THE LIBERAL REPUBLICAN PARTY IN IOWA, 1872

*By Mildred Throne**

As the presidential year of 1872 dawned, the Republican party, triumphant since 1860, was beginning to show the stresses and strains of long power. Grant's first term was drawing to a close with some members of his party in Congress and in the nation in open revolt. The Democrats watched this growing rift, hoping that they might capitalize on a split in the ranks of the party that had for twelve years kept them out of office.

Grant's first term had dulled some of the military glamour of his name. Such powerful Republicans as Charles Sumner, Horace Greeley, and Carl Schurz, among others, had dared to raise their voices against him. Corruption and scandal within the party had been brought to light; Grant's control of the patronage, by which he could reward or punish, had made enemies as well as friends; the Reconstruction policies of his Congress had brought Ku Kluxism to a peak in the South; and his efforts to annex Santo Domingo had alienated the respected Charles Sumner. Furthermore, Grant's political naivete had led him to accept the domination of some of the worst elements of his party. Roscoe Conkling, Oliver P. Morton, Ben Butler, and others had more influence in the White House than had Sumner, Schurz, or Lyman Trumbull. Spurred by demands for reform, amnesty for the prostrate South, and pleas for states' rights which had a strangely Democratic ring, and sparked by open revolt in Carl Schurz's Missouri, a faction of "Liberal Republicans" began to take shape in 1871.

The political semantics of the seventies are often confusing by modern standards. The dominant wing of the Republican party was known as "radical," but they also liked to use the term "progressive." The revolting faction was known as "liberal," but they also had adopted the adjective "conservative," as had the Democrats. The Radicals stood for a stern policy toward the South, making every effort to keep the governments of the Southern states under their control; for a protective tariff to aid the business interests of the East; for Negro suffrage in the South, where the votes of

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grateful black men would keep the Democratic whites from power; and, quite naturally, for the maintenance of their own control of the government, as the party of "loyal" men against the inroads of the "rebels" and "traitors" in the Democratic ranks. The Liberals, on the other hand, stood for civil service reform, amnesty for the South, less federal interference in local affairs, and free trade. This position would naturally attract Democrats.

The national picture was repeated in miniature in many of the states, where an anti-Grant sentiment was growing. Massachusetts, New York, Pennsylvania, and Missouri were in open revolt by 1871, led by strong men in their states. Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois also had powerful leaders to wave the Liberal banner.

In Iowa, safely Republican since 1856, the Republican party was dominated by General Grenville M. Dodge, railroader and politician; by James S. Clarkson, editor of the *Iowa State Register* of Des Moines, the state's leading newspaper; and by newly-elected Senator William Boyd Allison. This group, backed up by such leading Republicans as ex-Governor Samuel J. Kirkwood, James F. Wilson, the entire congressional delegation in Washington, and a goodly number of party wheel horses throughout the state, had in 1871 elected their choice for governor, Cyrus Clay Carpenter, and in January of 1872 had defeated Senator James Harlan's bid for re-election by deposing him in favor of William B. Allison. Some Democrats tried to equate the defeat of Harlan, a strong Grant man, with the anti-Grant movements in other states, but the Harlan-Allison contest was an internal struggle for power within the Iowa Republican party. The Dodge-Clarkson-Allison leadership was every bit as pro-Grant as was the Harlan wing.[1] Any Liberal revolt in Iowa would have to come from some other group.

The Liberal Republican movement, which had its birth in Missouri in the late sixties,[2] received little attention in Iowa newspapers until after the fall election of 1871. Since Iowa's newspapers were largely Republican, of a

[1] For election of Allison, see Dan Elbert Clark, *History of Senatorial Elections in Iowa* (Iowa City, 1912), 152-67; for C. C. Carpenter, see Mildred Throne, "Electing an Iowa Governor, 1871: Cyrus Clay Carpenter," IOWA JOURNAL OF HISTORY, 48:335-70 (October, 1950). See also, Earle Dudley Ross, *The Liberal Republican Movement* (New York, 1919), 22; Davenport *Democrat*, Feb. 1, 1872; Elkader *Journal*, March 27, 1872.

[2] Ross, *Liberal Republican Movement*, 28. For the Missouri Liberals, see Thomas S. Barclay, "The Liberal Republican Movement in Missouri," *Missouri Historical Review*, 20:3-78 (October, 1925), 262-332 (January, 1926), 406-437 (April, 1926), 515-64 (July, 1926); 21:56-108 (October, 1926).

strong Radical stamp, this Republican rift had been given no publicity at first. Recognition of the growing revolt was played up by the Democratic editors, however.

One of the strongest of these Democratic editors was Edward H. Thayer of the Clinton *Age*. Thayer's suggestion, as early as November of 1871, that the Democrats select "a man who was almost a republican" in the coming presidential campaign is a hint of what the Democrats were thinking. Watching the growing split in the Republican party, many Democrats were already toying with the idea of throwing their support to a Liberal candidate as a way out of their own political doldrums. Almost leaderless themselves, and tired of fighting a losing battle, they were ready to snatch at any straw. "The democracy are getting beat every year on mere questions of opinion," complained Thayer. Stop harping on the "everlasting negro question," he advised, and be wise enough to "forget some things that are ancient, and sagacious enough to remember many things that are new." [3]

The Republican Des Moines *Register*, the voice of James S. ("Ret") Clarkson, leader of the "Des Moines Regency," was delighted with Thayer's article. Clarkson, who had been fighting the Democrats for years, now claimed that Thayer had done a better job of destroying his own party than Clarkson had ever been able to do.[4]

Standard Republican attacks on the Democrats were a combination of tolerant amusement at the antics of their opponents on one day, and dire warnings of the dangers of these same opponents on the next. Vallandigham's "New Departure" policy — an acceptance of the *fait accompli* of the Civil War and the emancipation amendments — and the "Passive Policy" of the Missourians — a policy of holding no state conventions, but of throwing support to any anti-Radical party — were occasions for sneer and satire in the Republican press. "The Democratic house, divided against itself, would fall," wrote Clarkson, "but for one thing. It can't stand up to fall." [5] Republican E. N. Chapin, editor of the *Marshal County Times* of Marshalltown, warned that the "Passive Policy" was "simply a bid to disaffected Republicans, in the event of Gen. Grant's renomination, to organize a new

[3] Clinton *Age*, Nov. 17, 1871.

[4] Des Moines *Register*, Nov. 22, 1871.

[5] *Ibid.*, Nov. 15, 1871. For the "passive policy" of the Missourians, see Barclay, "Liberal Republican Movement in Missouri," 20:527.

party which shall take up the now disorganized Democracy in its embrace." [6]

Comments such as Thayer's, and amused taunts from other Republican editors, brought an official denial from the chairman of the Democratic state committee, John P. Irish of Iowa City, editor of the *Press* of that city. To reassure the masses of the Democratic voters, he "deemed [it] proper to announce that the organized Democracy of Iowa . . . permits no thought of disorganization to disturb its councils." A national convention will be held, Irish promised, and its conclusions will be supported. Thus, while claiming continued activity for the Democratic party, he carefully avoided taking any stand for a purely Democratic nomination. The "Passive Policy" was evidently working among the leadership of the Iowa Democrats. In the same issue of his paper, Irish himself made a bid for "that large minority" in the Republication party that had long espoused Democratic principles to "reture home and fight under the old banner." [7]

These half-hearted efforts of the Democrats to take over the growing revolt in Republican ranks were doomed to failure. Out of power in Iowa since 1856, and with the titular leaders — former Senators Augustus Caesar Dodge and George Wallace Jones — old and tired from long years in service, there was no real spark left in the party. Only the stubborn efforts of a few editors such as Thayer, Irish, Dennis A. Mahony of Dubuque, D. N. Richardson of Davenport, and Sam Evans of Ottumwa kept the voice of the party alive during these years. Having failed, by their own efforts, they now turned to splinter groups of the discontented — such as the Liberal Republicans in 1872 and the Anti-Monopolists in 1873 — to try to revive their fading fortunes. This was indeed the nadir of the Democracy.[8]

Not until January of 1872 did a Republican voice speak out for Liberalism in Iowa. Josiah B. Grinnell, founder of the town and college of Grinnell in Poweshiek County, had long held a place on the fringes of Iowa Republican leadership.[9] An abolitionist and a friend of John Brown, Grinnell had

[6] Marshalltown *Times*, Dec. 7, 1871.

[7] Iowa City *Press*, Dec. 13, 1871.

[8] Horace Samuel Merrill, *Bourbon Democracy of the Middle West, 1865-1896* (Baton Rouge, La., 1953), 57-76; Mildred Throne, "The Anti-Monopoly Party in Iowa, 1873-1874," IOWA JOURNAL OF HISTORY, 52:289-326 (October, 1954).

