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## CALHOUN, CRAWFORD, AND THE POLITICS OF RETRENCHMENT

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The "Era of Good Feelings," as the name implies, is usually depicted as a rather placid period, with the exception of the ominous Missouri Controversy. However, the most notable feature of this era politically is that despite the overwhelming dominance of one party there were bitter political struggles between rival factions within the Republican Party striving to advance the ideology and political aspirations of their strong and brilliant leaders. In fact, while the Missouri controversy was raging, another bitter struggle was being waged in Congress to reduce the size of the Army. This little-noted contest contributed significantly to the growing factionalism of the Republican Party which was to culminate after the election of 1824 in the fragmentation of the old Jeffersonian coalition. It also split Monroe's Cabinet, led to a clash between the Executive and Congress, and intimately affected the political careers of several potential candidates for the presidency, especially those of William H. Crawford and John C. Calhoun.

The movement against the Army arose out of several factors. Party orthodoxy held even a small standing army in fear. The experience of the War of 1812, however, had proven convincingly the dangers of unpreparedness, and Congress had accordingly fixed the size of the Army at 10,000 in 1815.<sup>1</sup> There were, nevertheless, sporadic efforts at reduction in the years that followed by many Congressmen who were never reconciled to what they considered a dangerously large force. Further, the conduct of several military leaders, particularly the heavy-handed actions of General Andrew Jackson in Florida, made the Army an object of increased attacks in Congress. Finally, the rising political prominence of the Secretary of War, John C. Calhoun, weighed against the Army. Under Calhoun, an unquestionably gifted administrator, the War Department by 1820 "had definitely become the prime instrument for carrying out the positive constructive programs of the general government."<sup>2</sup> These activities, ranging from roadbuilding and coastal fortifi-

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<sup>1</sup> Richard Peters, ed., *The Public Statutes at Large of the United States of America* (Boston, 1846), III, 224.

<sup>2</sup> Leonard D. White, *The Jeffersonians: A Study in Administrative History, 1801-1829* (New York, 1951), 138. See also Charles M. Wiltse, *John C. Calhoun: Nationalist, 1782-1828* (Indianapolis, 1944), 151-152, 177-179.

cations to Indian relations and western exploration, aroused the suspicious and bred hostility among more orthodox Jeffersonians.

The financial panic of 1819 and the consequent reduction of receipts into the Treasury provided opponents of the Army with an ideal opportunity to carry their plans into effect. William H. Crawford, the Secretary of the Treasury and a strong contender for the presidency, citing the Seminole War and other events connected with the Army, predicted to Albert Gallatin in the summer of 1819 that reduction of the Army was "almost certain."<sup>3</sup> It was not until the Sixteenth Congress, however, which met as the severe effects of the panic were first being felt, that the movement against the Army began in earnest. A determined anti-army group dominated by Crawfordites seized upon the theme of "retrenchment" and set about the task of dismantling the supposedly dangerous military service erected after the War of 1812.

It became obvious during the debates that the Crawfordites were attempting, by using the retrenchment theme, to preempt the ideological mainstream of the Jeffersonian political credo of simplicity, economy, and limited government. Their efforts, quite naturally, led to conflict with the followers of Calhoun and other army supporters. It is not likely that the Crawfordites at this time viewed Calhoun as much of a threat for the presidency, but reducing his influence was a factor. It was an undeniable fact that through efficient management and strict accountability Calhoun and his staff had effected many economies and eliminated much waste in the Army. By forcing him to defend a large army and the retention of the present level of expenditures, his opponents hoped to diminish his reputation as an economizer.

Retrenchment was a powerful and popular political issue which few dared to oppose. Support for retrenchment became a test not only of a commitment to cut back on government expenditures at a time of deep distress in the country, but also fidelity to Jeffersonian principles of simplicity. Further, the members of Congress were, no doubt, fully aware of the general malaise abroad in the land. Other factions, such as the Clay supporters, who had earlier cooperated with the Crawfordites in the attack upon Jackson's Florida campaign, for a variety of reasons joined in the assault upon the Army. Obviously, the War Department, which consumed roughly one-third of the annual budget, was an especially vulnerable target at this time.<sup>4</sup> The culmina-

<sup>3</sup> Crawford to Gallatin, July 24, 1819, in Henry Adams, ed., *The Writings of Albert Gallatin* (3 vols.; New York, 1879), II, 116.

