Virginia had once acted."<sup>101</sup> Stanly concentrated on the theme of Wise's relations with Tyler, asking if Wise saw "the inmost recesses" of the White House.<sup>102</sup> Another point was the appeal to the Whigs of the South. Stanly asked how many "fragments" of the Whig party existed: "there were none certainly in North Carolina . . . the true fragments were to be found at the extremities of the Pennsylvania

---

<sup>98</sup>Congressional Globe, XI, 380. This further Treasury note issue was opposed by the Democrats as an unnecessary extravagance on the part of the administration.

<sup>99</sup>Madisonian, April 2, 1842.

<sup>100</sup>Washington Globe, March 12, 1842.

<sup>101</sup>Congressional Globe, XI, 311.

<sup>102</sup>Ibid., XI, 457.

Avenue."<sup>103</sup>

Occasionally Stanly was joined by other Southern Whigs, such as Meredith Gentry of Tennessee who attacked particularly Wise's argument that the President had no war with the "moderate" men of the Whig party, and ridiculed hopes of a third party nomination for either Tyler or Wise. "No," said Gentry, "a third party would not come - it must be all officers and no soldiers." He was joined by Kenneth Rayner of North Carolina, who called on any Whig who had not approved of the 'Manifesto' reading Tyler out of the party to rise to his feet. The reporter noted that "No one rose."<sup>104</sup>

The party leadership was careful to use Southern Whigs in its attack on Wise, to point out that "the Whigs stood a united body."<sup>105</sup> Occasionally Gilmer was included in the attack, and once, Proffit, each Southern and therefore relevant to this crucial sectional issue.<sup>106</sup> The real point of these attacks was to prove that the party transcended sectional divisions. Yet this was only possible because the Guard could be portrayed as the slightly ridiculous, patronage-hungry adherents of a President without a party.<sup>107</sup> A once serious threat had been caricatured into impotence.

<sup>103</sup>Congressional Globe, XI, 333.

<sup>104</sup>Ibid., XI, 363-364.

<sup>105</sup>Ibid., XI, 333.

<sup>106</sup>Ibid., XI, 303, 339.

<sup>107</sup>In connection with the patronage issue, Congress did request Tyler to furnish the House with a complete list of those members of the House who had personally been applicants for office. This may have been aimed at the Corporal's Guard, or it may reflect a fear of further desertions. Tyler refused the request. James D. Richardson, op. cit., IV, 105-106.

And as Wise was constantly reminded, his dependence on Tyler was forcing him into an absurd position: he even found himself defending the appointment of Waddy Thompson, that "notorious bootlicker," as Ambassador to Mexico.<sup>108</sup> He was still able to look to his own interests, energetically defending increased naval expenditures.<sup>109</sup> Mallory, also, conducted a lengthy debate with the Democratic member from Philadelphia over the rival merits of their respective naval yards.<sup>110</sup> Irwin, with some difficulty, was able to present a resolution of the Pennsylvania legislature asking for improvements to allow a regular steamship traffic on the Ohio River.<sup>111</sup> But the House only allowed this in the complete absence of major legislation. There was of course always the Exchequer bill. The Committee report had finally been produced by Cushing on February 17, but the Guard showed no interest in taking up the bill.<sup>112</sup> The Madisonian, which had been asking, in its editorials on the subject, "Is Congress mad? Is Patriotism Dead?", had reversed its position by late April. "Let us admit," it said in a suitably magnanimous manner, "that the President may be wrong about the Bank."<sup>113</sup>

The main issue before Congress that summer was therefore the tariff question. The degree to which the party offensive against the Guard had been successful may be seen in the fact that no member of the Guard

---

<sup>108</sup> Congressional Globe, XI, 422.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., XI, 499-500.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid., XI, 508-509.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid., XI, 422.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., XI, 247.

<sup>113</sup> Madisonian, March 21, April 21, 1842.

spoke in the debate on the first bill, extending temporarily the operation of the tariff beyond the deadline of the Compromise Act. In part their silence might be due to the fact that Millard Fillmore had twice been able to blame the Guard for the disruption of the business of the House, a charge denied indignantly by Proffit and Wise.<sup>114</sup> The Clay press echoed this accusation, claiming that business had "been repeatedly stopped by a detachment of five or six worms called the Corporal's Guard."<sup>115</sup> Certainly the House was distinctly tired of the sound of Wise's voice. Playful threats by Stanly to give Wise the floor since "that gentleman speaks so seldom here," were greeted with laughter and cries of "No, no; oh, no!"<sup>116</sup>

Not until the veto on the second tariff bill did the Guard again play any part in the House. Whether by design or accident, it arrived as Cushing was speaking on a minor matter of foreign affairs. Since, under the one hour rule, he still had fifty minutes remaining, he refused to give up the floor, continuing to speak with evident enjoyment as Proffit called out the exact remaining time to any member who enquired.<sup>117</sup> But the regular Whigs already had their plans organized, and a Select Committee on the Veto was appointed under the chairmanship of Adams, the Guard all voting with the Democrats on this issue.<sup>118</sup>

Although the Madisonian claimed that "the situation of the President at this time is an enviable one," that of the Corporal's Guard was not:

<sup>114</sup>Congressional Globe, XI, 359-361, 339.

<sup>115</sup>"A Clay paper" quoted in the Madisonian, April 26, 1842.

<sup>116</sup>Congressional Globe, XI, 334.

<sup>117</sup>Ibid., XI, 865-866.

<sup>118</sup>Ibid., XL, 875.

for, when the members of the Committee were announced, it was found that Irwin and Gilmer were appointed. Irwin, placed neatly between his loyalty to the President and to Pittsburgh's need for a tariff, declined to serve. "A perfect uproar" ensued.<sup>119</sup> Although Irwin thus avoided the issue, Gilmer seemed happy to produce a minority report from the Committee, signed only by himself. Adams was able to ensure that the minority report was not printed, although the Democrats insisted that the report at least be read.<sup>120</sup> Although Irwin urged that the House find a compromise with the President, it was clear that for the remainder of the session the majority was most interested in destroying the President, or at least making him ridiculous. The last effort that Irwin made was a motion to reconsider the bill without the clause which continued the operation of the distribution act in the event of an increased tariff. Cushing, the other protection member, pointed out to New England that any tariff, however limited, was better than none. Amazingly, the motion passed the House with the united support of the Guard.<sup>121</sup>

Gilmer, at least, could hardly have realized that the bill itself would pass and receive the President's signature. Its passage might at first seem a victory for Tyler and the Guard, for the effective abandonment of distribution in return for a tariff was a major surrender by the Clay leadership. But the vote on the tariff revealed again the sectional weakness of the Guard. Adams, noting in his diary

---

<sup>119</sup>Madisonian, August 11, 1842; Congressional Globe, XI, 882.