[9] For biography of Grinnell, see Charles E. Payne, *Josiah Bushnell Grinnell* (Iowa City, 1938).

been active in the formation of the Republican party in Iowa in 1856. He had been in the state legislature and had been elected to Congress for two terms, serving from 1863 to 1867. Although he would have liked another term in Congress, his district had rejected him in 1866. A few days after this defeat Grinnell, in Washington, was caned by Lovell H. Rousseau, a Congressman from Kentucky, following a bitter debate in the House. This attack, against which Grinnell did not defend himself, was used later by his political enemies as a taunt, whenever he stood for any office. Some historians, confusing the dates, attributed Grinnell's defeat in 1866 to the "Rousseau affair," which actually occurred several days after the district convention had rejected Grinnell.[10] The exact reasons for Grinnell's declining political fortunes are not too clear, but by 1871 he had little or no power within the party he had helped to found. Nevertheless, his was still a name to be reckoned with, and his espousal of the Liberal cause gave the movement what little standing it achieved in Iowa.

In his youth Grinnell had been the recipient of Horace Greeley's famous advice, "Go west, young man, go west,"[11] and had always maintained a strong friendship with the famous editor of the New York *Tribune*, whose name was a household word throughout the Middle West, where his paper wielded great influence. In 1871 Greeley became one of the leaders of the Liberal revolt. In September, Grinnell had attended a dinner for Greeley in Chicago and had invited him to Iowa to speak. Much to the disappointment of serious-minded Iowans in the college center of Grinnell, Greeley chose to speak there on "Wit" instead of on his advertised subject, "Self Made Men." The local editor suggested that if Greeley "is aspiring to the Presidency, as some think he is, we think it would be wise in him to cease itinerating."[12] This visit of Greeley's caused little comment in the other Iowa papers, however, and it was not until January of 1872 that a letter by Grinnell forced even the Republican press to recognize the existence of a political revolt in the party.

An Iowa correspondent had written a letter to the Chicago *Tribune*, commenting on the Allison-Harlan senatorial fight in the Iowa legislature, and many assumed that Grinnell was the author. This he denied, in a letter

[10] Leland L. Sage, "William B. Allison and Iowa Senatorial Politics, 1865-1870," Iowa Journal of History, 52:116 (April, 1954).

[11] Payne, *Grinnell*, 26-7.

[12] Grinnell *Herald*, Sept. 27, 1871, quoted in Payne, *Grinnell*, 255.

dated January 20, 1872. But in the same letter he took occasion to oppose the renomination of Grant and to suggest as a compromise candidate either James W. Grimes or James F. Wilson of Iowa.[13]

The mention of Grimes is interesting. Had not the ex-Senator been a dying man in 1872 (he died at Burlington on February 7) would he have been able to rally the disgruntled Republicans of Iowa? Viciously denounced by his party for his vote against the impeachment of Andrew Johnson, the ailing Grimes had journeyed to Europe in search of health. Watching his party from there, he had seen weaknesses which disturbed him. As early as 1869 he had written to Senator William Pitt Fessenden:

> Perhaps you have observed that I have resigned my place in the Senate. The truth is, the place has become irksome to me. There are so many men there with whom I have not and never can have a particle of sympathy, so much corruption in the party with which I would be compelled to act, so much venality and meanness all around, that, aside from my ill-health, I had about made up my mind that the Senate was no longer the place for me. . . . Why, the war has corrupted everybody and everything in the United States. Just look at the senatorial elections of the last winter! They were all corrupt. . . . Thank God, my political career ended with the beginning of this corrupt political era![14]

About a year later he wrote to Jacob Rich of Dubuque, a member of the Allison wing of the party in Iowa, congratulating him on his newspaper career, but differing with him on certain articles Rich had sent Grimes.

> As you know, I do not share either your hope or faith. I do not pretend that the Democratic party is pure. Where it has unlimited sway, as in New York, it is unquestionably corrupt; but not a whit more corrupt than the Republican party in Philadelphia and Washington. It is the possession of uncontrolled power that makes every party corrupt, and almost every man. . . .
>
> The country needs a terrible shaking up and shaking down, financially, politically, and morally. The war and the easy way of making money have demoralized everybody in America. . . .[15]

In a third letter, which Democratic newspapers took pleasure in publishing during the 1872 campaign, Grimes wrote to the prominent Democratic

[13] Marshalltown *Times*, Feb. 8, 1872.

[14] James W. Grimes to William Pitt Fessenden, Aug. 31, 1869, in William Salter, *The Life of James W. Grimes* . . . (New York, 1876), 376-7.

[15] Grimes to Jacob Rich, Jan. 9, 1870, *ibid.*, 378-80.

judge, Charles Mason, on February 27, 1871, predicting that "if the democracy make wise nominations . . . the republicans will be overthrown, and ought to be."[16]

But by February, Grimes was dead and his influence only a memory. The new men who had taken over the Republican party had forgotten the ideals of 1860. Grimes, had he lived and fought, might have encouraged many who hesitated to follow Josiah B. Grinnell.

That Grinnell also mentioned the name of James F. Wilson, member of Congress from the First District for four terms (1861-1869) and rapidly becoming a power in Iowa politics, might have been a bid for a reconciliation. Clarkson was carrying on a vigorous campaign in the Des Moines *Register* for the nomination of Wilson for Vice President on a Grant ticket. However, Clarkson did not take the bait, but lectured Grinnell, more in sorrow than in anger, for trying to "tear Grant down."[17]

Joseph Eiboeck, one of the prominent Germans of Iowa and editor of the Elkader *Journal*, had supported Wilson rather than either Harlan or Allison in the senatorial contest. He at once endorsed Grinnell's choice of Wilson. Although he intended to support the nominee of the party, said Eiboeck, he thought it would be "wiser to nominate a new man like Mr. Wilson."[18] Eiboeck reflected the growing discontent of the Germans with the Republican party; he would be one of the few Republicans who, in spite of his promise, would take the usually fatal step of going over to the Liberals at the state convention at Davenport in April.

Other comments on Grinnell's letter varied from praise from the Democrats to condemnation or vituperation from the Republicans. Chapin of the Marshalltown *Times*, whose very reasonableness made his party loyalty suspect for a time, did not feel like "ridiculing or denouncing" Grinnell for his stand. "Denunciation will not save us; conciliation and concession may. . . . We must treat this matter seriously, and reason with one another kindly — no cracking of party whip will answer."[19] But Chapin's was a voice crying in the wilderness; the cracking of the party whip soon brought him into line.

The Ottumwa *Courier* was sure that Grinnell's letter would "sink quietly

[16] Grimes to Charles Mason, Feb. 27, 1871, Ottumwa *Democrat*, Apr. 18, 1872; Iowa City *Press*, May 1, 1872.

[17] Des Moines *Register*, Jan. 31, 1872.

[18] Elkader *Journal*, Jan. 31, 1872.

[19] Marshalltown *Times*, Feb. 8, 1872.

into oblivion." Grinnell was a "most persistent, irrepressible hanger on and seeker for further honors," and since he had not achieved these honors, he was stirring up trouble. A northern Iowa editor considered Grinnell "a standing candidate for office, and a worn-out political stager," while a Keokuk Republican called him a "precious bit of fussiness, a windy political charlatan, without a constituency, who has been for these several years making lachrymose pilgrimages over Iowa, a caned bottom martyr. . . ."[20] Thus the line of attack on Grinnell and the Liberals was set — they were disappointed office seekers or "soreheads," whose failure in Republican ranks sent them looking for a new party to further their own interests. Furthermore, in the case of Grinnell, the Rousseau caning affair was brought out, dusted off, and used as a weapon of ridicule. These slurs brought a protest from Grinnell which the *Register* printed and used as a springboard for further attacks.[21]

Grinnell went to Washington and tried to stir up support for Wilson among the Iowa congressional delegation, according to some reporters, although Grinnell indignantly denied the story.[22] In March he was asked (by whom it is not known) to speak in Des Moines, and there he came out flatly against the renomination of Grant. In the audience were the Governor, numbers of state officials, and the "Des Moines Ringmaster," James S. Clarkson, who took pains to point out that the speaker had read from a manuscript, a sure indication, according to nineteenth century standards of oratory, of a bad speech. "The rambling tendencies of the speaker," reported Clarkson, "make it an extremely difficult matter to report a synopsis of his remarks."[23] The speech was printed in some of the papers, and if it is a verbatim account of what was said, there is justification for Clarkson's opinion, biased though it may have been. Grinnell's failure as an orator hurt his cause considerably. Such a sentence as the following would certainly disappoint, if not confuse, listeners brought up on flowing perorations and rounded periods:

> When the intolerance of those in power, and fed by the people, is felt in the recrimination of leaders backed by the sordid spirit

[20] Ottumwa *Courier*, Estherville *Vindicator*, Keokuk *Gate City*, quoted in Des Moines *Register*, Feb. 7, Mar. 2, 6, 1872.