<sup>4</sup> The figure above was derived from a study of Congressional appropriations for 1820. It is extremely difficult to arrive at an accurate figure. Even the total of

tion of this early movement was a resolution passed on May 11, 1820, calling upon the Secretary of War to submit a plan at the beginning of the second session of the Sixteenth Congress for the reduction of the Army to 6,000.<sup>5</sup>

The Army was at this time divided into Northern and Southern Divisions, commanded by Major Generals Jacob Brown and Andrew Jackson respectively. The aggregate authorized force was 12,664 counting mechanics, artificers, and laborers in the Ordnance arsenals, and the number in service in September, 1820, was 10,281, of which 683 were commissioned officers.<sup>6</sup> Considering that this force was scattered over a vast area from Maine to Florida and from Louisiana to St. Paul, it was already small. Calhoun professed to be surprised that "any reasonable mind" could contemplate a reduction. He was, nevertheless, under orders to do so, and on July 21, he wrote to his six generals—Brown and Jackson, and Brigadier Generals Winfield Scott and Alexander Macomb of the Northern Division, and Edmund P. Gaines and Henry Atkinson of the Southern Division—to submit their plans and ideas for reducing the Army.<sup>7</sup>

As might be expected, the generals in their replies deplored any reduction. In any event, they recommended that the so-called General Staff should be left untouched and the officer corps should be retained as far as possible. The brunt of the reduction, they argued, should occur in the rank and file and noncommissioned officers. From these letters, complete with charts and graphs, Calhoun was to fashion his report.<sup>8</sup>

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the appropriations is misleading, for unexpended appropriations from the previous year were carried over and sums appropriated for 1820 were carried over to 1821. The fiscal year was the same as the calendar year at that time.

<sup>5</sup> *Annals*, 16th Cong., 1st Sess., 1602-1603, 2234. One of the last measures of this session was to authorize a three million dollar loan, *ibid.*, 2598-2600.

<sup>6</sup> William A. Gordon, comp., *A Compilation of Registers of the Army of the United States from 1815 to 1837* (Washington, D. C., 1837), 57-60. See the Army Register for January 1, 1821, *ibid.*, 182-197.

<sup>7</sup> Calhoun to Jackson, June 1, 1820, Andrew Jackson Papers (Manuscript Division, Library of Congress), hereafter cited L. C. National Archives, Record Group 107, Letters Sent by the Secretary of War Relating to Military Affairs, XI, 78 (Microcopy 6), hereafter cited NA, W.D., Letters Sent, Mil. Af. Brown's copy is in NA, RG 107, Confidential and Unofficial Letters Sent by the Secretary of War, I, 121-122 (Microcopy 7).

<sup>8</sup> Copies of these reports may be found in U. S. Army: Miscellany, L. C. See also Jackson to Calhoun, August 9, 1820, NA, RG 107, Letters Received by the Secretary of War, Registered Series, J-60 (Microcopy 221), hereafter cited NA, W.D., Letters Received; and Brown to Calhoun, October 6, 1820, *ibid.*, B-59.

The second session of the Sixteenth Congress convened on November 13. President Monroe's Annual Message did not mention army reduction, apparently from a desire to remain neutral in the controversy, but he did stress the expansion of the frontier and the growing commitment of military forces in this area.<sup>9</sup> Henry Clay's absence touched off a struggle to choose a new Speaker of the House. John W. Taylor of New York was finally elected on the twenty-second ballot, defeating Calhoun's close friend, William Lowndes. From Calhoun's standpoint this was unfortunate, for Taylor's selection of committee members was not favorable to the military. For example, while Alexander Smyth of Virginia, a supporter of the regular Army, was selected to head the Military Affairs Committee, the remaining six members were solidly in favor of army reduction.<sup>10</sup>

On December 12, Calhoun sent his report to the House. This state paper has generally been considered one of his most outstanding reports. One recent military historian has called it "one of the pivotal documents in the history of American military thought."<sup>11</sup> It was a bold defense of a standing army; from a political viewpoint, perhaps it was too bold. He made no concession to the mood of Congress, if indeed he understood that mood. He apparently wrote his report under two false impressions. This is indicated in a letter to his friend Samuel D. Ingram on November 6, 1820. "Many," Calhoun wrote, "who are calculating on our monied embarrassment, will be disappointed." Further, he passed off the clamor for army reduction as the "murmurs [*sic*] of the factions."<sup>12</sup> Calhoun was soon to learn that his calculations were quite different from those of the Secretary of the Treasury, and the latter

<sup>9</sup> James D. Richardson, comp., *A Compilation of the Message and Papers of the Presidents* (10 vols.; Washington, D. C., 1900), II, 73-80; *Annals*, 16th Cong., 2nd Sess., 16-17.

<sup>10</sup> Calhoun had urged Lowndes to seek the speakership. See Calhoun to Lowndes, October 12, 1820, William Lowndes Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina. The remaining six committee members, all of whom voted for Army reduction, were: Solomon Van Rensselaer of N. Y., John Cocke of Tenn., Joshua Cushman of Mass., Robert Moore of Pa., Hutchins G. Burton of N. C., and John Russ of Conn., *Annals*, 16th Cong., 2nd Sess., 435-438, 441, 933, 936-937.

<sup>11</sup> Russell F. Weigley, *Towards an American Army: Military Thought from Washington to Marshall* (New York, 1962), 30-37. For its long range implications, see Emory Upton, *The Military Policy of the United States* (Washington, D. C., 1912), 150-159.