<sup>120</sup>Congressional Globe, XI, 896-899.

<sup>121</sup>Ibid., XI, 884, 914-915.

that "the long agony was over and the lands are lost forever," added that "the Corporal's Guard divided equally upon the bill." Cushing, Irwin, and Proffit "with extreme reluctance," voted in favour of the bill: the three Virginians were opposed.<sup>122</sup>

At the moment of their apparent triumph, the Guard had been unable to close their ranks, perhaps in part because, as the administration press later announced, "it is known that the President, though he signed it, did not approve the provisions of the bill."<sup>123</sup> The signature of the bill was accompanied by a protest against Adams' report on the veto, a protest which the House refused to receive, despite the protests of the Guard.<sup>124</sup> On this note the session ended.

A few weeks later the President and Henry Wise spent a quiet day fishing from a new steamboat off the Eastern Shore.<sup>125</sup> It may be imagined that they looked back on the previous session without satisfaction. The regular Whigs had been able to take advantage of the contradiction between the views of the President and those of the constituents which the Guard represented. On two major issues, the bank and the tariff, the party leadership had taken some care to ensure that the Guard were forced to resolve that contradiction. As far as the bank was concerned, the Guard had decided in favour of the President. Cushing

<sup>122</sup>Charles Francis Adams, ed., op. cit., XI, 243.

<sup>123</sup>Madisonian, September 8, 1842. It has been said that the President alienated his Virginia supporters in Congress by signing this bill in order to conciliate the majority. Edwin Payne Adkins, op. cit., 114.

<sup>124</sup>James D. Richardson, op. cit., IV, 190-193; Congressional Globe, XI, 974.

<sup>125</sup>Madisonian, September 29, 1842.

and Irwin had reported the exchequer plan from committee despite the views of their constituents. On the tariff, their votes had reflected the interests they represented. But this had only been possible because the leadership had surrendered the clause continuing distribution.

There had been no other surrender. The session had proved that "Mr. Tyler was likely to get no more than a Corporal's Guard."<sup>126</sup> This can scarcely have surprised Wise. Fighting with the twin handicaps of a President who seemed to have no understanding of the workings of the House, or even the correct use of patronage, and an administration organ that perpetually claimed that the President rejected both the Whig party and its congressional leadership, Wise had been condemned to futility. He had also shown the inflexibility of his tactics. Although in a very different position as administration spokesman than earlier as party rebel, he had continued to use the same strategy until the laughter of the House exposed it as threadbare.

The Corporal's Guard had challenged the party in the special session. In return the party had isolated the challenge and identified it with the administration. In this position, the Guard had lost every encounter with the party leadership. Its existence was at best tenuous. The Guard had little to offer even to their constituents.

---

<sup>126</sup>Speech of Arnold of Tennessee in the House, January 27, 1842, Niles Weekly Register, LXI, 374.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE DISINTEGRATION OF THE GUARD

As the Guard returned home in September of 1842, Gilmer at least was glad to leave Washington. He was "sick of this place - of being pestered and haunted by office seekers."<sup>1</sup> For him and his companions, Mallory and Wise, the situation was as discouraging in Virginia as it had been when they left for Washington nine months previously.

The spring elections had been the worst catastrophe the Whig party had ever suffered in Virginia. This was a part of a widespread disillusionment with the Whig party, attributed to its inept performance in power at the national level. Even the party press in Virginia referred to it as "the sweep," and bemoaned the loss of "such strong Whig districts" in the House of Delegates.<sup>2</sup> "The overthrow of Clayism in Virginia is overwhelming," wrote the administration organ.<sup>3</sup> The real question was whether other varieties of Whig might expect to be saved.

Gilmer did not think so, and he continued to move into the Democratic party with increased speed. At Amherst Courthouse in November he spoke in a manner "very offensive to the Whigs."<sup>4</sup> He could

---

<sup>1</sup>Thomas Walker Gilmer to Mrs. Gilmer, August 23, 1841, Tyler MSS (College of William and Mary).

<sup>2</sup>Richmond Whig, May 6, 1842.

<sup>3</sup>Madisonian, May 9, 1842.

<sup>4</sup>Richmond Enquirer, December 6, 1842.

hardly act otherwise, since his Whig constituents had already nominated another candidate. The Democratic press officially welcomed him into the party. "We think we may assert that three-fifths of his constituents will decide at the polls next Spring that he has changed his party associations for good and sufficient reasons."<sup>5</sup> But there was as yet no indication that Gilmer was even assured of the Democratic nomination.

Mallory may have already decided not to seek another term in the House. He could hardly have intended to seek the Democratic nomination, since he remained a Whig for the rest of his life, and was anyway a personal, if not always political, admirer of Henry Clay.<sup>6</sup> A correspondent of the Whig assured the readers that Mallory could not "get twenty votes in this county again for any office whatever, from both parties."<sup>7</sup> Wise, as it happened, was sick and unable to leave Washington. He did decline offer of any vacant appointment made by Tyler, and was therefore, presumably, expecting to stand for re-election.<sup>8</sup>

At least one member of the Guard, Caleb Cushing, made the decision not to run for re-election during the recess. In September he issued an address to his constituents, in which he claimed in aggrieved tones to have at least voted for distribution, as a "mere question of interest, and local interest too." He did this, he stated, because "many gentlemen belonging to the manufacturing interest" wished "an increased margin for

<sup>5</sup>Richmond Enquirer, December 6, 1842.

<sup>6</sup>Harrison W. Burton, The History of Norfolk, Virginia (Norfolk, 1877), 9.

<sup>7</sup>Richmond Whig, March 1, 1842.