[21] Des Moines *Register*, March 6, 1872.

[22] *Idem.*

[23] *Ibid.*, Mar. 27, 1872.

which is possible to a company of 50,000 men (neither better nor worse than men in private life,) we have an argument for a single presidential term, and if the uncivil question is raised as to those who desire a change, what did they fail to get? . . .[24]

Small wonder that Governor Carpenter said the speech "hardly came up to my expectation."[25]

In spite of confusing verbiage, Grinnell made a strong plea for the anti-Grant element of the party, for a better attitude toward the South, for forgetting the war and letting bygones be bygones, and for acceping even Democratic support in the forthcoming Cincinnati convention of the Liberals. Ending on a note borrowed from Grant, Grinnell urged, "Let us have peace . . . and never taunt the fallen with defeat."[26] "Taunting the fallen," however, was too good political ammunition to be discarded by the victorious Republicans. With each election the war was refought, the Democrats accused of treason, the "bloody shirt" waved. Republicanism was equated with loyalty and prosperity; Democracy with treason and disunion. The name "Copperhead" for all Democrats was so successful that the Des Moines *Register* used it as late as 1895.[27] There was little chance that the voice of reform could still the taunts of the victorious.

A number of Iowa Republicans began swinging over to the Liberal cause, in spite of the party lash. They knew that their best chance for success lay in an alliance with the Democrats; therefore, any hints at cooperation in that direction were received with enthusiasm. When Henry Clay Dean, able Democratic orator of the war years, wrote to Grinnell, endorsing the latter's speech, the letter was given wide publicity among Liberals and Democrats alike. Dean wrote:

> I am a democrat, but when bold, honest men — republicans in an earnest attempt to save to us for our children the free institutions of our fathers will lead the charge against the machinery of oppression, you will have great trouble in preventing equally honest and earnest democrats from joining to assist you *en masse* at the polls. . . . We are all democrats, and we are all republicans. . . .[28]

[24] Ottumwa *Democrat*, Apr. 4, 1872.

[25] Carpenter Diary, March 22, 1872, *Cyrus Clay Carpenter Papers* (State Historical Society of Iowa, Iowa City).

[26] Ottumwa *Democrat*, Apr. 4, 1872.

[27] Robert Rutland, "The Copperheads of Iowa: A Re-examination," IOWA JOURNAL OF HISTORY, 52:28-9 (January, 1954).

[28] Henry Clay Dean to J. B. Grinnell, Apr. 6, 1872, in Ottumwa *Democrat*, Apr. 11, 1872.

Dean had already expressed these opinions in a previous letter to Sam Evans of the Ottumwa *Democrat*, thus placing himself firmly on the side of the Democrats who wished to cooperate with the Liberals.[29]

Dean's letters may have influenced Democrats, but they merely gave the Republicans another chance to deride the Liberals. Henry Clay Dean was famous not only for his oratory and his opposition to the war, which had led to his arrest and imprisonment for a time, but also for a general untidyness that had earned him the title, among Republicans, of "Dirty Shirt" Dean. The *Register* shouted with glee over the letters from the "Man of Odor," and pictured Grinnell and Dean going to Cincinnati arm in arm. "A happy family, — a very fragrant one!" concluded Clarkson.[30]

If the Liberal Republicans in Iowa were weak, the Democrats were even weaker. Almost with one voice, the leading Democratic editors counseled union with the Liberals. Probably the only well-known Democrat who refused to desert his party, even temporarily, was LeGrand Byington of Iowa City, a devoted Jeffersonian who defied the "insolent treachery" of the "rotten tricksters" of his party.[31] But Byington and the other "straight-outs" were able to muster only a little over 2,200 votes in the state. The rest of Iowa's Democrats went submissively along with the Liberals, trying to convince themselves that they did so from choice, not necessity.

Newspaper editors were violent partisans in every election. They "hoisted" the names of their party's nominees on their editorial pages and printed long columns of praise for their men and condemnation for their opponents. Since the Liberals had hardly any editorial pens of their own, they depended almost entirely on the Democratic papers for support. Among these Democratic papers, the Iowa City *Press*, Clinton *Age*, Sioux City *Times*, Davenport *Democrat*, Ottumwa *Democrat*, and Dubuque *Herald* all supported the Liberal program from the first. Of the Republican papers, only a scattering had the fortitude to defy the Radicals and come out strongly for Greeley. Perhaps the strongest was the Elkader *Journal*, edited by Joseph Eiboeck, and he sold the paper to a Radical before the election.

In the beginning, as has been pointed out, Eiboeck announced his intention to hew to the party line, even if it included support of Grant. But, as

[29] Dean to Evans, Mar. 19, 1872, Ottumwa *Democrat*, March 21, 1872; Des Moines *Register*, March 27, 1872.

[30] Des Moines *Register*, Mar. 27, 1872.

[31] Estherville *Vindicator*, Aug. 17, 1872.

time went on, Eiboeck wavered. When the Republican state convention to choose delegates for the national convention at Philadelphia was called for March 27 at Des Moines, Eiboeck protested. Why call the convention so early, he asked. This sudden call, with hardly a month's notice, is wrong and "smacks of trickery," he complained. Is the central committee afraid of the Liberals — afraid a "*reaction* might take place and anti-Grant delegates [be] chosen"? The Republican Independence *Bulletin* agreed: "it is a trick unworthy of the committee and altogether contemptible." Republican efforts, both nationally and locally, to gag the opposition pushed Eiboeck further toward the Liberals; he decided that his party was most certainly "going to the Devil." When the state convention met, instructed for Grant, and neglected to include any Germans in the delegation — but did include one Negro — Eiboeck was further alienated. He begged for moderation, complained that the use of such terms as "sorehead" or "Copperhead" for all who opposed the Republican program was a mistake. "Has it come to this," he asked, "that a Republican dare not say his soul is his own . . . has it become 'treason' to oppose an incumbent because he is deemed to use the power of federal patronage to secure his re-election?" The Cincinnati nomination of Greeley was a "decided surprise" to Eiboeck; for the moment his position was not clear. He opposed Grant, but could hardly accept Greeley. But after two months of soul-searching, and a column and a half of explanation, he at last concluded, "I shall go for Greeley." A month later, claiming ill-health, Eiboeck sold his paper to a loyal Radical Republican, and on August 14 the Elkader *Journal* flaunted the Grant ticket on its editorial page. Six years later Eiboeck, who had been proud of his Republicanism, ran for office, unsuccessfully, under the Democratic banner.[32] This, then, was the metamorphosis of an idealistic German from one party into the other, because of the upheaval in his party in 1872.

All Republicans with Liberal leanings did not have Eiboeck's fortitude in sticking to their beliefs. E. N. Chapin of the Marshalltown *Times* did not follow the accepted party line when considering the Liberal revolt. He was not completely happy with Grant, and as he watched the party whip recalcitrants into line — or out of the party — he asked, echoing Eiboeck:

> Has it indeed come to such a pass that a member of the Republi-

[32] Elkader *Journal*, Feb. 28, Mar. 6, 27, Apr. 3, 24, May 8, July 17, Aug. 7, 1872. For sketch of Eiboeck, see Benjamin F. Gue, *History of Iowa* . . . (4 vols., New York, 1903), 4:86.

> can party dare not speak for truth and demand that justice be done without his motives being impugned and himself denounced as an ingrate and traitor, and that in view of the *indisputable fact* that corruption runs riot? . . . Has it indeed come to pass that the Republican party will refuse to investigate and expose fraud, and must be kept together with the lash of the party drill master?

Later, Chapin even defended Grinnell and endorsed the latter's suggestion of Wilson for president. But the nomination of Greeley — or any man for that matter — by the Liberals was a mistake, said Chapin. The Liberals should have waited for the Philadelphia convention and tried to work out a compromise. As it was, they had instituted a revolution, and Chapin could not go along with them. His reward came four years later; Grant appointed him postmaster of Marshalltown, a post he had held under Lincoln and from which he had been removed by Andrew Johnson. Since the appointment came in 1876, and not in 1872, there is no suggestion that Chapin had been bought. He was merely a loyal Republican who objected to the course his party was taking, but who, unlike Eiboeck, could not for that reason leave the party.[33]

Several small county seat papers that went over to the Liberals, or were started to support the Liberal cause, barely outlived their party. In Jasper County the Monroe *Record* and the Newton *Sentinel* combined into the Newton *Liberal* during the campaign and succeeded in surviving until January of 1873. In LeMars a paper called the *Iowa Liberal* began publication in mid-1872 and lasted for a few years. The Villisca *Journal*, a Republican paper that came out for Greeley, found it necessary to combine with the Glenwood *Mills County Journal*; the following year it espoused the Anti-Monopoly cause and then went all the way over and became a Democratic journal.[34] The mortality of the Liberal papers was, thus, very high.