<sup>12</sup> Calhoun to Samuel D. Ingham, November 6, 1820, John C. Calhoun Papers, South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina.

statement reveals how far he had misjudged the growing strength of the anti-Army group.

In his report, Calhoun stressed that while a standing army in peacetime was necessary to garrison forts and protect the sovereignty of the United States, its most important object ought to be "to create and perpetuate military skill and experience," and to provide "a regular force . . . properly organized and prepared for actual service." The guiding principle for reorganization, he contended, should be to form the Army in such a way that, "at the commencement of hostilities, there should be nothing either to new model or create." Basically, his plan provided for the reduction of the rank and file while preserving the staff and officer corps virtually intact. Without adding a single officer or single company, the force could be augmented to 11,558, and with an additional 288 officers the Army could be expanded to 19,035 without creating a single new regiment. This was the principle of the "expandible Army" which is the basis of the fame of this report. Finally, Calhoun argued that "by no propriety of language can that arrangement be called economical, which, in order that our military establishment in peace should be rather less expensive, would . . . render it unfit to meet the dangers incident to a state of war."<sup>13</sup>

The response of the generals was enthusiastic. Jackson, for example, informed Calhoun that since the appearance of the report, "the enemies of the Army are dumb. . . . I think it will silence the *little* members of Congress who have had the reduction of the Army their *riding horse* for some years." However, an ominous note against Calhoun's plan was sounded in Congress when Thomas W. Cobb, a leading spokesman of the Crawford faction stated, "I can see no utility in an army of officers."<sup>14</sup>

Much depended upon the condition of the Treasury. Calhoun believed that the Army budget would make a favorable impression. "If the state of the Treasury is not very barren," he had written to General Brown, "I do not fear a reduction, notwithstanding the resolution."<sup>15</sup>

<sup>13</sup> The report on which this summary is based is the file copy in NA, RG 107, Reports to Congress from the Secretary of War, II, 154-169 (Microcopy 220). Other copies are found in Richard K. Cralle, ed., *Reports and Public Letters of John C. Calhoun* (6 vols.; New York, 1857), V, 80-93; and *Annals*, 16th Cong., 2nd Sess., 1715-1723.

<sup>14</sup> Jackson to Calhoun, January 4, 1821, Jackson Papers, Letters and Orders, vol. 50, L. C. See also, Brown to Calhoun, December 30, 1820, Brown Papers, Letterbooks, II, 203-204, *ibid.*; Gaines to Calhoun, December 31, 1820, NA, W.D., Letters Received, G-159. Cobb's comment may be found in *Annals*, 16th Cong., 2nd Sess., 730.

<sup>15</sup> Calhoun to Brown, July 21, 1820, NA, RG 107, Confidential and Unofficial Letters Sent by the Secretary of War, I, 121-122 (Microcopy 7).

Crawford's Treasury report of December 1, 1820, however, presented a very bleak financial outlook. Revenues of the government for 1821 were expected to drop \$4.8 million below expenditures which, with the anticipated deficit of nearly \$2.7 million for 1820, would mean an accumulative deficit of \$7.5 million in two years. This was a sizeable sum, when the average annual expenditures were around \$21 million.<sup>16</sup>

Calhoun labeled the report "a most unfortunate document [*sic*]." He explained to his friend Ingram that, "It has placed the whole subject connected with our disbursement in the worst possible light." There was a "clear error" of \$922,000 against the War Department, which Crawford had promised to correct, but further, the estimated expenditures had been augmented by two million by assuming that the old balances would be called for in 1821, when they certainly would not be. "It surely was a matter of no small importance," he continued, "to show that the financial difficulty was in point of fact limited to a single year. . . . I regret the consequence which must result from the report on the feelings of the nation, tho' certainly not intended by Mr. Crawford."<sup>17</sup>

The ambivalence of Calhoun's last statement reflects the hint of a suspicion that Crawford knew the impact his report would have on Congress, and that he deliberately contrived to make the report in such a way to assure at least some reduction of the Army. Whether this was in fact true is very difficult to determine. Certainly, a reading of the Treasury report of December 1 and the revised report of December 21, reveals two very different projections of the state of the Treasury and remarkably dissimilar figures in the two reports.<sup>18</sup> The disparity between the two reports, Crawford explained, arose from "the different manner of keeping the warrant and appropriation accounts in the Treasury, War, and Navy Departments." War Department figures did not change much in the two reports. The first set them at \$7.4 million, and the second revised it to \$6.8 million. Entirely new figures were pre-

<sup>16</sup> *Annals*, 16th Cong., 2nd Sess., 487-499. Figures have been rounded to the largest whole number.

<sup>17</sup> Calhoun to Ingram, December 17, 1820, Calhoun Papers, South Carolina Library, University of South Carolina.