<sup>8</sup>Address of Henry Wise to his constituents, March 6, 1843, in Lyon Gardiner Tyler, op. cit., II, 309.

protection" to be necessitated.<sup>9</sup>

Cushing returned to Newburyport and hired a large church in which to explain his actions, expecting to have an overflow crowd. But the church was not even half full, and "his remarks were greeted with death-like frigidity."<sup>10</sup> This description may be exaggerated, but nothing could disguise the fact of the overwhelming triumph of the Democratic party in the state elections in October. "We have indeed achieved the impossible" wrote Martin Van Buren's correspondent, referring to the Democratic majority in the legislature.<sup>11</sup>

Cushing wrote to the Newburyport Herald announcing that he would not accept renomination, and denying with unnecessary emphasis that his actions were motivated by any fear of defeat.<sup>12</sup> In fact his district had voted Democratic at the state level, and the administration press found it necessary to emphasize that "we repeat, Mr. Cushing is no office-seeker."<sup>13</sup> There had been persistent rumors to the effect that Cushing was to take the Treasury Department.<sup>14</sup> He himself denied these

<sup>9</sup>Richmond Enquirer, October 14, 1842; Washington Globe, October 13, 1842.

<sup>10</sup>Boston Atlas, reprinted in the Richmond Whig, October 14, 1842; Indiana Journal, October 26, 1842. These reports may be contrasted with the description of crowds waiting at the railway station, cannon salutes, etc., in the Madisonian, October 10, 1842.

<sup>11</sup>George Bancroft to Martin Van Buren, December 9, 1842, Worthington C. Ford, ed., op. cit., 395.

<sup>12</sup>Richmond Enquirer, November 1, 1842.

<sup>13</sup>Madisonian, November 25, 1842.

<sup>14</sup>New York Union, reprinted in the Richmond Whig, September 20, 1842.

indignantly, but there was no obvious alternative.<sup>15</sup> Cushing was now totally dependent on the President. Unfortunately, it did not seem that both Webster and Cushing could be in the cabinet. Webster, it was thought, would not resign because he feared the rejection of his nomination to a foreign mission by the Senate. This was, as the Richmond Whig declared, considered "cruel in view of the ambitions with which he knows the faithful breast of Caleb Cushing to be burning."<sup>16</sup>

Equally dependent on the President was George Proffit. The elections of 1842 had produced a decisive Democratic majority in the Indiana legislature.<sup>17</sup> Neither was there any hope that the Democratic party would accept a Tyler man. "The present is a Whig administration: John Tyler is a Whig," the party press stated firmly.<sup>18</sup> Proffit did not return to the state during the recess. He instead accepted that, as his local Whig paper claimed, he "dare not visit" his "indignant constituents." However, he announced that he belonged to "the Republican portion" of the Whig party.<sup>19</sup> He added that he was not discouraged, but this attitude could only reflect his hopes of reward by John Tyler.

Irwin could at least offer his constituents the tariff. This measure had aroused overwhelming bipartisan approval in Pennsylvania.<sup>20</sup>

---

<sup>15</sup>Caleb Cushing to Henry Wise, September 24, 1842, Lyon Gardiner Tyler, op. cit., III, 104-105.

<sup>16</sup>Richmond Whig, November 25, 1842.

<sup>17</sup>Fort Wayne Sentinel, November 5, 1842.

<sup>18</sup>Western Sun and General Advertiser, November 26, 1842.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., November 12, 1842, quoting the Evansville Journal.

<sup>20</sup>Malcolm R. Eiselen, op. cit., 149.

Apparently he was given a public dinner in Pittsburgh, at which Irwin, in his speech, cited "the unanimity of sentiment prevailing among the members of all parties."<sup>21</sup> The administration press drew attention to the act that the invitation to the dinner had "an immense number of signers, professedly of both parties."<sup>22</sup> While it might be true that Irwin gained wide approval in his district, it was equally true that he was identified as an extreme anti-mason, and the anti-masonic vote was steadily declining during the early forties.<sup>23</sup> It would be totally unrealistic to expect the bitter political strife that characterized Pittsburgh politics suddenly to die for his benefit. Irwin was plainly equally dependent on John Tyler for his future.

The Corporal's Guard entered the final session of the twenty-seventh congress in electoral positions of varying degrees of insecurity. Wise, though he had not even visited his district, was as ever in a strong position. Gilmer could only continue in the House if he gained the Democratic nomination, as in fact he did.<sup>24</sup> Mallory, who showed little sign of political ambition, was in no position to seek renomination. Neither were the other three members of the Guard, but in their case distinct political ambitions were present. And thus in the final session of congress, the enthusiasm shown by members of the Guard for their role was in proportion to their need for presidential patronage. The only alternative lay in the ranks of the Democratic

---

<sup>21</sup>Madisonian, October 14, 1842.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., October 3, 1842.

<sup>23</sup>Sister Mary Theophane Geary, op. cit., 16.

<sup>24</sup>A Biographical Directory of the American Congress, 948.

party, and it was very unlikely for all save Gilmer that the party would accept them unless it first accepted the President.

In the administration there was some interest in a rapprochement with the Democratic party. For Congress reassembled in December to the noisy accompaniment of the Madisonian's overtures to the Democrats. "John Tyler alone is the man round whom the Democratic party can rally with security, on whom it can rely," the journal asserted, and the theme was reiterated throughout the month.<sup>25</sup> This was noted with interest, even amusement, by the Democratic press. "Shall the Democratic Party take the responsibility of the present Administration?", asked the Globe, and gave the predictable reply.<sup>26</sup> Francis Blair, the editor, believed that Tyler wished his decade of warfare with Jackson could be blotted out.<sup>27</sup> The Madisonian, which claimed the defection of "millions" of Democrats, was still, it seemed, read with attention by members of congress.<sup>28</sup> One ironical by-product of this move towards the opposition party was that it was they, and not the Whigs, who attacked the Corporal's Guard as a 'third party' to ward off a possible threat.<sup>29</sup>

---

<sup>25</sup>Madisonian, December 16, 1842. See also the editorials of December 2nd., 8th., and 9th., 1842.

<sup>26</sup>Washington Globe, December 20, 1842.

<sup>27</sup>Francis Blair to Andrew Jackson, November 13, 1842, John Spencer Bassett, op. cit., 175.