The Democratic editors spent half their political space on encouraging the Liberals, and the other half on justifying Democratic support for these Liberals. But the Democrats should not join in the revolt just to beat Grant, warned Thayer of the Clinton *Age*. If the Liberal movement "when further

[33] Marshalltown *Times*, Mar. 7, 14, Apr. 18, 25, May 2, 9, 1872. For sketch of Chapin, see *Annals of Iowa* (third series), 2:565 (October, 1896).

[34] Monroe *Record*, June 22, July 13, 20, Aug. 17, 1872; Sioux City *Times*, July 20, 1872; Newton *Jasper County Liberal*, Aug. 24, 1872; W. W. Merritt, Sr., *History of the County of Montgomery* . . . (Red Oak, Iowa, 1906), 311; *History of Mills County, Iowa* . . . (Des Moines, 1881), 532, 684-5.

developed, proves to be predicated on the idea of a radical reform in the administration of the government . . . then might the Democratic party, with perfect consistency, unite its strength with such an organization," he concluded.[35] Sam Evans of the Ottumwa *Democrat* was equally insistent that the Democrats must throw no block in the way of the Liberals. The Liberals could only win with Democratic support; if the Democrats nominated their own candidate, the result would be a victory for Grant and the Radicals; if the Democrats, on the other hand, joined forces with the Liberals, victory would be assured.[36] Richardson held the olive branch even closer to the Liberals: "If the Cincinnati Convention is a success — if it puts an acceptable ticket in the field — if the great Republican journals support that ticket — then the Democratic party will not stand in its way."[37] There were a good many "ifs" in the promise, but this was the position generally accepted by Democrats before the Liberal convention met at Cincinnati on May 1.

John P. Irish, as chairman of the Democratic state central committee, did not go so far as to promise support to the Liberals publicly, but he defended Grinnell from attacks by the Radicals, and he scorned the Republican charge that all Liberals were disappointed office seekers. "Nothing could be more remote from the truth," he wrote. "But [the Liberal revolt] comes of the unparalleled corruption so common in high places, the shameless nepotism of Grant, and his failure to adopt a wise and just plan of reconstruction."[38] Irish was ready to lead his party into the Liberal camp, but he was biding his time. Not until after the Democrats had held their national convention at Baltimore did Irish reveal that he had been working closely with the Iowa Liberals from the beginning.

Meanwhile, the Republican attitude toward the Liberals solidified into a few lines of attack. The Liberals were soreheads who could not win office under the Republican banner. Furthermore, the Liberals were being used by the Democrats as a springboard for return to office; should such a coalition win, the government would be in the hands of rebels and Copperheads. A typical attack of this sort came from the Estherville *Vindicator*:

> The real questions which the nation will be called upon to decide

[35] Clinton *Age*, March 8, 1872.
[36] Ottumwa *Democrat*, Mar. 28, Apr. 11, 1872.
[37] Davenport *Democrat*, Apr. 4, 1872.
[38] Iowa City *Press*, Apr. 10, 17, 1872.

are, "Shall the enemies of the United States, who, since the war, have murdered, by assassination, in the South, thousands of the friends of government, of both American and African races, and their Northern sympathizers be installed as the rulers of loyal men?" "Is the combination of all the reactionary and revolutionary forces of the nation going to be allowed to overthrow existing institutions, to be successful in establishing violence and disorder in the place of harmony, and the progressive development of the nation?" . . .

If the loyal men of the nation can no longer be trusted with its destiny, then it must wither, and be reckoned among the lamented things that were; for the disloyal elements that hate order and governmental stability and regard it as a tyranny, will certainly make no effort to save it. . . .

Under these circumstances it would be the basest of ingratitude to overthrow our Republican administration with its certainty and place our destiny in the hands of the public enemy, of mountebanks and adventurers whose only rule of order means chaos — whose only principles of right are political knavery and traitorousness.[39]

As the campaign wore on, this sort of attack increased, indicating that the Republicans, although in public they treated the Liberal-Democratic coalition with tolerant amusement, were worried. They need not have been, as the results would show, but during the summer of 1872, before the returns came in from the early-voting states, the bloody shirt was waved with unusual vigor, and the cry of "traitor" heard throughout the state. The calling of the Republican state convention almost two months earlier than usual may well have been, as Eiboeck claimed, an indication that the Radicals feared all was not well within their own ranks. They quoted the New York *Times's* characterization of the Liberal movement as a "little faction of grumble and fuss,"[40] but they did not intend to let anything go by default. They fought a vigorous campaign with a smooth working organization, and although their victory looked good on its face, a close examination of the returns should have told them that they were in for trouble.

The Iowa Liberals called for a state convention to be held at Davenport on April 23 to elect delegates to the national convention at Cincinnati. Early in April many local conventions were held throughout the state. The

[39] Estherville *Vindicator*, Mar. 2, 1872.

[40] New York *Times*, quoted in Fort Dodge *Messenger*, Apr. 18, 1872.

success of these conventions, even their numbers, is difficult to determine, since the reports were colored by the political faith of the newspapers. Even when the state convention met, the number of delegates was not given. The Des Moines *Register* reported that the convention was "not exactly a complete failure, but it was a fizzle"; scarcely a hundred delegates, besides those from Scott County, attended from only nineteen counties, according to Clarkson. At the other extreme, the Ottumwa *Democrat* claimed that the convention contained "full and enthusiastic delegations from every county in the state." In Davenport the *Democrat* took a middle ground: "The attendance was not large — nor was it expected it would be."[41]

It is true, as reported by the *Register*, that not one member of the convention was a Republican officeholder. The names appearing on the list of 150 delegates appointed to attend the Cincinnati convention were not well known in Iowa politics, with a few outstanding exceptions. Unlike the Liberal movement in some of the Eastern states, Iowa's Liberal leaders were mostly political unknowns in the state, both in number and in influence. Grinnell dominated the convention and made out the list of 150 delegates who were to attend the Cincinnati convention and cast Iowa's 22 votes at that gathering. How many of the 150 attended the convention, or even authorized their names on the list, is not known. Besides Grinnell in the controlling group at the convention there was the temporary chairman, David C. Cloud of Muscatine, a lawyer and former Democrat who had joined the Republicans in 1856. Cloud was of the reform element attracted to the Liberals; the publication in 1873 of his book, *Monopolies and the People*, an attack on the power of the railroads in American politics, indicates his point of view toward government. Fitz Henry Warren, who had been a member of the convention which organized the Republican party in 1856, was chosen as permanent chairman at Davenport. Warren had a brilliant Civil War record, having been brevetted a major general, and had served as United States Minister to Gautemala for two years. Jacob W. Dixon of Wapello County, who had served two terms in the Iowa legislature as a Republican, and who would be elected to the House on the Anti-Monopoly ticket in 1873, was an active member at Davenport, as was Joseph Eiboeck. Surprisingly, several prominent railroad attorneys, whom one would expect to find in the ranks of the Radicals, were at Davenport.

[41] Des Moines *Register*, May 1, 1872; Ottumwa *Democrat*, Apr. 25, 1872; Davenport *Democrat*, Apr. 25, 1872.

Judge David Rorer of Burlington, prominent attorney for the Burlington Railroad, was there, together with Joseph H. Swan of Sioux City, another railroad attorney, and Joseph A. Rhomberg of Dubuque, president of the Iowa road which would eventually become a part of the Milwaukee system.[42] What led these men away from the branch of the party that had done so much for the railroad interests of the country is a matter for speculation in the absence of further documentation.

A state central committee of fifteen was appointed, headed by J. D. Campbell, an attorney from Davenport.[43] Whether all these men attended the Cincinnati convention, or how many actually attended from Iowa, is not definite, but the taunt of the *Register* that "On the Iowa delegation at Cincinnati there is not a single Republican who was a soldier" is an example of carelessness with the truth which was part and parcel of the political tactics of the period.[44] At least half of the members of the Liberal state committee had good Civil War records, and there was the usual scattering of military titles among those who attended the Davenport and Cincinnati meetings. Clarkson's statement was another instance of the Radical gospel that the war had been fought and won by Republicans, and if you did not "vote as you shot," you evidently had not shot.