<sup>18</sup> *Annals*, 16th Cong., 2nd Sess., 689-692. Congress eventually authorized a five million dollar loan. 3 Stat. 635-636. The Committee on Ways and Means on February 28, 1821, issued their own estimate of a \$3.6 deficit for 1821, or \$1 million less than Crawford's estimate, *Annals*, 16th Cong., 2nd Sess., 1247. Crawford's estimate was more nearly correct as the same committee's report of April 30, 1822 shows. They also stated that the estimates of "the present Secretary has been nearer to the result than his immediate predecessors." *ibid.*, 17th Cong., 2nd. Sess., 1746-1752.



sented in the revised report for all the executive departments, including all the old unexpended balances, or money appropriated but unspent, although Crawford frankly admitted that a portion possibly would not be paid out until 1822. Still, the revised report lowered the cumulative deficit for 1820 and 1821 to \$4.7 million. To meet this deficit and all contingencies, Crawford recommended that Congress authorize a loan \$7 million.

In effect, Crawford was presenting the worst that was possible, which was perfectly proper, but there is little doubt that a friend of the Army could have just as properly presented a more favorable projection of the financial situation. Calhoun wrote to his friend Virgil Maxcy that the second report from the Treasury was "certainly to be much regretted." The first report, he related, produced an unfavorable impression, and "threatened to derange all of our establishment. The corrected report followed at a long interval, and has not fully done away the impression of the first. In fact, I think the last almost as erroneous as the first."<sup>19</sup>

Whether it was Crawford's intention to foster the attack upon the Army or not, his report had the effect upon the economy-minded Congress that Calhoun had feared. The Army became their primary object. What is perhaps most important is that Calhoun became convinced that Crawford was behind the anti-Army movement. Historians seeking the beginnings of the overt break between these two men could well start with the Treasury reports of 1820 and the Army reduction of 1821.

The attack upon the Army began in earnest in January 1821. Thomas W. Cobb, on January 3, supported a series of sweeping resolutions he had introduced, designed to reduce government expenditures by three million dollars, two million of which would come in the military. Cobb asserted that unless "radical retrenchments" were adopted Congress would be forced to authorize an eight million dollar loan. With respect to the military, Cobb was convinced that the militia was capable of meeting any invading force until regulars could take the field.<sup>20</sup>

William Lowndes countered on January 4 by submitting a resolution calling upon the Secretary of the Treasury to report the balance in the Treasury as of the 1st of January 1821. Alexander Smyth followed the next day by delivering a scathing attack upon one of the favorite themes of the retrenchment forces—that the militia, and not the Army, should be the main reliance for the country's defense. He cited the militia's unreliability in the past and asserted, "before you destroy the Army, you

<sup>19</sup> Calhoun to Virgil Maxcy, January 14, [1821], Galloway-Maxcy-Markoe Papers, XXXII, L. C.

<sup>20</sup> *Annals*, 16th Cong., 2nd Sess., 709-712, 715-734.

ought to pass an efficient militia law." He further contended "it is singular that the Government should be charged in this house with prodigality and oppression, when no taxes whatever are imposed on the people."<sup>21</sup>

Cobb's resolutions were laid on the table on January 8, the same day that the House Military Affairs Committee presented the bill for the reduction of the Army. The bill virtually ignored all of Calhoun's recommendations. Drastic reductions were proposed for the staff, and the officer corps was to be reduced proportionally with the rank and file, with only one brigadier general to be retained to command the Army. The principal author of the bill was probably John Cocke, a Crawford supporter, who presided over the Military Affairs Committee after Alexander Smyth refused to attend the sessions.<sup>22</sup>

Eldred Simkins of South Carolina, a Calhoun supporter, denounced the bill. He charged that the cry for retrenchment was "an attack upon the whole course and spirit of the present administration." He further alleged that the condition of the Treasury was not nearly as bad as the Secretary had presented. Simkins claimed he was for economy, but the country's defense should not be sacrificed.<sup>23</sup>

Army reduction was debated in the House almost exclusively for the next two weeks of January. The major themes had been developed already by Cobb, Simkins, and Smyth, and these themes with variations were reiterated many times in the speeches that followed. One of the strongest attacks on the Army, and upon Calhoun as well, was delivered by Lewis Williams of North Carolina. Adverting to the Jeffersonian credo, he claimed it was time for the country to return to the paths of frugality and prudence. He denounced Calhoun's report as "a practical renunciation of the principles upon which our Government is founded." As for Calhoun's statements that the militia was not to be relied upon and that a large number of officers must be retained, Williams exclaimed, "I protest against this doctrine with my whole strength; I disclaim it, as anti-Republican, as useless, as dangerous, as extravagant." Like others, Williams contended that the Navy was a far more likely deterrent to an attack than the regular Army.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 735, 744-756.

