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ABSTRACT

HISTORIANS OF THE WAR OF 1812

By Roger M. Parks

The purpose of this thesis is to trace the development of interpretations of the coming of the War of 1812 from the time it occurred until the present, and to present a critical analysis of the more important ones. The study contains interpretations that are significant for their singularity as well as those that represent dominant points of view.

The methodology used is threefold. First, an attempt is made to trace the most important sources of an interpretation. Secondly, the interpretation is criticized in relation to its own methodology and its regard for facts. Finally, an attempt is made to assay its significance. These three tools are used in varying proportions throughout the thesis.

The study reveals that there have been two distinct phases in the historiography of the War of 1812. A third phase may be developing.

In the first phase, historians accepted the judgment of the war generation and interpreted the coming of the war in terms of America's major maritime grievances against Britain - impressment and the orders in council. They recognized that the inland sections of the country favored war, while the maritime sections tended

to oppose it. But they explained these sectional differences in terms of the superior patriotism of the West.

During the second phase, historians ignored maritime causes and explained the war in terms of the material interests of the West. They were influenced in this course by Fredrick Jackson Turner's work in relation to the significance of the frontier, and by Henry Adams' questioning of Western motives for espousing maritime grievances.

Since the early 1930's, interpretations have tended to include more and more the ideas of the maritime rights historians and less and less those of their successors. However, while frontier interpretations are becoming less accepted among historians of the war, they remain dominant in college texts and popular literature.

The significant fact about the interpretations studied is that they fail to attack the problem of the causes of the war from all pertinent points of view. Rather, many of them contain only one set of causes and tend to contradict each other. Thus the need is seen for a more well rounded approach.

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A THESIS

Submitted to the College of Science and Arts of
Michigan State University in partial
fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

Department of History

1961

Approved

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G 19807
2/28/62

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author is indebted to Dr. Paul Varg and Dr. Stuart
Bruchey for their helpful advice.

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INTRODUCTION

The war of 1812 has never received anything resembling a definitive treatment from historians. The relatively few who have written about it have found it a potent source of controversy. But they have usually confined their perspective to one set of causes. Some of them have conceded that other causes may have also been important, but have defended their particular topic, whether maritime rights, Western land hunger, Indian troubles, or economic conditions on the frontier, as the decisive factor. However, so many objections can be raised to each of these explanations that any one of them seems to be only partially correct at best.

It appears, therefore, that a definitive study would have to view the causes of the War of 1812 from a broader perspective than political history, as nineteenth century historians and some more recent ones have tended to view it, or economical and social history, as the generation or two following the publication of Fredrick Jackson Turner's frontier thesis tended to view it. A number of points of view would have to be taken into consideration, and the historian would then have to attempt to determine their relative importance.

Such a study is overdue. The War of 1812 was probably more than a minor skirmish that ended in a military stalemate. The beginning of a wide-spread feeling of nationalism and of manifest destiny seems to have been an outcome of the war. It is even possible that without the unifying effect of this war, the nation could not have survived the Civil War. Whether this same nationalism and

feeling of manifest destiny were also a cause of the war has concerned historians but has not been fully answered as yet.

The essay that follows analyzes the major scholarship that has been done on the coming of the War of 1812. It seeks to show the strengths and weaknesses of the major theses and the significance of their findings. It offers suggestions as to how these findings can be expanded upon to reach a fuller understanding of the causes.

CHAPTER I

The War of 1812, said Henry Adams many years later, "was chiefly remarkable for the vehemence with which, from the beginning to the end, it was resisted and thwarted by a very large number of citizens who were commonly considered...by no means the least respectable, intelligent, or patriotic part of the country."¹

The vote for war in the House of Representatives was relatively close - 79 to 49 - and was in large part - sectional. Of the 79 votes for war, only 17 were cast by representatives from states to the north and east of Pennsylvania. Of the 49 votes against war, only 12 were cast by representatives from states to the south and west of Pennsylvania.² Opposition was strongest in New England, which freely traded with Britain during the war and withheld troops and money from the federal government.³ In December, 1814, New England representatives met in the Hartford Convention, the most radical members of which advocated the dissolution of the Union.⁴ On the other hand, the most outspoken advocates of the war came from the frontier - particularly Tennessee and Kentucky - which sent more than its share of the so-called war-hawk representatives to the Twelfth Congress, including Henry Clay and Richard Johnson of Kentucky, and Felix Grundy and John Rhea of Tennessee.