<sup>28</sup>Madisonian, December 16, 1842.

<sup>29</sup>Speech of Meriwether of Georgia, January 4, 1843, Congressional Globe, XII, 115; speech of Gordon of New York, January 9, 1843, ibid., XII, 124; speech of Ingersoll of Pennsylvania, January 9, 1843, ibid., 138.

Congress opened on December 5th. All the Corporal's Guard were present with the exception of Proffit, who was ill.<sup>30</sup> Adams presented his usual motion to rescind the twenty-first rule. If he hoped for another debate with Wise, he was disappointed, for the House voted to lay the resolution on the table a few days later.<sup>31</sup> Wise did no more than raise a point of order.<sup>32</sup> It was obvious that the Corporal's Guard no longer existed as a threat to create a new party: the appeal to the South was over.<sup>33</sup>

It was also obvious that this was to be a 'lame duck' session, for even the Whigs on the floor of the House were prepared to admit that "all conceded the Democracy would have a large majority."<sup>34</sup> Even the reception of a message containing two vetoes failed to arouse the Whigs to a display of wrath.<sup>35</sup> If the Corporal's Guard ever had any chance of disrupting the Whig party on President Tyler's behalf, it was in this session. The fact that they did not attempt to, that they confined themselves to purely rhetorical defenses of the President, suggests not only the limitations on their loyalty to Tyler, but their

<sup>30</sup>Madisonian, December 2, 1842.

<sup>31</sup>Congressional Globe, XII, 41.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., XII, 31.

<sup>33</sup>The anxiety of Henry Wise to present a resolution of the Virginia legislature praying a remission of a fine on Jackson suggests he may have given the Democratic party some consideration. Letter of Henry Wise to the Governor, December 24, 1842, H. W. Flournoy, ed., Calendar of Virginia State Papers (11 vols., Richmond, 1893), XI, 8. Resolution presented December 27, 1842, Congressional Globe, XII, 86.

<sup>34</sup>Speech of Arnold of Tennessee, December 21, 1842, ibid., XII, 71.

<sup>35</sup>Congressional Globe, XII, 52.

evident interest also in his gratitude.

A special message from the President on February 13th. served as a reminder that it would be necessary at least to show interest in the Exchequer Bill.<sup>36</sup> Cushing had urged that the bill be sent to the Committee of the Whole, but Millard Fillmore had buried it at the start of the session in the Committee on Ways and Means.<sup>37</sup> And a majority report of the Committee had recommended that the House take no action on the bill. Cushing had offered criticism of this: he did not say that they were bound to have reported the Exchequer plan, but, he concluded weakly, "they should have reported some bill."<sup>38</sup> The Madisonian deduced from this that "the Exchequer is to be given the go-by."<sup>39</sup> So far, Cushing had scored all the credit for his lonely championship of the bill.

Wise, his interest in Tyler's legislative program very small by now, merely joked that he had been deprived of his "promised chance" to discuss the Exchequer Bill, after the President's special message was read, and relapsed into silence.<sup>40</sup> This was the least appropriate moment for the press to speak of "our present 'wise' administration in Washington."<sup>41</sup> When the repeal of the bankrupt law came up for debate, a measure for which Wise had pressed hard in the previous session, he merely remarked that, if there were half a million debtors in the

<sup>36</sup>James D. Richardson, ed., op. cit., IV, 226-227.

<sup>37</sup>Congressional Globe, XII, 42-43.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., XII, 136.

<sup>39</sup>Madisonian, January 11, 1843.

<sup>40</sup>Congressional Globe, XII, 320.

<sup>41</sup>Richmond Whig, February 18, 1843.

country who would be hurt by it, there were probably more than half a million creditors who would welcome it.<sup>42</sup> The House appreciated this type of electoral arithmetic, but Wise did not pursue his opportunity.

Gilmer was ill through a large part of January and early February. So depressed was he that he suffered a religious conversion experience.<sup>43</sup> In late February he had not yet recovered enough to walk to the Capitol, but had to be taken in a carriage.<sup>44</sup> He was probably spared the debate on his retrenchment bill on February 14, a bill that the House had for once refused to print, perhaps as a gesture to economy.<sup>45</sup>

The bill, which was designed to reduce such contingent expenses of the House as mileage, was chiefly regarded as an opportunity for the display of humor. Wise offered an amendment to limit food rations handed out to members of the House, to which Thomas Arnold of Tennessee added the clause "except for the Guard who are to receive foreign missions after the 4th. of March next." This raised some laughter, and Wise, in good humor, moved to except the Senate "where there is no member of the Guard."<sup>46</sup> It was clear that the Corporal's Guard, to the House and to its Captain, was no more than a joke.

As a further illustration of his lack of interest in the administration, Wise abandoned its official organ, which had claimed that a secret party caucus had killed the Exchequer Bill one evening.

<sup>42</sup>Congressional Globe, XII, 72.

<sup>43</sup>Letters of Thomas Walker Gilmer to Mrs. Gilmer, January 19, February 5, 1843, Tyler MSS (College of William and Mary).

<sup>44</sup>Richmond Whig, February 28, 1843.

<sup>45</sup>Congressional Globe, XII, 352.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., XII, 284.

Wise said that neither he nor any member of the Guard knew of it or was responsible for the editorial policy of the Madisonian.<sup>47</sup> The opportunity for this disclaimer must have given Wise some satisfaction after a year of persistent embarrassment by that journal. This session, it did not as previously pay tribute to the "consummate ability" of the Guard.<sup>48</sup> In fact, all mention of the group disappeared from its columns.

If Wise was conspicuous for his abandonment of the administration, Gilmer for his absence, and Mallory for his silence, Cushing was equally conspicuous for his defense of the President. He thus gained the blessing of the Madisonian, which had been withheld from others.<sup>49</sup>

Shortly after Christmas, Cushing made his first appeal to the Whig party on behalf of the President.<sup>50</sup> It was described as a "profligate offer of the patronage of the general government to any party who would pay for it by supporting John Tyler." The party press thought it had "no parallel since the declining days of the Roman empire."<sup>51</sup> The opposition press believed there "would be a postponement of the sale for want of bidders," and a Democratic member waved the election results of the previous fall in Cushing's face.<sup>52</sup> Proffit offered support in terms that were at best ambiguous: he did not know "exactly what the

<sup>47</sup>Congressional Globe, XII, 189.