<sup>22</sup> The motion for reduction had been placed before the House of Representatives by John Cocke on November 20, 1820, *ibid.*, 444. The House bill is in *ibid.*, 934. See also John Cocke to John Williams, April 30, 1822, *American State Papers: Military Affairs*, Class V (7 vols.; Washington, D. C., 1834), II, 414 (hereafter cited A.S.P., *Mil. Af.*).

<sup>23</sup> *Annals*, 16th Cong., 2nd Sess., 758-767.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 767-779.

Many specifically complimented the efficient and economical administration of the War Department, while at the same time urging a reduction of the Army. As the debate progressed, it was obvious that a large majority of the House favored retrenchment. David Trimble of Kentucky perhaps best reflected this mood with his anguished cry, "to live upon loans is treason against posterity!"<sup>25</sup> Defenders of the Army were in a weak position. Generally, they were willing to concede some reduction, but insisted that the state of the Treasury did not warrant any such drastic reduction as proposed. Attempts to amend the bill were decisively defeated. Desperately, they sought to defer any action until the long-awaited answer to the Lowndes resolution was received.<sup>26</sup>

Crawford's report in response to the Lowndes resolution was received by the House on January 22. It revealed a balance of about \$1.1 million and nearly the same amount in the hands of the Treasurer as Agent for the War and Navy Departments. While it may have appeared that this report contradicted his earlier reports, Crawford noted that there was still an anticipated demand on the Treasury of \$4.7 million to complete the service of 1820.<sup>27</sup>

But the issue of which side was correct about the state of the Treasury was no longer germane. The fate of the Army was already sealed. The same day that Crawford's report was received, the House voted overwhelmingly to order the Army Reduction bill engrossed for the third reading. The next day final passage came by a vote of 109-48.<sup>28</sup>

Calhoun dejectedly wrote to Jackson that the House bill was contrary "to the most obvious military principles," and he added, "we shall have the mortification to find the Army disorganized, at the very moment, when for the first time in this country, it had begun to attain a considerable degree of perfection." Calhoun did not have to add that there probably would not be a suitable place for Jackson in the reduced Army. He merely added that he hoped Jackson would "find it convenient and

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 884.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 890-900, 902-907, 911.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 930-932. Whether Crawford deliberately delayed the report is difficult to say. Time was needed to gather the information from various places. A similar call a year earlier, on January 17, was answered on January 24. *ibid.*, appendix, 2351.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 933-937. One of those who spoke briefly favoring the final passage of the bill was Henry Clay who had taken his seat a week earlier. John Quincy Adams labelled the movement as "a coalition of all the partisans of Mr. Crawford, of De Witt Clinton, and of Mr. Clay." Charles F. Adams, ed., *Memoirs of John Quincy Adams* (12 vols.; Philadelphia, 1875), V, 237. See also Norman K. Risjord, *The Old Republicans: Southern Conservatism in the Age of Jefferson* (New York, 1965), Chapter 7, for a fuller discussion of the various issues arising during this period.

suitable" to accept the position that President Monroe had offered to Jackson the day before—that of Governor of the Florida Territory.<sup>29</sup>

In the Senate the pro-Army forces were stronger, and they took up Army reduction only very reluctantly. Mahlon Dickerson of New Jersey, in fact, asserted: "measures calculated to save the Army . . . would not be exactly calculated to save ourselves. A reduction which principle would render proper, our empty Treasury will render necessary; and but for this necessity no reduction would take place."<sup>30</sup> John Williams, Chairman of the Military Affairs Committee, like his brother Lewis Williams of the House a Crawford supporter, reported on February 2 a substitute for the House bill. This bill, perhaps in recognition of the mood of the Senate, more closely approximated Calhoun's recommendations. A larger proportion of officers were retained, including one major general and two brigadier generals, and by reducing the size of the companies the bill adopted in part the idea of "skeleton" regiments. Williams claimed that the Senate version would save nearly as much money as the House version.<sup>31</sup> The pro-Army group may have been in the majority, but faced with the realities of the overwhelming House vote and the possible political consequences of frustrating efforts at retrenchment, they obviously concluded that the Williams version was the best course to take.<sup>32</sup>

In the House, for the first time during the whole debate, the leaders took charge. Henry Clay, who had only recently taken his seat, along with Philip Barbour, and others, argued for acceptance of the Senate bill. They reasoned that if the Senate insisted, which was fairly certain, the whole bill might be placed in jeopardy. Cobb, Cocke, and the other retrenchers insisted on the House bill, but when the lines were drawn, the retrenchers were defeated 79-72. The final passage of the measure came on March 2, with reduction to become effective on June 1.<sup>33</sup>

Though the retrenchers had not been successful in fixing the final form of the bill, they had won a significant victory in reducing the Army. Their next effort was to restrict severely the expenditures of the War Department. Appropriations for fortifications were reduced by three-fourths, from approximately \$800,000 to about \$200,000; the Indian De-

<sup>29</sup> Calhoun to Jackson, January 25, 1821, Jackson Papers, L. C.; Monroe to Jackson, January 24, 1821, in John Spencer Bassett, ed., *Correspondence of Andrew Jackson* (7 vols.; Washington, D. C., 1926), III, 38.