With war popular in some quarters and unpopular in others, it is not surprising that conflicting interpretations of its origin

1. Henry Adams, History of the United States of America, 9 Vols. (New York, 1890), p. 224.

2. See Appendix I.

3. Charles M. Wiltse, The New Nation, 1800-1845 (New York, 1961), pp. 47, 48.

4. Ibid., pp. 49, 50.

arose. In his war message to Congress on June 1, 1812, President James Madison attributed the need for war to the restrictions placed upon American commerce by Britain during her long and bitter struggle against Bonapartist France.⁵ Madison listed four maritime grievances against Britain. The first was impressment, which was the British practice of boarding neutral merchant ships upon the high seas in search of deserters from the royal navy. Because Americans often looked and talked like Englishmen, United States citizens were sometimes among those seized by the British. The second grievance was that of British warships violating the coasts of the United States and occasionally blockading an American port, although British ships had been forbidden to enter American waters most of the time since the Chesapeake affair in 1807. Third was the British policy of declaring paper blockades of particular continental ports. The final maritime grievance was the British orders in council of January and November, 1807. The first of these orders had authorized the British navy to seize neutral vessels attempting to enter any European or colonial port from which Napoleon had excluded British ships and British goods by his Berlin decree of November, 1806. The second order had sought to license neutral trade with these ports.

In addition to the maritime grievances, Madison insinuated that the British in Canada had instigated the trouble American settlers were having with the Indians in the Northwest. American-Indian relations had been particularly strained since the battle of Tippecanoe in November, 1811.

5. Annals of Congress, 12th Congress, 1st Session, Part I (Washington, 1853), pp. 1624-1629. (Hereafter cited as Annals.)

Madison's views were similar to those that had been expressed by the war hawks in their speeches calling for war against Britain since the meeting of the Twelfth Congress in November, 1811. In addition, they sometimes blamed Britain's restrictions for the falling world prices of cotton, tobacco, and other American exports.⁶ But although the supporters of war thus alleged a number of grievances against Britain, they put the greatest emphasis upon maritime restrictions, and especially upon impressment and the orders in council. Thomas Jefferson, writing in anticipation of the declaration of war in April, 1812, sought to justify the forthcoming measure as follows:

Surely the world will acquit our government from having sought it. Never before has there been an instance of a nation's bearing so much as we have borne. Two items alone in our catalogue of wrongs will forever acquit us of being aggressors: The impressment of our seamen, and the excluding us from the ocean. The first foundations of the social compact would be broken up, were we definitively to refuse to its members the protection of their persons and property while in their lawful pursuits.⁷

The opponents of the war, of whom none was more outspoken than the New England Federalists led by Josiah Quincy, admitted that the United States had sufficient grievances against Britain to justify war. But they said the United States had been partly to blame for England's actions. In the matter of impressment, for example, Americans had encouraged British sailors to desert the royal navy for the better pay and conditions to be found in the American merchant marine.⁸ Furthermore, they said, war against Britain would be a most

6. See below, Chap. VI, p. 1.

7. Paul L. Ford, editor, The Writings of Thomas Jefferson (New York, 1898), IX, p. 343.

8. Miles Weekly Register, II (July, 11, 1812), p. 310.

inexpedient measure. American commerce had also suffered at the hands of Napoleon, whose continental system sought to prohibit neutral trade with Britain as well as British trade with the continent. Thus, said the Federalists in a minority protest following the declaration of war:

It cannot be concealed that, to engage in the present war against England is to place ourselves on the side of France; and exposes us to the vassalage of states serving under the banner of the French emperor.⁹

Besides stressing the inexpediency of the war, the signers of the protest implied that they and the public in general had not been told the real reason for the declaration.¹⁰ The "ostensible," reason was maritime grievances. But they implied that the "real" and the "ostensible" reasons might not have been the same.¹¹

The distinction between real and ostensible causes has appeared important to many historians of the War of 1812. Almost from the beginning, some of them began making such a differentiation. The tendency became accelerated early in the twentieth century, when a school of interpretation arose which found the real and ostensible causes almost completely unrelated. The opponents of the war were defeated in their attempts to prevent it in 1812 and were discredited during and after the war because of the activities of some of the most outspoken of their number. But their views have exerted a strong influence on the historiography of the war. They have tended to fare better at the hands of historians than have those who supported the war.