When the Liberal National Convention assembled on May 1, a strange mixture of reformers and politicians gathered in the Music Hall at Cincinnati. Carl Schurz, the Missouri father of Liberalism, presided, but saw the convention taken over by the politicians, and Horace Greeley chosen as the presidential nominee.[45] This was a bitter pill for the reform element to swallow, and even bitterer for the Democrats who had already practically committed their party to support of the Liberal candidate. Iowa's delegates, in spite of the supposed domination of Grinnell, who was a Greeley man, could muster only 7 of their 22 votes for Greeley on the first ballot, and only 5 on the sixth, when Greeley was nominated. After scattering their support among the various "reform" candidates, Iowa's delegates, after the third ballot, swung the majority of their strength to Charles Francis

[42] For names of members of the convention, see Des Moines *Register*, May 1, 1872. For sketches of the various men mentioned, see Gue, *History of Iowa*, 4:55, 75, 278-9; *Annals of Iowa* (third series), 7:238 (October, 1905), 4:321 (January, 1900), 3:159 (July, 1897).

[43] Des Moines *Register*, May 1, 1872.

[44] *Ibid.*, May 8, 1872.

[45] Ross, *Liberal Republican Movement*, 86-105.

Adams, giving him 17 votes to the 5 for Greeley on the last ballot.[46] The "chief explanation of Greeley's success," writes the historian of the Liberal Republican movement, "is to be found in the efficient support of the politicians. . . . [It was] the triumph of experienced political intriguers over inexperienced over-confident reformers."[47] Not only had the convention chosen the weakest candidate, but they had chosen the one man the Democrats would find hardest to support. And the Liberals had no chance at victory without the support of the Democrats.

Horace Greeley, editor of the New York *Tribune*, hitherto the voice of Republicanism in the Middle West, was too much of what moderns would call a "character" for serious consideration for the presidency. Many of the votes he received in November were votes *against* Grant, not *for* Greeley. Furthermore, his vitriolic attacks upon the Democrats during and since the war would make it almost impossible for Democrats to support him happily. The editorial voices of the party achieved miracles of rationalization in explaining their support for Greeley, while Republican editors delighted in filling their columns with quotations from Greeley's past attacks on the Democracy, thus rubbing salt in the wounds of a party helpless to fight its way out of a coalition it had found distasteful.

Even if Greeley had not been one of the most violent of wavers of the bloody shirt, his stand on the tariff would have alienated Democrats. Greeley was an arch-protectionist, and the Liberal reformers had stood, before Cincinnati, for tariff reform if not for free trade. The tariff plank of the Liberal platform, upon which both Greeley and the Democrats would have to stand, was masterly in avoiding the issue:

> Recognizing that there is in our midst an honest but irreconcilable difference of opinion in regard to the respective systems of protection and free trade, we remit the discussion of this subject to the people in their congressional districts, and the decision of Congress thereon wholly free of executive interference or dictation.[48]

Then there was the question of temperance. A large support for the Liberals had come from the Germans, who were naturally strongly opposed to "that fanaticism" of which Greeley was the author, as Rutherford B. Hayes

[46] Des Moines *Register*, May 8, 1872.

[47] Ross, *Liberal Republican Movement*, 102.

[48] Article 6, in Liberal Republican platform, Davenport *Democrat*, May 9, 1872.

put it.[49] "When the Convention opened," Schurz wrote Greeley, "we had nearly the whole German vote with us. . . . When we came out of that convention, that force was almost entirely lost to us." Schurz, the German reformer, was bitter and took no pains to conceal his disappointment from the successful candidate. The "freshness and flavor" of the Liberal movement "are gone and we have come down to the ordinary level of a campaign of politicians," he wrote Greeley.[50]

But Schurz had to accept Greeley's nomination, in spite of his disappointment, and so did the rest of the Liberals and the Democrats. They had gone too far to back out. So they settled down to the campaign with grim determination if with little enthusiasm. Even before the Cincinnati convention, some of the Iowa Democrats were uneasy. Sam Evans hoped the Liberals would not choose a man "peculiarly obnoxious to democrats," and Thayer pointed out that if the candidate of the Liberals was to have "a show of success" he must be "*so near a Democrat that the difference would hardly be perceptible to the naked eye.*"[51]

The Republicans were delighted with the nomination, of course, for they were wise enough politically to see that the Liberals had chosen the man the Republicans could most easily defeat. The *Register* commiserated with the Democrats. The Liberals, wrote Clarkson, have "chosen the man, who, of all other men, the old-line Democrats would most hate to vote for." And they will not vote for him, continued Clarkson, but "will lead the party into making nominations of its own and a fight of its own."[52] This solicitude for the Democrats did not escape notice; a correspondent signing himself "Clio" was amused at the sudden Radical interest in the health of a party they had been declaring dead for many years.[53]

Sam Evans hemmed and hawed and quoted Shakespeare and finally argued himself into support of Greeley. The nomination was "not expected," he wrote. Greeley's antislavery sentiments and his protectionism were distasteful to Democrats, but they must support him as opposed to Grant. "A democratic nomination would not only drive the Liberal Republican ticket

[49] Hayes's letter quoted in Merrill, *Bourbon Democracy*, 72.

[50] Carl Schurz to Horace Greeley, May 6, 1872, in Frederic Bancroft (ed.), *Correspondence and Political Papers of Carl Schurz* (6 vols., New York, 1913), 2:364.

[51] Ottumwa *Democrat*, May 2, 1872; Clinton *Age*, quoted in Des Moines *Register*, May 8, 1872.

[52] Des Moines *Register*, May 8, 1872.

[53] Ottumwa *Democrat*, May 23, 1872.

from the field, but demoralize the democratic party itself, and lead thousands of honest and true democrats who have already made up their minds to support Greeley to curse such a thick-headed policy as would lead to healing the disruption of the radical party."[54]

Thayer of the Clinton *Age* was not so easily won over as Evans, but he, too, had to succumb to the inevitable. Greeley, he admitted, had slandered Democrats for years.

> Yet these things were in the past, and now if all Democrats are Christians as undoubtedly they are, and can find a corner in their hearts for the words, "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which dispitefully use you and persecute you" — then may the Philosopher of the *Tribune* become the subject of the prayers of three millions of Democrats, and it may be the recipient of their votes.

But Thayer was not even convinced himself by this fine display of forgiveness. He had his doubts; there were many Democrats who "could not be pursuaded [*sic*] to touch [Greeley] with a pole as long as the Atlantic Cable." But, if the Democratic convention decides to endorse Greeley, the masses of the party may "become educated up to such a high moral point as to shut their eyes and go for Greeley — and may the Lord have mercy on their souls." He himself could vote for Greeley if he had to, but he would wait for the action of the Democratic convention.[55]

Forget the personalities and vote for the principles, urged Richardson of the Davenport *Democrat*. If a vote for Greeley, argued Charles Negus of Fairfield, would help destroy the Republican party, then it was justified.[56] John P. Irish, always ready to jump into any political fray, was strangely silent, although he took occasion to deny the *Register's* claim that Grinnell was going to dictate the actions of the Democratic state convention. That convention would meet, wrote Irish, and decide the policy for the party, "and by the result of that organized action the committee and every member of the party will be bound."[57]

But before the state convention met on June 11, certain other Democratic voices were heard. Several county conventions, which met to appoint dele-

[54] *Ibid.*, May 9, 1872.

[55] Clinton *Age*, May 10, 1872.

[56] Davenport *Democrat*, May 9, 1872; Ottumwa *Democrat*, May 30, 1872.

[57] Iowa City *Press*, May 15, 1872.

gates to the state meeting, declared in favor of a coalition with the Liberals. And on June 3 the mentor of the Democrats — ex-Senator Augustus Caesar Dodge — in a letter to George Gillaspy of Ottumwa, came out for a Greeley nomination at the national convention to be held at Baltimore. In spite of the fact that the choice of Greeley was "unexpected and unwelcome," wrote Dodge, he was determined to "sustain the movement." That Irish published this letter in full in his paper indicated his approval.[58]

After the Republican convention at Philadelphia had renominated Grant, there was no other course for Democrats, either in Iowa or the nation, but to endorse Greeley. The nomination of a third candidate would merely split the opposition and Grant's election would be insured — either by a majority of the vote or, if the selection were thrown into Congress, by a vote there in favor of Grant. The Democrats knew this, and so did the Republicans.

The Liberals, anxious for Democratic support, were impatient. "Be easy with us," urged Thayer. "To step from the probable support of a Democrat into the arms of Greeley . . . partakes of the gigantic. . . . One thing is certain, Democrats will not be driven into the Revenue Reform movement by the lash of Republican newspapers. As they go into it, they will go from the sense of duty and not for the pleasure of it. They will do evil that good may come."[59] Such an attitude, although promising support, could not have been very encouraging for the Liberals, who wanted enthusiastic, not grudging, aid.