<sup>30</sup> *Annals*, 16th Cong., 2nd Sess., Senate, 368.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 261-365.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 375.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, *House*, 1242-1243; *ibid.*, Senate, 389. A copy of the Act of March 2 may be found in *ibid.*, 1789-1799, and in 3 Stat. 615-616.

partment appropriations were cut from \$200,000 to \$100,000; and not one cent was allocated for ordnance. Here their efforts and unanimity faltered. The Crawfordites were unable to carry their zeal for retrenchment into other areas, or rather they were unable to keep the coalition of factions unified beyond this point. Their drive against the Navy was met by significant defections among the Clinton and Clay factions. The attempt to reduce the civil expenditures received only half-hearted support and was tabled.<sup>84</sup>

The retrenchment effort against the Army apparently satisfied most Congressmen, and presumably they felt that it would satisfy their constituents. The Crawfordites had been able to marshal support against the Army, but their inability to carry their advantage any further indicates their failure to weld together a viable coalition. The majority of Congress was simply unwilling to go as far as the Crawfordites on the issue of retrenchment, Jeffersonian principles of simplicity notwithstanding.

Although both Monroe and Calhoun had opposed Army reduction, they were now forced to carry it into effect. But they did have a certain latitude to interpret the Act; and though they were certainly very conscious that Congress would review their actions, it became their objective to achieve the maximum efficiency out of the limited numbers prescribed by Congress.<sup>85</sup> They were assisted in the details of reduction by a Board of Officers, composed of Major General Brown, who became the Commanding Officer of the Army with his headquarters in Washington, and Brigadier Generals Scott and Gaines, who commanded the Eastern and Western Divisions respectively.<sup>86</sup> There were many obstacles, not the least of which were the hundreds of petitions from officers seeking retention and from Congressmen recommending the merits of some worthy officer.

In terms of organization, some positive improvements were made by the Act, so that the smaller numbers were utilized much more efficiently. The artillery was cut by more than half its previous size and organized into four regiments. The size of each company was reduced from what amounted to a war-footing size of 100 privates to 42. The infantry was pared by somewhat less than one-half and organized into seven regiments. Staff organization was not altered greatly, although the numbers authorized were in some cases significantly reduced. One drawback was

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, House, 754, 1041-1042, 1059-1063, 1192, 1215, 1280.

<sup>85</sup> See, for example Calhoun to Jackson, April 8, 1821, Jackson Papers, L. C.

<sup>86</sup> Gordon, *Army Registers* (1821), 198. The precedent for such a Board had been established in the reduction after the War of 1812, *ibid.*, 52-54. An apparently verbal arrangement was made whereby Scott and Gaines would rotate their commands every two years.

the increased use of the line officers to perform staff functions, at the expense of the efficiency of the line.

When the work was completed, Calhoun wrote to Jackson that the task had been "a painful one," but the new organization was "decidedly superior in several respects to any of the preceeding organizations."<sup>37</sup> Despite this, Calhoun showed in other ways his bitterness over the reduction of the Army. In a letter to the *National Intelligencer*, published under the pseudonym of "Vauban," he attacked the "retrenchments" made by Congress. "To abolish or disorganize establishments necessary for the defense and security of the nation," he wrote, "ought to be distinguished by a very different epithet . . . This may be called *retrenchment* and *saving*, but it is neither *wisdom* nor *economy*." Calhoun attributed the measures of Congress to "an unfortunate formation of the committees," and to the fact that "the members of experience and talents in the House had not their just and usual influence, and the management of the business of the House fell principally into the hands of those but little distinguished for talents or standing with the nation."<sup>38</sup>

It may be inferred from the above that Calhoun laid the blame for Army reduction essentially on the actions of the pro-Crawford group, headed by Cobb, Cocke, and Williams. John Quincy Adams, the Secretary of State, agreed. He noted in his diary that "all the attacks against the War Department during this Congress have been stimulated by Crawford and promoted by his partisans." With characteristic vanity, he concluded that he was the real object, and that the War Department was being assailed only as an "outwork."<sup>39</sup> Calhoun would only note to Jackson, whose enmity to Crawford was well-known, that Crawford's friends had "in particular been very pointed in their attacks on me personally." He added, "if anyone desiring to rise to the head of this nation, has contributed to it he deserves, and I do hope, will receive the execration not only of posterity, which is certain, but the present generation."<sup>40</sup> Calhoun was not as reserved in his statements to his friend Virgil Maxcy who had recommended a counter-attack by Calhoun's friends. Calhoun replied, "certain it is, that there has been an extraordinary series of mistakes and miscalculations in relation to our revenues." If Maxcy

<sup>37</sup> Calhoun to Jackson, May 19, 1820 (1821), Jackson Papers, L. C.