9. Ibid., II, p. 315.

10. Ibid., II, p. 310.

11. Ibid., II, pp. 310, 311.

Nineteenth century historians of the War of 1812 can be classified in general as "maritime rights" historians. The classification is only a rough one, however. Some of them accepted maritime rights unquestioningly as the real cause of the war. Others accepted it only with qualifications.

The extremes in point of view within the maritime rights school are illustrated by J. T. Headley and Theodore Dwight.¹² Headley claimed that Britain started the war against France without provocation, and thus:

In order to shield herself from the infamy which should follow such a violation of the rights of nations and waste of treasure and of blood, she planted herself on the grand platform of principle, and insisted that she went to war to preserve human liberty and the integrity of governments..... With these declarations on her lips, she turned and deliberately annulled her agreements with the United States, and invaded her most sacred rights. She impressed our seamen, plundered our commerce, held fortresses on our soil, and stirred up the savages to merciless warfare against the innocent inhabitants of our frontier.¹³

Because of Britain's actions, said Headley, the United States was compelled "to declare war, or forfeit all claim to the respect of the nations of the earth, and all right to an independent existence."¹⁴

Dwight, writing in defense of the Hartford Convention, said that the stated grounds upon which war was declared were impressment and violation of neutral rights.¹⁵ These may have been the grounds

12. J. T. Headley, The Second War With England, 2 Vols. (New York, 1853), I; Theodore Dwight, History of the Hartford Convention (New York, 1833).

13. Headley, Second War, I, pp. 37, 38.

14. Ibid., I, p. 55.

15. Dwight, Hartford Convention, p. 212.

also upon which a part of the nation became aroused. But, according to Dwight, Madison, and Jefferson before him, shaped their policies upon quite another consideration. "An ardent and ever-waxing attachment to revolutionary France, and an implacable enmity to Great Britain were the governing principles of these two distinguished individuals."¹⁶(Italics original.) Thus the administration timed the war to coincide with Napoleon's invasion of Russia.¹⁷

Most of the other historians of the period fell between the extremes of Dwight and Headley. Richard Hildreth, a New Englander whose sympathies were toward the Federalists, accepted the maritime rights interpretation.

It was an offensive war, voluntarily undertaken on the part of the United States, to compel Great Britain, by the invasion and conquest of her Canadian territories, to respect our maritime rights.¹⁸

But, according to Hildreth, war was undertaken partly because to do so would be politically expedient for the war hawks, whose constituents believed Britain must be made to change her policies.¹⁹ War also appeared economically expedient to the country's rising class of manufacturers.²⁰ But it was inexpedient for the Northeast. Commerce would be destroyed, rather than protected; impressed seamen would not be aided by a war on land; and to go to war against Britain would be to fight in behalf of French tyranny.²¹ "To help to overthrow

16. Ibid., p. 228.

17. Ibid., p. 232.

18. Richard Hildreth, The History of the United States of America, 6 vols., (New York, 1851), VI, p. 313.

19. Ibid., VI, pp. 199, 225, 319.

20. Ibid., VI, p. 318.

21. Ibid., VI, pp. 198, 322, 324.

England was to help in preparing a terrible yoke for ourselves."²²

Thus, according to Hildreth, while maritime grievances might have argued for the justice of the war, inexpediency argued more strongly against it.

Herman von Holst took a similar position.²³ He saw the coming of the War of 1812 as an example of the tyranny of majorities. The majority, he said, knew the strong moral objections of the Federalists to a war with England and should not have undertaken a course of action that threatened to strain the bonds of the Union. Wisdom and expediency argued against war, even though there was legal justification for it.²⁴

James Schouler, on the other hand, called the war a maritime rights measure, but said that while it might have been undertaken rashly, it was strongly provoked and was preferable to "dishonorable submission."²⁵ And A. T. Mahan, who saw the war as an example of the necessity for naval power, believed that the maritime differences between Britain and the United States involved questions of fundamental principles and of necessity. The war was not only "justifiable," but imperative.²⁶