Thus the Democrats moved slowly into the Liberal camp, with many a longing look backward. But they put the best face on it that they could at their state convention and unanimously endorsed a resolution favoring the nomination of Greeley at Baltimore. Thayer "never knew Democrats more enthusiastic over the nomination of a Democrat than over the nomination of Greeley." Evans, who had been carrying the Greeley ticket in his newspaper ever since the Cincinnati convention, was pleased. According to the *Register*, Irish announced at the Democratic convention that his committee and that of the Liberals had been cooperating ever since the state convention of Liberals at Davenport.[60]

[58] *Ibid.*, July 3, 1872. For county conventions, see Elkader *Journal*, June 5, 1872; Fort Dodge *Messenger*, June 6, 1872; Sioux City *Times*, June 8, 1872.

[59] Clinton *Age*, June 7, 1872.

[60] *Ibid.*, June 14, 1872; Ottumwa *Democrat*, June 20, 1872; Davenport *Democrat*, June 20, 1872; Des Moines *Register*, June 19, 1872.

Since the Iowa Democrats had now officially joined with the Liberals, the Republicans, who would have preferred a third ticket, made the best of it and took comfort in announcing the death of the Democratic party. An Osceola editor was not so sure, however. "The old democratic party dies not so accommodatingly," he warned. "The republicans will find that the whole thing is arranged by the chief fuglemen." The Democrats will probably take over the whole Liberal movement. They are "not dead but crafty," he concluded.[61]

After the Baltimore convention had duly endorsed the Greeley ticket, Thayer published a column of reassurance to Democrats which confirmed the suspicions of the Osceola editor:

> We do not think the mission of the Democratic party is ended. The Baltimore Convention has merely ordered that the good old name shall be carefully wrapped in clean linnen [*sic*], properly labelled "DEMOCRACY," and laid on the highest shelf, with directions to be opened four years hence. The masses who know that the history of the progress of the nation and the history of the Democratic party are one and the same, will not permit the package to gather dust longer than until 1876.[62]

Once the Baltimore convention had acted, Irish began his campaign for Greeley. As chairman of the Democratic party in the state, he now stepped forward to lead the parade that had been forming for some time.[63] He sent out a call for a state convention to meet at Des Moines on August 1 to nominate candidates for the various state offices. Almost simultaneously, Campbell published a call for the Liberal state convention to be held on the same day at Des Moines.[64] That the two parties should meet at the same place on the same day was hardly an accident. A dramatic union was to be staged.

The "Marriage Ceremony," as Grinnell called it, took place in front of the courthouse at Des Moines. The two conventions had met separately for temporary organization and the appointment of committees. While the delegates listened to speeches whipping up their enthusiasm, a joint committee of the two parties met and chose a slate of candidates. Then the

[61] Osceola *Republican*, June 20, 1872.
[62] Clinton *Age*, July 12, 1872.
[63] Iowa City *Press*, July 17, 1872.
[64] Davenport *Democrat*, July 11, 18, 1872.

Democrats left their meeting place at Moore's Hall to join the Liberals, who were at the courthouse. An emotional delegate described the scene:

> On the approach of the Democratic delegation, the Liberals formed an avenue of themselves through which they should pass, and received them with long welcoming cheers. . . . General A. C. Dodge, of Des Moines County, the Chairman of the Democratic Convention, and Dr. Gilbert [*sic*. Dr. E. A. Guilbert of Dubuque], of the Liberal Convention, clasped hands, and each made a beautiful and fitting speech. That of the old General was the most noticable [*sic*], as the good old man was so filled with emotion that his lips quivered and tears might be seen rolling down his cheeks — tears of joy at the glorious union which he in his old age was so delighted to witness. . . .[65]

A joint central committee was appointed, with John H. Keatley, Liberal Republican of Council Bluffs, and John P. Irish, Democrat of Iowa City, as co-chairmen.[66] Grinnell, who had sparked the movement in Iowa, was active in the convention but was not put up for any of the state offices nor placed on the central committee. Neither was he named by his district for a congressional seat, a neglect which hurt him but which did not dim his enthusiasm for the Liberal cause.[67]

As the delegates left Des Moines for their homes, an incident occurred which Joseph Eiboeck found both amusing and symbolic. Dennis Mahony, the Dubuque Democratic editor who had been jailed for his opinions during the Civil War, accompanied Eiboeck and several other Republicans and spent the night at the home of J. B. Grinnell. To see Mahony, the most famous "Copperhead" of the state, accepting the hospitality of Grinnell, the abolitionist and friend of John Brown, was "the most striking illustration of the times," wrote Eiboeck. And when the host offered Mahony the bed that John Brown had formerly slept in, Mahony accepted with only "the least bit of extra twitching of his facial muscles."[68]

Although the Liberal-Democratic coalition was but poorly organized, groups in each district managed to get together conventions and put up candidates for Congress. Iowa had just been redistricted by the General Assembly, thereby increasing her representation in Congress from six to

[65] "Delta" in Estherville *Vindicator*, Aug. 10, 1872.

[66] Iowa City *Press*, Aug. 7, 1872.

[67] Payne, *Grinnell*, 267-8.

[68] Elkader *Journal*, Aug. 7, 1872.

nine. Although the slate of state officers was divided between the Liberals and Democrats — two of the five places going to Democrats[69] — in the congressional districts the Democrats took over and nominated their own men, with the exception of the Seventh District, where the Liberals nominated a Republican by the name of Oliver L. Palmer to run against the popular Republican nominee, John A. Kasson. Irish was nominated in the Fifth District, while the best-known and most influential Democrat in the Ninth District, John F. Duncombe of Fort Dodge, was chosen on what he liked to call an "Independent" ticket.[70]

In September the campaign swung into full vigor, with both sides stumping the state. Not only did the candidates make almost daily political speeches, but the leading members of each party were scheduled for exhausting tours. The experiences of Governor Carpenter are typical. He started his tour on September 9, going to Marengo by train, where he spoke in the evening. Leaving Marengo at 8 the next morning, by freight train, he traveled to Iowa City, where he made another speech in the evening. At 4 the next morning he took a train for Wilton, traveled from there by carriage to Tipton and made another speech. Again rising at 4, he took a carriage to Cedar Rapids, where he "saw lots of people," and left at 5 in the afternoon for West Liberty to speak. The following day he returned to Des Moines for a few hours, then set out for Osceola, "by the slow and tedious and aggravating means of freight train transportation." The next day he took a buggy to Lineville, where he boarded a train for Muscatine, traveling all night and arriving at 6 in the morning. There he met W. B. Allison, and the two journeyed to Crawfordsville where they spoke in the afternoon, then on to Washington for an evening meeting. In the morning a friend took the governor by carriage to North English where he spoke at a pole raising. "The wind was blowing a gale and I spoke in the woods to a good crowd making an acceptable speech. Rode in the cold 15 miles to Sigourney after dark got chilled through. . . ." Next, "across country" to Ottumwa, where Allison spoke in the afternoon and Carpenter in the evening. The governor left Ottumwa at 6 the next morning and traveled to Bloomfield, where he spoke again. By now his voice had given out, and he returned to Des Moines for several days to recuperate. This was September 21 — he

[69] Davenport *Democrat*, Aug. 8, 1872.

[70] For list of candidates, see Iowa City *Press*, Sept. 11, 1872. For Duncombe, see Sioux City *Times*, Aug. 31, 1872.

had been speaking daily (except Sundays) for 13 days, and getting from place to place by train, freight, carriage, or buggy. On September 25 he set out again, speaking at Albia with Allison, then on to Pella, back to Des Moines, to Fort Dodge, to Webster City, and then back to Fort Dodge, where the doctors put him to bed for a week. On October 9 he started out again, speaking daily until the 17th, when he had another slight respite at Des Moines. For the rest of the time until the election on November 5, the Governor was constantly on the road, traveling and speaking, from one end of the state to the other. Small wonder that he wrote, on election day, "I am glad the contest is over."[71]

The Governor was not the only speaker in the campaign. Every state official, the congressional delegation, the two Senators, and the candidates for office had similar speaking tours. They paid all their own expenses on these trips, but since all politicians traveled on passes on the railroads at the time, and were put up at private homes wherever possible, and doubtless hauled from towns with no railroad connections by party members who had buggy or carriage to offer, the financial outlay was not very heavy. When, after the election, the party chairman, Jacob Rich, asked for a statement of the Governor's expenses so that he could reimburse him from the party treasury (an entirely revolutionary idea at that time), Carpenter replied: "I do not think I have done more than I ought to have done, and have no bill against your committee. . . ."[72]

It is difficult to assess the influence of this type of speaking tour. It was, of course, the only way the candidates had of reaching the voters, with the exception of the highly partisan reports in the newspapers. These reports are not reliable, since the editors reported only good things of their party speakers, only bad things of the opposition. Probably most of the voters' minds were already made up. There were few political "Independents" at this time; most voters cast a straight ticket without question. But the speaking tours stirred up enthusiasm, kept the wavering in line, and "brought out the vote" which might have stayed at home unless properly motivated. That the Republicans were worrying about the "stay-at-homes" vote is indicated in a letter Governor Carpenter wrote to a friend in Ohio, a letter that was to be read at the meeting of a Grant club there. "The fact is . . . our

[71] Carpenter Diary, Sept. 9 to Nov. 5, 1872, *passim*, *Carpenter Papers*.