<sup>48</sup>Madisonian, July 1, 1842.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid., February 25, 1843, describing Cushing as "our friend and benefactor."

<sup>50</sup>Congressional Globe, XII, 87-88.

<sup>51</sup>Richmond Whig, January 4, 1843.

<sup>52</sup>Washington Globe, December 28, 1842; Congressional Globe, XII, 108-109.

gentleman from Massachusetts intended to intimate . . . but he knew that his friend had some peculiarities of expression."<sup>53</sup> The House laughed. Wise remarked that this administration was no worse than any previous one in its use of patronage, thus further revealing his disenchantment.<sup>54</sup>

But if the Corporal's Guard was no longer interested in gathering congressional adherents for the administration, it could hardly allow the President to be impeached without a murmur. On January 10th., John Minor Botts moved to appoint a Committee to investigate charges against the President with a view to impeachment.<sup>55</sup> Since it was a Massachusetts Whig who attempted to suppress the motion, it may be assumed that it had, as the administration press claimed, "shocked the sober and discreet men of both parties."<sup>56</sup> But the attempt to suppress Botts also seems to have disappointed the bored members of the House, for there were cries of "Oh, no; let us have a vote!" The motion of Botts was defeated, though not by an overwhelming margin.<sup>57</sup>

Only Proffit, of all the members of the Guard, felt impelled to speak.<sup>58</sup> The others merely voted against the resolution. Nothing could illustrate more pointedly the disintegration of the Guard.

The question of the future was thought to be uppermost in their minds, as the remark of Arnold in the Retrenchment debate indicated.

<sup>53</sup>Congressional Globe, XII, 117.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid., XII, 98.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid., XII, 144.

<sup>56</sup>Madisonian, January 21, 1843.

<sup>57</sup>A vote of 83-127; Congressional Globe, XII, 146.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid., XII, 147.

Gilmer, of course, had his plans to become the Democratic representative from Albemarle already prepared. "I hear that Wise is nominated for France," he wrote home, "I prefer going on a mission home to my old woman."<sup>59</sup> The fact that he was a Democrat in the twenty-eighth congress did not make him an opponent of President Tyler. He played a significant part in raising congressional support for the annexation of Texas, and was appointed Secretary of the Navy for a brief period before his accidental death in an explosion aboard the warship Princeton.<sup>60</sup>

It seems highly unlikely that Gilmer could have maintained his position in national politics after the failure of Tyler's brief bid for re-election, but it is equally true that Gilmer's membership in the Guard did not end his career in Washington. The other members, with the exception of Mallory, were less fortunate.

Speculation had for some time centered on Caleb Cushing. The President had sent a special message to Congress asking for an extraordinary appropriation for a mission to China.<sup>61</sup> In the House it was noted that Cushing, although a member of the Committee which reported the bill, took no part in the discussions or votes on it, thus strengthening the belief that this mission had been reserved for him.<sup>62</sup> Benton, who offered this analysis, was unimpressed by Tyler's argument that China was a vast potential market, and "thought they had

<sup>59</sup>Thomas Walker Gilmer to Mrs. Gilmer, February 28, 1843, Tyler MSS (College of William and Mary).

<sup>60</sup>O. P. Chitwood, op. cit., 284. The most detailed account of the Princeton accident is given by Roger Seager, And Tyler Too (New York, 1963), 204-207.

<sup>61</sup>James D. Richardson, op. cit., IV, 211-214.

<sup>62</sup>Thomas Hart Benton, op. cit., II, 512.

enough to do without meddling with the Celestial Empire."<sup>63</sup>

Cushing preferred the Treasury Department, and Webster had recently offered some hope that this might be his.<sup>64</sup> On the last day of the session, Adams asked Cushing if he was acting as an executive officer or a member. "He smiled, and answered in good humor that he did not know."<sup>65</sup> On the same day, he claimed on the floor of the House to be the member who had most cause for complaining of unjust treatment.<sup>66</sup> He was as yet unaware of the treatment that he was to receive at the hands of the Senate.

For on the last day of the session, Tyler nominated Cushing to the Treasury Department, Wise to the Paris embassy, and Irwin to the more modest post of charge d'affaires in Denmark. Only Irwin was approved by the Senate, despite the repeated renomination of Cushing by Tyler.<sup>67</sup> The rejection of Wise and Cushing, it was said, by an opposition organ, "imparted satisfaction to many of both parties, and, as far as we can ascertain, is particularly disagreeable to none."<sup>68</sup> It was "a clear expression of the opinion of all parties in the Senate on the conduct

<sup>63</sup>Congressional Globe, XII, 392.

<sup>64</sup>Daniel Webster to Caleb Cushing, February 29, 1843, Fletcher Webster, ed., The Writings and Speeches of Daniel Webster (18 vols., Boston, 1857-1903), XVI, 401.

<sup>65</sup>Charles Francis Adams, ed., op. cit., XI, 333.

<sup>66</sup>Congressional Globe, XII, 397.

<sup>67</sup>James D. Richardson, op. cit., IV, 223; Madisonian, March 4, 1843; Charles Francis Adams, ed., op. cit., XI, 367; Claude M. Fues, op. cit., I, 387-389.

<sup>68</sup>Richmond Whig, March 7, 1843.

of the President,"<sup>69</sup> remarked another. It might be noted that Wise had even failed to gain the vote of Rives.<sup>70</sup>

It only remained to find a suitable position for Proffit. Tyler's initial failure to look after this matter aroused some alarm in Irwin's mind. As he pointed out to Cushing, "the administration owes him much, and he should be taken care of." Ultimately, Proffit asked Tyler for an appointment, and was given the mission to Rio de Janeiro.<sup>71</sup>

His stay in Rio de Janeiro was brief, for he failed to gain confirmation of his appointment when the new congress met. Irwin, however, was able to retain the more modest position of charge d'affaires in Denmark, and the Senate also agreed to Cushing's mission to China. With the success of this expedition, and the signature of a commercial treaty with China, Cushing was able to regain some of his lost prestige.<sup>72</sup>

In contrast to this rather desperate search for executive office, Wise sought re-election as a Whig, explaining bluntly to his constituents that this "had been forced upon" him by the action of the Senate.<sup>73</sup> He ran as an anti-Clay Whig against Carter Hill, the strongest candidate that the party could find. The election centered on Hill's charges that Wise was grossly inconsistent. Needless to say, Wise was re-elected. Though he remained a supporter of Tyler, he did not serve his

<sup>69</sup>Washington Globe, March 6, 1843.