22. Ibid., VI, p. 324

23. Herman von Holst, The Constitutional and Political History of the United States, 8 vols. (Chicago, 1889), I.

24. Ibid., I, pp. 235-238.

25. James Schouler, History of the United States of America, 7 vols., (New York, 1882), II, p. 395

26. A. T. Mahan, Sea Power in its Relations to the War of 1812, 2 vols., (London, 1905), I, pp. viii, 2-4.

Other historians of the period who accepted the maritime rights interpretation included Nicholas Butler, The Effect of the War of 1812 Upon the Consolidation of the Union (Johns Hopkins University Studies in Historical and Political Science, Baltimore, 1887), Fifth Series, Part VIII, pp. 22, 23; Benson J. Lossing, The Pictorial Field-Book of the War of 1812 (New York, 1869), pp. 212, 226, 230; Theodore Roosevelt, The Naval War of 1812 (New York, 1889), p. 6.

Thus nineteenth century historians were in fairly close agreement as to what the causes of the war were. They differed principally as to whether those causes were so great as to make the war both justifiable and necessary.

A question that was to bother later historians was why the South and West supported a war for protection of maritime rights, while the maritime section of the country opposed it.²⁷ The maritime rights historians, however, saw no paradox in this. As Headley said, "The people of the South and West, between whom and their country's honor and rights selfish interests and bitter party hate did not come, nobly sustained the war sentiment."²⁸ Nicholas Butler, Schouler, and Lossing also accepted the idea that the South and West were more patriotic than the Northeast.²⁹ Hildreth, a bitter critic of slavery, saw the war spirit as the manifest desire of young men, idled by slavery, to win glory.³⁰ And both he and von Holst believed political ambition partially motivated the Congressional war hawks.³¹ But with the exception of Hildreth, there is little indication that maritime rights historians sensed that anything besides maritime grievances lay behind Southern and Western war spirit.

The maritime rights historians tended to believe that "history is past politics." They were later to come under attack for failing to see that social and economic problems of the South

27. See below, Chap. V, p. 54.

28. Headley, Second War, I, p. 66.

29. Butler, Effect of the War, pp. 22, 23; Schouler, II, p. 395; Lossing, Field-Book, p. 230.

30. Hildreth, VI, p. 318

31. Hildreth, VI, p. 225; von Holst, I, p. 229.

and West contributed to the desire for war in those sections. Their failure was due primarily to the fact that they viewed history through a particular philosophical framework, just as their critics were to view it through another. Within their framework, the maritime rights writers saw politics as the most important element of history. And as one of their critics was to point out, a political study of the period indicates that maritime grievances were decisive in the coming of the war.³²

32. See below, Chap. III, p. 22.

CHAPTER II

During the 1890's the work of two historians led the way to a gradual revision of the maritime rights interpretation. The first of these historians, Fredrick Jackson Turner, did not deal specifically with the causes of the War of 1812. But his frontier thesis had a pronounced effect on the historiography of the war, just as it had on the writing of most phases of American history.

Turner rejected the germ theory, which taught that the course of American development was a result of the planting of Anglo-Saxon values in the early colonial settlements, from whence they were carried inland along the advancing frontier. Although he did not discount the importance of old-world institutions, Turner believed they were shaped into a distinctly American culture by the presence of free land on a vast, ever-moving frontier, and by the consequent necessity for ~~strong~~, self-reliant men to adapt themselves to life in the wilderness. He and his followers saw the frontier as the dominant factor in American history and the focal point from which American history should be studied. They rejected the long-held theory that politics and diplomacy are at the core of history. Instead, they said, politics and diplomacy are merely reflections of the conflict of large social forces, which must be understood if history is to be meaningful. Under Turner's influence, a number of American historians began to change their point of view from the seaboard to the wilderness, from political and diplomatic to social and economic history. Julius W. Pratt, whose Expansionists of 1812 (1925) became the most influential revisionist interpretation, expressed the contribution of Turner to

the historiography of the War of 1812 in saying that Turner had led him and his colleagues "to view the West - particularly the Northwest - with more scrutiny," and to reach new conclusions about the causes of the war.¹

But frontier-oriented historians who turned their attention to the War of 1812 probably found confirmation of their point of view in Henry Adams' nine-volume study of the Jefferson and Madison administrations, the first volume of which appeared in 1890.² The effect of Adams on the revisionists was indirect. For, like the maritime rights historians, he treated political, rather than social factors as primary causes of the war. But he placed firmer emphasis on the sectional character of the war party than had his predecessors. And he attributed new motives to the leaders of that party, making it apparent that their actions could not be explained in terms of disgust at Britain's maritime restrictions or even their own desire for political popularity alone. Adams thus demonstrated the possibility of re-interpreting the war from a frontier point of view.