[72] Jacob Rich to Carpenter, Nov. 9, 1872; Carpenter to Rich, Nov. 16, 1872, Letterbook B, 1872, p. 297, *ibid*.

people have felt so sure that the Republican ticket would triumph, that many of them have not taken sufficient interest in the election to attend; but this year the coalition against the Republican Party will arouse a public feeling which will bring out the votes."[73] As the results will show, the Republicans had reason to be worried about the voters who stayed at home.

The Republican campaigners wasted little time on Greeley and the Liberal program. Their ancient enemy, the Democracy, was too good a whipping boy at election time. Furthermore, it was difficult to explain away some of the Liberal charges against Grant and his administration. Thus, the accepted technique was to dismiss the Liberals as soreheads and to attack their Democratic allies as Copperheads. According to a listener at Albia, Carpenter and Allison, in their speeches there, "expounded . . . the great truths of Republicanism as contradistinguished from modern Greeleyism and Rebelism."[74] With some confusion as to their meaning, a Webster City editor used high sounding words to describe Carpenter's speech there: "The plausible [*sic*] theories and studied sophism of the opposition to Gen. Grant and the Republican party were thoroughly exposed and annihilated by the convincing logic and able arguments of Gov. C."[75]

In Centerville the editor summed up in one paragraph the main arguments for a Republican victory:

> "Righteousness alone can exalt a nation." . . . No political party can hope for success unless based on this fundamental truth. . . . Such is the Republican party. It liberated the slave and elevated him to the rights of citizenship. It gave the poor man a homestead of 160 acres, at a nominal cost of $10; and it guarded the rights of the rich by making secure the payment of the national debt, according to contract. The Republican party is founded on principles of justice, and is therefore bound to succeed. Young man, if you desire a political future for yourself, or if you have any desire to promote the right and put down the wrong, then give your support to the Republican party.[76]

A particularly blatant example of bloody-shirtism appeared in the Estherville paper at this state of the campaign:

[73] Carpenter to W. S. Bradford, Sept. 3, 1872, Letterbook B, 1872, pp. 187-94, *ibid.*

[74] Des Moines *Register*, Oct. 4, 1872.

[75] Webster City *Hamilton Freeman*, Oct. 9, 1872.

[76] Centerville *Weekly Citizen*, Aug. 31, 1872.

> Since the close of the rebellion not less than *twenty-three thousand persons*, black or white, have been scourged, banished, or murdered by the Kuklux Klans of the South. The victims of their horrible barbarity have been Republicans. Not a Democrat has suffered. Loyalty to the United States Government brought persecution; disloyalty exemption. . . .[77]

Faced with this type of argument, Thayer complained that "had not those republicans who are now helping the democracy fight this great political battle, succeeded so well in years past in teaching the people to hate democracy the victory would be better assured."[78]

The weakness of the Liberal-Democratic coalition in Iowa is obvious, from a reading of the newspapers and from a survey of the type of canvass conducted. The Republicans ranged up and down the state, speaking at cities, at fairs, and at schoolhouses, and their itineraries were well advertised in advance. On the other hand, few Liberal or Democratic speaking tours were publicized. Even the Davenport *Democrat*, one of the strongest of the anti-Grant papers, carried no listing of speaking engagements. Richardson, the editor, recognized this weakness, but beyond a complaint did nothing about it. That this was not merely an Iowa failure is evidenced by Richardson's quotation of a statement by Theodore Tilton in the *Golden Age* that "there is too much of a disposition among the Liberals everywhere to trust the fate of the campaign to the enthusiasm of the people." "It is even so," wrote Richardson. "We must arouse ourselves. We must work, or we shall not have the proud honor of ranking among the States who will elect Greeley in November. What is our committee doing?"[79]

Evidently, the committee did very little. Nor did the editors who could have carried on the fight. The slate of state officials put up by the coalition was hardly mentioned in the papers. Some local areas had rousing campaigns for the congressional seats; in others, practically nothing appeared. While every Republican officeholder from the Senators and the Governor down to the lowest of the county officials campaigned night and day, few Liberal meetings were held and these but poorly reported. Democratic and Liberal editorials were anti-Grant rather than pro-Greeley. The Republicans were conducting a positive campaign; the coalition, with divided lead-

[77] Estherville *Vindicator*, July 27, 1872.

[78] Clinton *Age*, Sept. 27, 1872.

[79] Davenport *Democrat*, Sept. 19, 1872.

ership, fought a negative battle. The positive issue of reform was soon lost in a welter of political attacks on Grant and the Republicans. The Liberal defeat in Iowa can be said to be partly due to the fact that the party had no real program. A year later, when the coalition became the Anti-Monopoly party with a positive program of control of railroads, the Republicans came nearer to defeat than they had in any election since the war.

The "straight-out" Democrats were a feeble voice in Iowa. After a national group had met at Louisville and nominated Charles O'Conor (an honor which O'Conor declined and for which he refused to campaign), a few old-line Democrats — "The orphans who lost their mother at Cincinnati and their father at Baltimore," according to the *Register* — met at Des Moines and put up a state ticket. This movement was said to be financed by the Republicans in order to split the Democratic vote.[80] Whatever its origin, the 2,200 votes it garnered in the election made no difference in the outcome.

The states that voted in September and October forecast the results. In November the Liberal-Democratic coalition was roundly defeated, Greeley carrying only six states, all in the South. Iowa's vote in round numbers was 131,000 for Grant, 71,000 for Greeley, and 2,200 for O'Conor. This gave the Republicans a majority of 56,000, an increase of 10,000 over the majority given Grant in 1868.[81] On the face of it, this was a great victory. All the state offices won by about the same majority, and the entire congressional delegation of Republicans was elected by comfortable margins. The only district where the contest was even close was the Second, where Aylett R. Cotton won over W. E. Leffingwell by only 175 votes. Here, the large German population may have played a part in Leffingwell's high vote. The district included Muscatine, Jones, Cedar, Clinton, Scott, and Jackson counties; Scott and Jackson returned majorities in favor of Leffingwell, but their votes were offset by the votes for Cotton in the other four counties.

In the state, only two counties (traditionally-Democratic Dubuque and Scott) gave Greeley sound majorities, while Fremont, in the southwestern corner of the state, with a total of 2,653 votes cast, favored Greeley by a slim 31. All other Iowa counties gave Grant a majority.

The election would seem to have insured Republican dominance in Iowa.

[80] Des Moines *Register*, Sept. 27, 1872; Newton *Liberal*, Aug. 31, 1872.

[81] 1868 election returns, Des Moines *Register*, Dec. 16, 1868; 1872 returns, *ibid.*, Nov. 29, 1872.

But a long second look at the returns reveals a decline not only in the Democratic vote (the accepted explanation of Liberal-Democratic defeat in 1872), but also a definite decline in Republican votes. The voting population of Iowa had increased from 216,000 in 1869 to 261,000 in 1873, but the total vote cast in 1872 (204,000) as compared with the total cast in 1868 (194,000) did not reflect this increase in the number of voters. Whereas in 1868 the amazing total of 90 per cent of the qualified voters went to the polls, in 1872 only 78 per cent bothered to vote. The voting population between presidential elections had increased 45,000, but the votes cast increased by only 10,000. This was unusual, in a state where the population was steadily increasing, and at a time when voting was proportionately much heavier than it is today. It thus indicates that not only did some Democrats stay home on election day, but many Republicans likewise failed to vote.