<sup>70</sup>Indiana Journal, March 22, 1843.

<sup>71</sup>William W. Irwin to Caleb Cushing, March 24, 1843, Lyon Gardiner Tyler, op. cit., III, 109; A Biographical Directory of the American Congress, 1484.

<sup>72</sup>See Claude M. Fuess, op. cit., ch. VII ff., for a description of the remainder of Cushing's long and varied career.

<sup>73</sup>Richmond Enquirer, March 11, 1843.

full term in the twenty-eighth congress, but instead took the mission to Brazil on the return of Proffit.<sup>74</sup>

Mallory retired to Norfolk. Since he was no longer dependent on Henry Wise in congress, he was able to revert to being a Clay Whig, even delivering the memorial oration in Norfolk on the day of Clay's funeral. Millard Fillmore, who had as Chairman of the Ways and Means Committee been the object of Mallory's attacks, appointed him navy agent at Norfolk. For the last seven years of his life, Mallory was President of the Norfolk and Petersburg Railroad Company.<sup>75</sup> His membership in the Corporal's Guard was something of an aberration in such a conventional Whig career. Had Wise been neither a popular figure in Norfolk nor Chairman of the House Naval Affairs Committee, it seems unlikely that Mallory would have behaved in a manner different from that of any other Clay Whig in Virginia.

For the final session of the twenty-seventh Congress had reduced the Corporal's Guard to the role that is usually ascribed to them. They had been no more than the champions of the President. The strong connection between their individual needs in terms of appointive office and the varying extent to which they championed President Tyler underscores the transient quality of their loyalty to him.

Only in an indirect sense did John Tyler ever have any congressional supporters. The Guard was first and foremost six individual members of the party who lacked enthusiasm for Henry Clay. Their rebellion against his leadership in the special session was a product of simple calcula-

---

<sup>74</sup>Richmond Enquirer, March 23, 1843; John S. Wise, op. cit., ch. I, describes Wise's years in Brazil.

<sup>75</sup>William S. Forrest, op. cit., 294, 391.

tions based on local political factors. It became an overt rebellion only because the party leadership in the House encouraged it through their inept handling of the legislative programme of the session.

Henry Wise offered to these dissatisfied members of the party an alternative leadership that would apparently have the support of the executive. But it must be emphasized that Wise himself was not so reckless in invoking the name of the President as his "second fiddle."

It was Gilmer who by implication suggested to the regular Whig leadership a method of suppressing the rebellion that was burgeoning in the House. Gilmer was a man clearly out of his depth in the complex politics of the House of Representatives. His political vision was bounded by the Virginia stateline. His political vocabulary was even more limited, based as it was on the belief that the party formation of the Jacksonian period was artificial. Limited by his anachronistic conception that all politicians reveal themselves as either Federalists or Republicans, he was more a hindrance than a help to Wise.<sup>76</sup>

Yet Wise had been in the process of creating a personal following in the House as an alternative to the leadership of Henry Clay. He gravely under-estimated Clay and the cohesion of the party. The Corporal's Guard was forced into an uneasy union with the administration as the Regular Whigs drew together against the successive vetoes of John Tyler. What had been very close to the "plot for breaking up the Whig party" became a somehow ridiculous group of personal adherents of the President,

---

<sup>76</sup>Gilmer was the only member of the Guard who had any personal friendship with Tyler prior to 1840. That his attitude at the opening of the special session was hardly that of a loyal supporter may be gathered from his derisive reference to Tyler as "his majesty," in a letter to Frank Minor, May 25, 1841, Tyler MSS (College of William and Mary).

through no choice of its own.<sup>77</sup>

The two succeeding sessions of Congress revealed the impossible position of the Corporal's Guard. It had placed its members in a position where local political factors which once made rebellion logical now made re-election hopeless in most cases. Only then did the Corporal's Guard become no more, indeed, something less, than the loyal supporters of the President.

In varying degrees, this administration marked a reversal of the political careers of each member of the Guard, with the possible exception of Gilmer. This was particularly true in the case of Henry Wise, whose career had promised considerable success in national politics. His role, as he viewed it, had become that of assisting Tyler to stand up.<sup>78</sup> In later years Tyler was to keep a portrait of Wise prominently displayed in his house. He would tell his visitors that, after Littleton Tazewell, Wise had the most brilliant political mind that he had ever known.<sup>79</sup> It was a poor return for such a service.

<sup>77</sup>National Intelligencer, quoted in the Washington Globe, September 11, 1841.

<sup>78</sup>Henry Wise to Beverley Tucker, June 15, 1842, Tucker MSS.

<sup>79</sup>"Edmund Ruffin's Visit to John Tyler" (extract from the diary of Edmund Ruffin), William and Mary College Quarterly Historical Magazine, XIV, no. 2, (October, 1905), 195.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### Primary Sources

#### 1. Manuscripts.

Nathaniel Beverley Tucker Papers, Earl Gregg Swem Library, College of William and Mary.

John Tyler Papers, Earl Gregg Swem Library, College of William and Mary.

The Presidential Papers of John Tyler, Library of Congress (microfilm), used on microfilm at the Earl Gregg Swem Library, College of William and Mary.

#### 2. Newspapers.

The Fort Wayne Sentinel (Fort Wayne, Indiana), January, 1841 - April, 1843.

The Globe (Washington, D.C.), January, 1841 - April, 1843.

The Indiana Journal (Indianapolis, Indiana), November, 1840 - April, 1843.

The Madisonian (Washington, D.C.), January, 1841 - April, 1843.

Niles Weekly Register (Baltimore, Maryland), January, 1841 - April, 1843.

The Pittsburgh Gazette (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania), January, 1841 - April, 1843.

The Richmond Enquirer (Richmond, Virginia), October, 1840 - April, 1843.