According to Adams, patriotism played a part in war-hawk thinking. But he implied other motives, too. After all, he said, the

1. Julius W. Pratt, Expansionists of 1812 (New York, 1925), pp. 9, 10. The influence of Turner on revisionist thought also is particularly apparent in John F. Cady, "Western Opinion and the War of 1812," Ohio Archaeological and Historical Society Publications, XXXIII (1924), pp. 427-476. Claude H. Van Tyne, who accepted essentially the maritime rights interpretation, also noted that Turner had demonstrated the significance of the frontier to students of the war. See "Why Did We Fight in 1812? The Causes and Significance of our Last War with Great Britain," Independent, LXXIV (1913), p. 1331.

2. Adams, History.

United States had seethed over the Chesapeake affair and the failure of the Erskine agreement, and yet had failed to carry out its threats of war. In 1811-12, on the other hand, the war hawks had no new grievances to allege. At this time, with the country divided over the question of war or peace, the treasure nearly empty, and Britain's policy no longer as belligerent as it had been under George Canning, there seemed to be some basis for hope that the orders in council would be revoked.³ Not only were the reasons for going to war with Britain no longer as clear-cut as they once had been, but the war hawks, who talked of going to war to recover the nation's honor, ignored the fact that war with Britain meant "continued submission to one robber (Napoleon) as the price of resistance to another."⁴

These observations led Adams to conclude that the war party tried to arouse the nation by appealing to the justice of a war at a time when the only relevant question was whether or not war would be expedient. The justice of war long had been apparent, he said, but war previously had been rejected on the grounds of inexpediency, which grounds he said the war hawks now ignored.⁵ To illustrate this point he rejected a number of arguments that were raised from the point of view of expediency. He dismissed for example, the arguments that the nation would profit, from driving a hostile power from the continent and that farmers again would be able to

3. Ibid., VI, pp. 122, 123, 223-225.

4. Ibid., VI, p. 113. See above, pp. 6, 8.

5. Ibid., VI, p. 223. See above, pp. 6, 8.

export their surplus crops at a fair profit. Adams, who made a number of caustic comments about the mental capacities of most of the leading figures of the war period, called such arguments "declamation."

Probably these appeals carried weight with the Western people; but even earnest supporters of war might doubt whether men of sense could be conciliated by such oratory.⁶

The orators, said Adams, were nationalistic young Republicans from the newer parts of the country, who had become dissatisfied with the whole Jeffersonian system of weak government, as well as Jeffersonian foreign policy, which was based on peaceful coercion. They tried to effect a political revolution in order to replace that system with one based on old-world models. Thus, according to Adams, war was to have been a vehicle for a political revolution much like the one older Republicans had accused Hamilton of plotting in 1798 - a revolution whereby government would assume the function assigned to it by John Calhoun. In what Adams called an unprecedented speech for a Republican,⁷ Calhoun said:

6. Ibid., VI, pp. 142, 143. Adam's sarcasm was not directed at war hawks alone. He found the actions of New England Federalists irrational and at times almost treasonous. (VI, pp. 153, 170-173) And the Jeffersonian system of peaceful coercion seemed insipid. Discussing Jefferson's embargo, he said, "if war made men brutal, at least it made them strong; it called out the qualities best fitted to survive in the struggle for existence. To risk life for one's country was no mean act even when done for selfish motives; and to die that others might more happily live was the highest act of self-sacrifice to be reached by man. War, with all its horrors, could purify as well as debase; it dealt with high motives and vast interests; taught courage, discipline, and a stern sense of duty. Jefferson must have asked himself in vain what lessons of heroism or duty were taught by his system of peaceable coercion." See Harvey Wish, The American Historian (New York, 1960), p. 170.