<sup>38</sup> *Daily National Intelligencer*, Tuesday, April 10, 1821, p. 2, Calhoun admitted authorship of this essay in a letter to Virgil Maxcy, April 11, 1821, Galloway-Maxcy-Markoe, XXXII, L. C., and claimed that "its intention is not to discuss the subject, but to call the public attention to it."

<sup>39</sup> Adams, *Memoirs*, V, 315-316.

<sup>40</sup> Calhoun to Jackson, March 7, 1821, Jackson Papers, L. C.

wanted to expose these errors, Calhoun stated, "I will furnish the documents to which you refer, if they can be had."<sup>41</sup>

A controversy soon arose in the Senate in the Seventeenth Congress over certain decisions made by Monroe, Calhoun, and the Board of Officers. John Williams reported on March 13, 1822, the Military Affairs Committee's recommendation against accepting the nominations made by President Monroe. In particular, he objected to the appointments of Colonel Nathan Towson, the former Paymaster General, as the commander of one artillery regiment over officers senior to him in rank, and of Colonel James Gadsden as Adjutant General under similar circumstances. Implicit in the two days of debate that followed was the subtle charge of favoritism. Towson was known to be close personally to both Calhoun and Monroe, and Gadsden, a former aide-de-camp to Jackson, was a particular favorite of Calhoun. The Towson and Gadsden nominations were rejected, thus setting up a confrontation with the Executive.<sup>42</sup>

Monroe angrily withdrew his nominations on March 26, and then resubmitted them to the Senate on April 12, accompanied by a long explanation of his actions. There is little doubt that Calhoun figured prominently in the formulation of this letter.<sup>43</sup> Monroe declared that the law of March 2, 1821, gave the President "full power . . . to take [officers] from any and every corps of the former establishment, and place them in the latter." He further maintained that the law had created original vacancies, or new positions, and Congress had "no right, under the Constitution, to impose any restraint, by law, on the power granted to the President, so as to prevent his making a free selection of proper persons for these offices from the whole body of his fellow citizens."<sup>44</sup>

At issue ostensibly were Presidential prerogatives and a difference of interpretation whether Congress had created original vacancies in the Act of March 2, 1821. Beneath the surface, however, lay an accumulation of grievances generated by the reduction, which fueled the surprising level of passion this issue excited. Certainly the complaints of officers

<sup>41</sup> Calhoun to Maxcy, April 27, 1821, Galloway-Maxcy-Markoe Papers, XXXII, L. C.

<sup>42</sup> *Annals*, 457-479. Towson was defeated by a vote of 18 yeas to 25 nays. Gadsden was rejected by a vote of 20 yeas to 23 nays, and on a second vote by 21 yeas to 23 nays.

<sup>43</sup> He had stated essentially the same things in a letter to the Senate on January 29. See also, Calhoun to William Eustis, January 29, 1822, *ibid.*, 485-489, and Calhoun to Monroe, March [30], 1822, Chicago Historical Society.

<sup>44</sup> Monroe to Senate, April 12, 1822, *Annals*, 17th Cong., 1st Sess., 479-485.

who were reduced or dismissed and who found supporters in the Senate must account in part for the position taken by that body.

On April 25, John Williams again reported for his Committee on the nominations of Towson and Gadsden and again they recommended against accepting the appointments. He contended Towson's appointment violated the principle of seniority and, if confirmed, it would "verify the adage, that one campaign in Washington was worth two upon the lines." Williams denied that Congress had created any new offices, and he asserted that the Act called for the officers to be "arranged," and "*arrange* does not mean to *create*." He maintained that this also applied to Gadsden's appointment as Adjutant General. After spirited debate, the Senate on April 29, by identical votes of 25-17, refused to consent to the appointments.<sup>45</sup>

In the aftermath, Daniel Parker was removed from the position of Paymaster General, and Towson was reappointed and confirmed by the Senate on May 8. Gadsden left the service, and the position of Adjutant General was filled by Major Charles J. Nourse on a "temporary" basis for the remainder of Monroe's administration. Monroe stubbornly refused to nominate another colonel to the place vacated by Towson, and it remained vacant until 1832.<sup>46</sup>

The defeat of the President's nominations aroused a great deal of tension in the Cabinet. The breach between Calhoun and Crawford was widened to the point where they could no longer be reconciled. John Quincy Adams noted that Calhoun had formed his own group in Congress to counter Crawford, and that the Cabinet discussions between the two men "have become painful by the tone in which they express their opinions—being that of suppressed hatred and subdued anger."<sup>47</sup> Calhoun had entered the presidential race, avowedly to help defeat Crawford. There is little doubt that the Army Reduction Act was the prime motivating factor.

The relationship between Crawford and Monroe was also aggravated almost to the breaking point. Crawford wrote to Gallatin in May, 1822, that "a state of irritation prevails which greatly exceeds anything which has occurred in the history of this government." Crawford asserted that

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 489-502, 509-510. All other nominations, except for a few brevet appointments, were eventually approved.