The Richmond Whig (Richmond, Virginia), January, 1841 - April, 1843.

The Times (London, England), January, 1841 - April, 1843.

The Western Sun and General Advertiser (Vincennes, Indiana), January, 1841 - April, 1843.

## 3. Public Documents.

The Congressional Globe, Vol. X (27th. Congress, 1st. Session), Vol XI (27th. Congress, 2nd. Session), Vol XII (27th. Congress, 3d. Session). Washington: Blair & Rives, 1841 - 1843.

Flournoy, H. W. (ed.). Calendar of Virginia State Papers and Other Manuscripts, January 1, 1836 - April 15, 1869. 11 vols. Richmond, 1893.

Richardson, James D. (ed.). A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents, 1789-1897. 10 vols. Washington, 1907.

## 4. Printed Sources and Writings of Contemporaries.

Adams, Charles Francis (ed.). The Memoirs of John Quincy Adams. 12 vols. Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott & Co., 1874-1877.

Adkins, William (ed.). O. Jennings Wise Letters, 1848 - 1861. Bloomington: (typescript), 1944, Earl Gregg Swem Library, College of William and Mary.

Ambler, Charles Henry (ed.). The Correspondence of R. M. T. Hunter, 1826-1876, in the Annual Report of the American Historical Association for 1916, vol. II. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1918.

Bassett, John Spencer (ed.). The Correspondence of Andrew Jackson. 6 vols. Washington: The Carnegie Institute, 1933.

Benton, Thomas Hart. Thirty Years View. 2 vols. New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1854-1856.

Boucher, Chauncey S., and Robert P. Brook (eds.). Correspondence Addressed to John C. Calhoun, 1837-1849, in the Annual Report of the American Historical Association for 1929, vol. II. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1930.

Colton, Calvin (ed.). The Life, Correspondence, and Speeches of Henry Clay. 6 vols. Rev. ed. New York: A.S. Barnes & Co., 1855-1857.

Ford, Worthington Chauncey (ed.). The Van Buren - Bancroft Correspondence, 1830-1844, in the Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society, vol. XLII. Boston, 1909.

Grattan, Thomas Colley. Civilized America. 2 vols. London: Bradbury & Evans, 1859.

Greeley, Horace. Recollections of a Busy Life. New York: J. B. Ford & Co., 1868.

Kennedy, John Pendleton. A Defense of the Whigs. New York: Harper Bros., 1844.

- Mallory, Daniel (ed.). The Life and Speeches of the Hon. Henry Clay. 5th. ed., New York: Van Amringe and Bixby, 1844.
- Owen, Robert Dale. 'Recallings from a Public Life: Western People and Politicians of Forty Years Ago', in Scribner's Monthly, Vol. XV (November, 1877), 255-263.
- Poore, Benjamin Perley. Perley's Reminiscences of Sixty Years in the National Metropolis. 2 vols. Philadelphia: Hubbard Bros., 1886.
- Rabb, Kate Milner (ed.). A Tour through Indiana in 1840: the Diary of John Parsons of Petersburg, Virginia. New York: R. M. McBride & Co., 1920.
- Riker, Dorothy, and Gale Thornborough (eds.). Indiana Election Returns, 1816-1851. Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Bureau, 1960.
- Robinson, Nellie Armstrong, and Dorothy H. Riker (eds.). The John Tipton Papers. 3 vols. Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Bureau, 1942.
- Sargent, Epes. The Life and Public Services of Henry Clay. Rev. ed. New York: Greeley & McElrath, 1848.
- Tuckerman, Bayard (ed.). The Diary of Philip Hone, 1828-1851. 2 vols. New York: Dodd, Mead, & Co., 1889.
- Tyler, John. 'Letter to Henry Wise, September 27, 1841', printed in the William and Mary College Quarterly Historical Magazine, Vol. XX, no. 1 (July, 1911), 7.
- Tyler, Lyon Gardiner (ed.). 'Edmund Ruffin's Visit to John Tyler', printed in the William and Mary College Quarterly Historical Magazine, Vol. XIV, no. 2 (October, 1905), 193-211.
- Tyler, Lyon Gardiner (ed.). 'Thomas W. Gilmer on Politics', printed in Tyler's Quarterly Historical and Genealogical Magazine, Vol. VII, no. 2, (October, 1925), 105-106.
- Webster, Fletcher (ed.). The Writings and Speeches of Daniel Webster. 18 vols. Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1857-1903.
- Weed, Harriet A. (ed.). The Autobiography of Thurlow Weed. Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Co., 1883.
- Wilson, George R. (ed.). 'Journal of an Emigrating Party of Pottawattomie Indians in 1838', printed in the Indiana Magazine of History, Vol. XXII, no. 3 (September, 1925), 347-353.
- Wise, Henry A. 'Mr. Wise's Speech in 1843', printed in the William and Mary College Quarterly Magazine, Vol. XVIII, no. 4 (April, 1910), 222-231.
- Wise, Henry A. Seven Decades of the Union. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott & Co., 1872.

Secondary Sources

1. Unpublished Works.

Adkins, Edwin Payne. Henry A. Wise in Sectional Politics, 1833-1860.  
 Doctoral dissertation: the Ohio State University, 1948.

Dingledine, Raymond C. The Political Career of William Cabell Rives.  
 Doctoral dissertation: the University of Virginia, 1947.

Eiselen, Malcolm Rogers. The Rise of Pennsylvania Protectionism.  
 Doctoral dissertation: the University of Pennsylvania, 1932.

Geary, Sister Mary Theophane. A History of Third Parties in  
 Pennsylvania, 1840-1860. Doctoral Dissertation: The Catholic  
 University of America, 1938.

Jones, Newton Bond. Charlottesville and Albemarle County, Virginia,  
 1819-1860. Doctoral dissertation: the University of Virginia,  
 1950.

Louthan, Henry T. The Congressional Career of William Cabell Rives of  
 Virginia. Master of Arts thesis: the University of Chicago,  
 1911.

Poage, George Rawlings. Henry Clay and the Dissolution of the Whig  
 Party in 1841. Doctoral dissertation: the University of  
 Chicago, 1923.

Snyder, Charles McCool. Pennsylvania Politics, 1833-1847: the Jackson  
 Era. Doctoral dissertation: the University of Pennsylvania, 1950.