7. Ibid., VI, pp. 143, 144, 170, 171, 210, 211.

I know of but one principle to make a nation great, to produce in this country not the form but the real spirit of union, and that is to protect every citizen in the lawful pursuit of his business....Protection and patriotism are reciprocal. This is the road that all great nations have trod.⁸

To Adams the important point about the revolution was its political manifestations. War hawks seeking to bring it about tried to persuade Old Republicans, who previously had resisted any measure more belligerent than economic coercion, "to do in a single session what required half a century or more of time and experience, - to create a new government and to invest it with the attributes of old-world sovereignty under pretext of the war power."⁹ These Nationalists succeeded to the extent of securing a declaration of war. Adams believed the question of war or peace finally was settled in Congress, by Old Republicans, who held the balance of power in the war vote and were motivated by different considerations than those that caused the war hawks to press for war.¹⁰ The Jeffersonians were persuaded in part by patriotic "declamation" and pressure from war men in key chairmanships in the House of Representatives, he said, and in part by Madison, who "thoroughly twisted" the threads of negotiation with England in an effort to get a settlement on his own inflexible terms, and also pressed for a declaration of war when his efforts failed.¹¹ Even at the time of the vote, said Adams, there probably would have been no war if the Old Republicans had known Britain was revoking

8. Annals., 12, I, p. 479.

9. Adams, VI, pp. 170, 171.

10. Ibid., VI, pp. 142-144, 146, 158, 159, 170, 171.

11. Ibid., VI, pp. 62, 117, 118, 175, 193-198, 205, 206, 220-229.
See below, Chap. VII.

her orders in council in what seemed to be an effort to conciliate the United States.¹²

Thus Adams, although attributing different motives to the war hawks than did his predecessors, interpreted the decisive causes of the War of 1812 in a political and diplomatic context. And thus he differs from the revisionists, whose interpretations were based on the assumption that the decisive causes are to be found in the social and economic problems of the frontier. That assumption, as Pratt indicated, was rooted in Turner. But such an assumption does not necessarily preclude the possibility that frontiersmen were genuinely concerned about the honor the United States was sacrificing to the belligerents on the seas. The insignificance of such concern, however, is another assumption of most revisionist writings, and seems to be a logical implication of Adams' interpretation. For Adams also differed from the maritime rights school in the amount of emphasis he placed on war-hawk concern with national honor.

Adams' predecessors had assumed that the West and South "felt the humiliation if not the pecuniary loss occasioned by the British measures."¹³ But Adams scoffed at the idea that maritime grievances had an important influence on frontier sentiment. The war-hawk argument that Britain's persistence in the orders in council merited war "was not skillfully made."¹⁴ And as for impressment - "the

12. Ibid., VI, p. 226.

13. Pratt, Expansionists, pp. 9, 10.

14. Adams, VI, p. 139.

worst of all American grievances" - war men began to denounce it in earnest as a political maneuver, which they undertook only after they had determined to have a war. They hoped thereby to underscore the justice of their position.¹⁵ Such an interpretation, if accepted, makes it doubtful that war men had any concern for national honor and that their statements can be trusted. Adams himself continued to put a degree of emphasis on concern for honor.¹⁶ And three of his successors took a similar point of view.¹⁷ But Woodrow Wilson, examining the maritime rights interpretation in view of Adams' work found the causes of the War of 1812 "singularly uncertain."¹⁸ It is not surprising, then, that revisionist writers were to generally ignore the importance of maritime grievances and seek the true causes of the war in only those problems that affected the frontier materially.

Adams influenced the development of the revisionist school in another way also. As will be seen in succeeding chapters, he pointed to the specific frontier problems from which revisionists were to infer the causes of the war. Hildreth and other maritime rights historians had known that frontiersmen talked of conquering Canada and East Florida and that they were embittered by the belief that the British in Canada were behind their troubles with the Indians.¹⁹ But these earlier writers, although not always without misgivings as to war-hawk motives, never connected such problems with frontier war sentiment.

15. Ibid., VI, pp. 117, 118.

16. Ibid., VI, pp. 115, 122, 123, 143, 144, 155, 210, 211.

17. Van Tyne, "Causes and Significance," p. 1331; Albert B. Hart, Formation of the Union, 1750-1832 (New York, 1893), pp. 204, 205. Kendrick C. Babcock, The Rise of American Nationality (New York, 1906), pp. 3, 37, 50-52, 84, 85, 190.