<sup>46</sup> Calhoun to Parker, May 13, 1822, NA, W.D., Letters Sent, Mil. Af., XI, 392; Gordon, *Army Registers*, 220, 233, 247, 263. An extended account of this issue may be found in William E. Birkhimer, *Historical Sketch of the Organization, Administration, Material and Tactics of the Artillery, United States Army* (1884; reprinted New York, 1968), 46-47 fn.

<sup>47</sup> Adams, *Memoirs*, V, 515.



Calhoun ("Our Mars") was in the ascendancy in the minds of the public, and that the President, believing that Crawford was responsible for the rejection of the nominations by the Senate, had sided with Calhoun. Crawford stated that he would take no steps to counteract this impression, "because I believe it will not be injurious to me to remain in this state, or even to be removed from office."<sup>48</sup>

That Monroe did seriously consider removing Crawford from office is revealed in a letter from Joel Poinsett to Monroe on May 10, 1822. Reflecting upon a conversation of the day before, Poinsett cautioned that Crawford's removal might result in "the elevation of the man, but in any event, the measure will be honorable to you. Whether he encourages the systematic opposition of his friends or whether he is unable to control them, he is equally unfit for the station he now holds."<sup>49</sup> Monroe also revealed his exasperation to his friend Madison, "I have never known such a state of things as has existed here during the last Session, nor have I personally ever experienced so much embarrassment and mortification." He blamed the activities of the Crawford group. "The object," he asserted, "is to raise up a new party, founded on the assumed basis of economy."<sup>50</sup>

Monroe closed the above letter by remarking, "We have undoubtedly reached a new epoch in our political career." He was perceptive enough to recognize that the Jeffersonian coalition was shattered. A bitter and destructive struggle had begun which would move the country toward a new political alignment. Many other factors, and other events in the future, were responsible for the eventual realignment that occurred after the election of 1824, but the primary reason was the factionalism that developed after the War of 1812. And the Army reduction movement was a primary element in the growth of that factionalism.

<sup>48</sup> Crawford to Gallatin, May 13, 1822, in Adams, *Gallatin Writings*, II, 242.

<sup>49</sup> Joel Poinsett to Monroe, May 10, 1822, Monroe Papers, L. C.

<sup>50</sup> Monroe to Madison, May 10, 1822, in Hamilton, ed., *Monroe Writings*, VI, 286-289.

## THE SCHIRMER DIARY

(Continued from April 1972)

1843

- September 23 New Rice—Several Lots to Market but it is very dull.  
 28 Fire 1½ PM roof of West's Kitchen in Church St. Soon put out.  
 28 P. A. Strobel gone to Savannah to establish a Female School.  
 30 Remarks past mth. Unusually hot, at its close severe rain, yet still healthy, on some portions of the Neck very sickly, several Germans have died and a large number now sick. Business dull, some new rice and cotton have been brought to Market. The former is dull and declining the latter great speculation.  
*Deaths:* 2d F D Picault Mrs. Brown daughter of Mrs. Blackwood.
- October 1 Clear & Hot Mornng & Aft Dr. B. Eve staid home.  
 8 Rainy Mornng No service. Went & Heard Dr. Curtis. Aft Dr. B. Eve staid home.  
 6 Charleston Hotel reopened under lease fr Council by Boyce and others under the charge of Nickerson.  
 7 Miss Evans left Bermudas via N. Y. ship Anson.

### (Marriages)

- |    |  |                    |                               |
|----|--|--------------------|-------------------------------|
| 28 | Ult. Jonathan Bryan, Jr.   | George A. Sneed    | G W Petrie at Washington, 9th |
| 5  | Isaih Purse  | Caroline Naser     | Dr Bachman                    |
| 7  | Alexr Gambath  | Agathy Dapray      | Dr Lynch                      |
| 5  | J Blakely Smith  | Ann K. Morgan      | Mr Bass                       |
| 12 | John Carr  | Dalcidia L. Thomas | Mr Danner                     |
| 6  | J. J. McCarter   | M. C. Bryan        | Dr Hutton in New Y.           |
| 10 | Ed'd Addison   | Frances L Rene     | Mr Trapier                    |
| 18 | Perry E. Chapman   | Julia E Anderson   | Dr Brantly                    |
| 18 | P M Sheridan   | Maria B Davis      | Mr Burke                      |
| 14 | Weather last night a great change, today very cool. After a few days cold fire was comfortable. We now have it warm again, on 14 was a killing frost in Lexington. |                    |                               |
| 22 | Clear very warm Mornng & Aft Dr B this morning was Confirmation & Communion 2 Miss Berks, Miss Schirmer & Miss Mentzing.   |                    |                               |
| 29 | Clear & Cool Mornng & Aft Dr B Eve staid home.   |                    |                               |
| 23 | Wm Assman came to town retd 28th.  |                    |                               |