In the 96 counties then voting, there was a decline in total vote from 1868 in 47 counties. Thirty of these counties show a loss in Republican votes; 41, in Democratic votes. Geographically, the counties with a declining vote, for either or both parties, are located in the southeastern half of the state — the area longest settled and with the largest population. The only exception to this geographical generalization is Harrison County on the Missouri River, where there was a very slight decline in a small Democratic vote.[82]

The possible significance of this decline in voter interest may throw a slightly different light on the outcome in Iowa. Although the Republicans cheered, understandably, over their large majority, they judiciously ignored the fact that in almost one-third of the counties fewer Republicans voted in 1872 than in 1868. There could be several explanations for this. The Republican voters could have felt so sure of the outcome that they did not bother to go to the polls; or they could have stayed at home because they did not like Grant but could not bring themselves to vote for Greeley; or possibly they just were not interested, one way or the other. Corruption in high places is often shrugged off by the voter, unless it touches his own pocketbook. The cry of reform — especially civil service reform, which meant little to most Iowans — had no appeal to the voters in times of pros-

[82] Voting population figures from *1836-1880 Census of Iowa . . .* (Des Moines, 1883), 228-35; German population from *Ninth United States Census* (1870), Vol. I, 353-4.

perity. When, the following year, an economic depression began to make itself felt, sparked by the failure of the mighty house of Jay Cooke and the ensuing panic, the grumbling against the great monopolies (especially the railroads) broke into a roar, and Iowans, who now felt the need of a reform, trooped to the polls and almost overturned the Republican party in the state.[83] Possibly, then, the decline in Republican voting in 1872 may be attributed to a declining faith in the Republican party. Also, in 1872 there was really no issue to arouse the voters, the Liberals had produced a weak candidate, and the Republicans offered nothing new.

Did the voters sense the changes which had come to the Republican party in 1872; did they miss the idealism of 1860? Sam Evans thought so. In trying to explain the election, he wrote:

> There is a difference however between the Radical party of to day and the Black Republican party of 1860. One was infused with the fierce, misguided enthusiasm of zealots. The other is held together and made strong through the same motives which actuate a band of robbers. The one fought for a sentiment; the latter day Republicans fight for bread and butter. . . .[84]

Subtracting the Democratic bias from the above statement, it may hold a kernel of truth. The number of "original abolitionists" in the Liberal party, from Grinnell in Iowa to Sumner in Massachusetts, would indicate a certain disillusionment, by the men who founded the party of Lincoln, with the men who now made up the party of Grant.

John P. Irish viewed the election and, after a bit of involved reasoning, came up with the solution that Grant had won by a minority. According to Irish, one million Democrats nationally had "snubbed the polls"; if they had voted, Grant's majority of some 760,000 would have been erased. Then Irish looked to the future and, in ringing tones, invited the Liberals to become Democrats. "Let us organize the Liberal Democracy," he urged, "and make the successful minority feel the weight of a once more united majority."[85] The editor of the Newton *Liberal* echoed Irish and candidly admitted that Grant could have been defeated by the coalition "had they been satisfied with and united upon their candidate."[86]

[83] Throne, "Anti-Monopoly Party in Iowa, 1873-1874," *passim*.

[84] Ottumwa *Democrat*, Nov. 7, 1872.

[85] Iowa City *Press*, Nov. 13, 1872.

[86] Newton *Liberal*, Nov. 23, 1872.

"We have met the enemy and we are theirs," wrote Richardson of the Davenport *Democrat*. But the fight is only beginning — "it is only the commencement of a long campaign" — he added, and concluded by quoting Cromwell: we must "Fear God and keep our powder dry."[87]

Evans could not resist an "I told you so" attitude, conveniently forgetting that he had been one of the first to advise a coalition. He had always opposed straying from original Democratic principles, he now claimed, but "had conquered the prejudices of a lifetime" and supported Greeley. "That the movement was not a success, is no fault of ours," he wrote.[88]

In all these explanations, justifications, and recriminations, no Democratic voice in Iowa spoke out strongly for the future of the party, and Liberal voices were stilled almost at once. Those Republicans who had embraced the movement soon crept back into their own ranks or, if they could find no haven there, went all the way over to the Democracy. William P. Hepburn, a Republican and a railroad attorney, had joined with the Liberals in 1872, but four years later he was safely back in the Republican fold and went on to a distinguished career in Congress.[89] Grinnell joined the Anti-Monopolists in 1873, but rejected the Greenbackers; in 1880, with the nomination of Garfield, whom he admired, he returned to his old party. Eiboeck never went back to the Republican party; in fact, in 1878 he ran for state office as a Democrat.[90]

The diary of Charles Mason of Burlington, former Democratic chief justice of Iowa's supreme court, reveals something of the weakness of Iowa's Democracy. Mason had early advised coalition with the Liberals, had accepted the nomination of Greeley, had attended the state convention of the party in June, and had drawn up the resolutions endorsing the Liberal candidate. He had also been elected as one of the four Democratic delegates-at-large from Iowa to Baltimore. Sanguine of success at first, by mid-May he began to lose heart. "I do not much like the association because our newspapers have to publish laudations of acts which I detest," he wrote on May 24. During the campaign he made speeches, wrote articles for the Burlington *Gazette*, and grew steadily more discouraged. "Little short of a miracle can alone save us," he wrote on the eve of the election. He blamed

[87] Davenport *Democrat*, Nov. 14, 1872.
[88] Ottumwa *Democrat*, Nov. 14, 1872.
[89] John Ely Briggs, *William Peters Hepburn* (Iowa City, 1919), 96-7.
[90] Payne, *Grinnell*, 281-4; Gue, *History of Iowa*, 4:86.

the Democratic-Liberal defeat on the Negro vote, on the "Bourbon" vote of the straight-outs which, although "trifling," had had a "depressing influence." "We are not fit for self-government," he mourned, "and the sooner we change the better." When Carl Schurz spoke at Burlington on November 21 Mason talked with him and agreed that "the Democratic party should disband itself or withdraw from the arena."[91] Disheartened at repeated defeats, the Democratic party had indeed reached a low-water mark in 1872.

The Democratic editors of Iowa, not quite so disheartened as Mason, followed their party from Liberalism to Anti-Monopolism, then tried out a hybrid "Democratic, Liberal Republican, Anti-Monopoly" party in 1875. In 1876, rejecting the Greenbacker agitation, the Democrats of Iowa returned to their own name and platform, never to desert it again, although victory did not come until 1889, with the election of a Democrat as governor of Iowa for the first time since the election of Stephen Hempstead in 1850.[92]

The significance of the election of 1872 in Iowa is that it reflected the national political picture. The Republican party, in power since 1860, had through patronage established itself firmly in office, from the local postmasters up through the appointive judgeships. A loyal organization had thus been built up that would work for the party at every election. In Iowa this organization was dominated by Grenville M. Dodge, William B. Allison, Samuel J. Kirkwood, James S. Clarkson, and a host of political lieutenants. Clarkson, in addition to editing the powerful Des Moines *Register*, held the even more important job of Des Moines postmaster. The corruption of the Grant regime had not yet touched the Iowa Republicans to any great extent; therefore, that argument of the Liberals meant little in the state. To the average Iowan, busy with an expanding agriculture, growing cities, an increasing population, and rapidly extending lines of railroad, the economic picture looked good. Almost automatically, he voted yearly for the party that seemed to embody this prosperity. The Liberal-Democratic coalition was able to garner only some 71,000 votes in the 1872 election; this, plus the 2,200 "straight-out" Democratic votes, totalled 1,000 less than the Dem-

[91] Charles Mason Remey (ed.), *Life and Letters of Charles Mason, Chief Justice of Iowa, 1804-1882* (16 typescript volumes, Washington, 1939), 10:1269-80 *passim.*

[92] See Jean B. Kern, "The Political Career of Horace Boies," IOWA JOURNAL OF HISTORY, 47:215-46 (July, 1949).

ocrats alone had won in the 1868 election, thus indicating that the coalition had little appeal in Iowa.

The Democrats of the state were in much the same position as the party nationally. They had no leadership, they held no offices, and their only voice was a handful of editors who could spread Democratic gospel but who had no organization. The docile acceptance of Greeley as a candidate did nothing to enhance the reputation of the party. The "old vilifier" of the Democrats was the poorest candidate the Liberals could have chosen to oppose the popular Grant. The Democrats, turning from New Departure to Passive Policy to Liberal Republicanism in a vain search for a winning combination, did not present to the voter a program of steady principles. The voter knew what to expect from the Republicans; he was never sure of the Democrats. The closest the Democrats came to winning in Iowa in these years came in 1873, when they espoused a popular economic program of opposition to the growing power of the railroads. Even then, however, the Republicans stole most of their thunder by being just as "anti-monopoly" as was the party masquerading under that name. In the gubernatorial election of 1873 the Democrats won 44 per cent of the vote, a high percentage for them, but not high enough even in a year of panic and depression to enable them to win. They did manage to win an even half of the seats in the Iowa House of Representatives, an indication that they were on the right track, but by 1874 they had returned to their old principles and their old minority position in Iowa politics.

In the 1872 election the Liberal-Democratic coalition had won only 35 per cent of the votes cast, considerably below the national average of 44 per cent. In 1876, when the Democrats polled more votes than the Republicans nationally, even though they lost the presidency, Iowa Democrats polled only 41 per cent of the votes cast. Nationally, the Democratic party was weak; in Iowa, it was almost impotent. The handful of Liberals in Iowa had gambled on a feeble reed to support them to victory, and had lost.