18. Woodrow Wilson, A History of the American People, 5 vols., (New York, 1906), III, p. 212.

19. See, for example, Hildreth, VI, pp. 251-255, 267, 311, 313, 322.

Adams actually did not do so, either. But he came close at times. He said war hawks were willing to risk war with England "on the chance of creating a nation, of conquering Canada and carrying the American flag to Mobile and Key West."²⁰ He also said they sought to overthrow the Republican party's stand against a strong army at a time "when no foreign nation threatened attack, and...avowedly for the purpose of conquest."²¹ And, he said, William Henry Harrison's campaign against the Indians in Indiana territory was aggressively undertaken and "begun for no other object than to win the valley of the Wabash."²² How much significance Adams personally placed on these statements is difficult to say. In the context of his interpretation, they appear to indicate steps the war party wished to take in bringing about a general nationalization of the country. The reasons behind this program were of less interest to Adams than the political maneuvers undertaken to carry it out. But to the revisionists, who were more interested in social and economic causes than in political effects, these statements conceivably could have appeared to point to the real causes of the war.

Adams' History did not necessarily lead to the revisionist interpretations. In fact, some recent non-revisionist interpretations are related more closely to Adams' work than are those of Pratt, Howard Lewis, and Louis Hacker, which nevertheless seem to have developed from it. On the other hand, the revisionists, who were oriented towards a frontier-social approach to American history, might

20. Adams, VI, p. 123

21. Ibid., VI, p. 154.

22. Ibid., VI, p. 140.

have developed their interpretations independently of Adams' work had there been reason to suppose the War of 1812 would be a good subject for re-interpretation. But the war is a fairly obscure event in American history. And if they saw such reason, it is probably because of Adams' respected study, which presented evidence of the inadequacy of the maritime rights interpretation and implied that the frontier had reasons of its own for wanting war.

CHAPTER III

The year 1911, the 100th anniversary of the meeting of the War Congress, saw two important developments. One was the introduction of the monograph as a vehicle for studying the causes of the war. The other was the publication of the first of the revisionist interpretations. Revisionism dominated writing on the subject for 20 years, and remains influential today.

With the exception of military or naval histories, such as Benson J. Lossing's or Mahan's, historians previously wrote of the war as an episode in the larger panorama of American history. Now began a specialized treatment of the coming of the war. Howard Lewis' "A Re-analysis of the Causes of the War of 1812" marks a turning point.¹ The more intensive studies stemmed from a series of new approaches, from Progressive deflation of nationalism, from the Turner frontier school, and from Marxism.

The monographic approach to the War of 1812 sacrificed a well rounded explanation of causes to a study of one or more causes fitting revisionists' points of view. Nineteenth century historians, such as Hildreth, at least mentioned both the problems of the frontier and those connected with the war in Europe. In the major revisionist monographs, however, the spotlight was focused almost entirely on frontier causes, and rarely, if ever, on more than one or two of the important frontier problems. Thus the historian who thinks, as

1. Howard T. Lewis, "A Re-analysis of the Causes of the War of 1812," Americana, VI (1911), pp. 506-516, 577-585.

Pratt himself conceded, that maritime causes may have been as important as frontier ones,² not only finds no mention of maritime causes in these studies, but finds little evidence to help him gauge the relative importance of various frontier causes. The impression usually gained from these studies, if college textbooks may be considered an accurate gauge, is that the only factors relevant to the coming of the war are selected economic and social problems of the sparsely settled frontier.

Lewis, who wrote the first of these monographic studies, recognized the implications of Adams' findings and concluded:

The War of 1812 was not waged primarily over the question of neutral rights and impressment, but was rather forced on by men who were prompted by other motives using this excuse.³

The use of the "excuse" he said, makes it appear in a study of the Annals of Congress that neutral rights were the most important causes of the war.⁴ Yet, if this was so, he asked, why did New England, the section most vitally interested in Britain's maritime restrictions, vote almost solidly against war,⁵ while "Pennsylvania and the states to the West and South of it" voted almost solidly for war?⁶

Although other historians had been struck by this paradox,⁷ none had offered the solution to it that Lewis did. He concluded that with the exception of possibly six votes cast by members of the anti-British Society of United Irishmen, and a few others cast

2. Pratt, Expansionists, p. 14.

3. Lewis, "Re-analysis," p. 583.

4. Ibid., p. 506

5. Ibid., p. 507. New England cast 12 votes in favor of war and 20 against it in the House of Representatives. (Appendix I.)