2. Published Works.

Ambler, Charles Henry. Thomas Ritchie: A Study in Virginia Politics.  
 Richmond, Virginia: Bell Book and Stationery Company, 1913.

Ambler, Charles Henry. Sectionalism in Virginia from 1776 to 1861.  
 Chicago: the University of Chicago Press, 1910.

Braverman, Howard. 'The Economic and Political Background of the  
 Conservative Revolt in Virginia', in the Virginia Magazine of  
 History and Biography, Vol. LX, no. 2 (April, 1952), 266-287.

Brock, R. A. Virginia and Virginians. 2 vols. Richmond: H. H.  
 Hardesty, 1888.

Burton, Harrison W. The History of Norfolk, Virginia. Norfolk: the  
 Norfolk Virginian Job Print, 1877.

Chitwood, Oliver Perry. John Tyler, Champion of the Old South. New  
 York and London: D. Appleton-Century Co., for the American  
 Historical Association, 1939.

- Cole, Arthur Charles. The Whig Party in the South. Gloucester, Massachusetts: P. Smith, 1962 /1914/.
- Craig, Neville B. The History of Pittsburgh. Pittsburgh: J. H. Mellor & Co., 1851.
- Dewey, Davis R. The Financial History of the United States. 12th. ed. New York: Augustus M. Kelley, 1939.
- Eaton, Clement. The Mind of the Old South. Rev. ed. Baton Rouge, La.: Louisiana State University Press, 1967.
- Forrest, William S. Historical and Descriptive Sketches of Norfolk and Vicinity. Philadelphia: Lindsay and Blakiston, 1853.
- Fraser, Hugh Russell. Democracy in the Making: the Jackson-Tyler Era. Indianapolis and New York: the Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1938.
- Fuess, Claude M. The Life of Caleb Cushing. 2 vols. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1923.
- Gunderson, Ray. The Log Cabin Campaign of 1840. Lexington: the University of Kentucky Press, 1957.
- Hall, Claude Hampton. Abel Parker Upshur, Conservative Virginian, 1790-1844. Madison: the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1963.
- Hambleton, James Pinkney. A Biographical Sketch of Henry A. Wise, with A History of the Political Campaign in Virginia in 1855. Richmond: J. W. Randolph, 1856.
- Howison, Robert Reid. A History of Virginia from its Discovery and Settlement by Europeans to the Present Time. 2 vols. Philadelphia: Cary & Hart, 1846-1848.
- Jenkins, John Stilwell. A History of Political Parties in the State of New York. Auburn: Alden & Parsons, 1849.
- Johnson, Allen, and Dumas Malone, eds., The Dictionary of American Biography. 22 vols. New York, 1928-1944.
- Lambert, Oscar Doane. Presidential Politics in the United States, 1841-1844. Durham: Duke University Press, 1936.
- McCarthy, Charles. The Anti-masonic Party, a Study of Political Anti-masonry in the United States, 1829-1840, in the Annual Report of the American Historical Association for 1902, Vol. I. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1903.
- McGrane, Reginal C. Foreign Bondholders and American State Debts. New York: the Macmillan Co., 1935.

- Morgan, Robert J. A Whig Embattled: the Presidency Under John Tyler. Lincoln: the University of Nebraska Press, 1954.
- Mueller, Henry R. The Whig Party in Pennsylvania. New York: Columbia University Press, 1922.
- Murray, Paul H. The Whig Party in Georgia, 1825-1853. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1948.
- Poage, George Rawlings. Henry Clay and the Whig Party. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1934.
- Rhea, Linda. Hugh Swinton Legare, a Charleston Intellectual. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1934.
- Seager, Robert. And Tyler Too. Indianapolis and New York: the Bobbs-Marrill Co., 1963.
- Sims, Henry Harrison. The Rise of the Whigs in Virginia, 1828-1840. Richmond: the William Byrd Press, 1929.
- Stonecipher, Frank W. 'Pittsburgh and the Nineteenth Century Tariffs', in the Western Pennsylvania Historical Magazine, Vol. XXXI, no. 3, (September, 1948), 83-99.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 'Political Campaigns of the 1840s', in the Western Pennsylvania Historical Magazine, Vol. XXXV, no. 2 (June, 1952), 63-78.
- Swem, Earl Gregg, comp. Virginia Historical Index. 2 vols. Roanoke, 1934-1936.
- Thompson, James H. 'The Financial History of Pittsburgh: the Early Period, 1816-1865', in the Western Pennsylvania Historical Magazine, Vol. XXXIII, no. 1, (March, 1950), 43-64.
- Thurston, George Henry. Pittsburgh As It Is: or Facts and Figures Exhibiting the Past and Present of Pittsburgh. Pittsburgh: W. S. Haven, 1857.
- Tyler, Lyon Gardiner. The Letters and Times of the Tylers. 3 vols. Richmond: Whittier and Shepperson, 1884-1896.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Encyclopedia of Virginia Biography. 5 vols. New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Company, 1915.
- United States Government (comp.). A Biographical Directory of the American Congress, 1789-1961. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1965.
- Van Deusen, Glyndon G. William Henry Seward. New York: Oxford University Press, 1967.
- Wilson, George R. 'George H. Proffit: His Day and Generation', in the Indiana Magazine of History, Vol. XVIII, no. 1, (March, 1922), 1-46.

Wingfield, Russell S. William Cabell Rives, a Political Biography, in Richmond College Historical Papers, Vol. I (1915-1916), 57-72.

Wise, Barton Haxall. The Life of Henry A. Wise of Virginia, 1806-1876. New York: the Macmillan Co., 1899.

Wise, John S. The End of an Era. Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin Co., 1902.

Woods, Edgar. Albemarle County in Virginia. Charlottesville: The Michie Co., 1901.

## VITA

Nigel Graeme Barber

Born in Malvern, England, and educated at Dean Close School, Cheltenham, and Clare College, Cambridge, where he read Modern History, graduating in 1966. After a postgraduate year studying for the Diploma in Education, he emigrated to Canada, where he taught at the secondary school level from 1967 to 1969.

In September 1969, the author entered the College of William and Mary as a graduate assistant in the Department of History.