6. These states voted for war, 62 to 14. (Appendix I.)

7. Schouler, II, p. 395.

by Congressmen who represented manufacturing interests, the majority of votes for war were cast by representatives (including some from Pennsylvania and New York), whose interests were "as thoroughly Western....as those of Kentucky or Ohio."⁸ The Western interests they represented had little to do with impressment or orders in council, Lewis implied.

Western interests, he said, centered upon desire for land. What Henry Adams saw as one factor, Lewis saw as the whole explanation. According to Adams, although the West blamed the British in Canada for inciting and arming Tecumseh's Indian federation, it was Tecumseh's veto of the cession of the Wabash valley to the United States that led to war.⁹ The white population of the Indiana territory, said Adams, "wanted the lands of the Wabash even at the risk of war."¹⁰ Lewis took a similar position. He said the conflict between whites and Indians, which led to conflict with England, was the result of American settlers' need for Western land.¹¹

There were three possible ways to bring about an "absolutely necessary" expansion and make land available for the country's growing population, according to Lewis. Americans could acquire land from the Indians, "peacefully or otherwise," could move into Spanish Florida, or could expand into Canada.¹² Because they wished to live under the jurisdiction of the United States, they took the first course and purchased land from the Indians until the rise of Tecumseh threatened

8. Lewis, "Re-analysis," pp. 507, 510. Hildreth also mentioned the number of Irishmen in politics and in editorial positions. He attributed the observation to August Foster, the British envoy. (Hildreth, VI, pp. 316, 317.)

9. Adams, VI, pp. 83, 140.

10. Ibid., VI, p. 140.

11. Lewis, "Re-analysis," p. 511.

12. Ibid., pp. 511, 512.

the arrangement.¹³ Thenceforth, a fear that Tecumseh, with British encouragement, might unite Northern and Southern tribes to drive the white man off the frontier became a driving force.¹⁴ Frontiersmen also believed "English gold and English duplicity" had prevented the United States from acquiring East Florida from Spain.¹⁵ Thus, according to Lewis, conflict with Britain was the indirect result of American efforts to acquire territories held by allies of Britain. Americans bitterly looked toward Canada and saw an opportunity to rid themselves of a tormenter by conquering it. They also anticipated desirable political results.¹⁶ As Felix Grundy of Tennessee said:

I am willing to receive the Canadians as adopted brethren; it will have beneficial political effect; it will preserve the equilibrium of the government. When Louisiana shall be fully peopled, the Northern states will lose their power; they will be at the discretion of others, they can be depressed at pleasure, and then the union might be endangered - I therefore feel anxious not only to add the Floridas to the South, but the Canadas to the North to the empire.¹⁷

Louis Hacker, the only other major exponent of the land hunger interpretation, read an entirely different motive into the projected conquest of Canada. Hacker at this time accepted the Marxist interpretation of history, and saw the War of 1812 as an illustration of capitalistic waste making imperialistic expansion necessary.¹⁸ A pioneering society is always on the move because its primitive agricultural techniques rapidly wear out the land, said Hacker. But the pioneers who exploited the Ohio River valley during the early

13. Ibid., pp. 510-512.

14. Ibid., pp. 513-516.

15. Ibid., pp. 578, 579.

16. Ibid., p. 577.

17. Annals, 12, I, p. 426.

18. Wish, American Historian, p. 203.

part of the nineteenth century faced a dilemma. If they continued to move west they would run into the prairie, where lumber, fuel, and water were scarce.¹⁹ On the other hand, the agricultural lands of Canada were lush and inviting, but under the control of a foreign power, Hacker believed the frontier pressed for war with Great Britain in order to seize these lands.²⁰ Despite the "lofty pretensions in which war sentiment was wrapped," he said:

The War of 1812 was ordered by an agricultural people interested and sustained by the soil and was to have as its goal the acquisition of Canada, not so much because that meant the cutting off of the living threat of England, as because Canada stood for great reserves of agricultural land. In short, the West desired Canada and...sought war with England.²¹

Hacker's arguments can be criticized in several ways. First, his interpretation implies that the West brought about the war by itself. It had neither the population nor the representation in Congress to do so.²²

Secondly, although he claimed that white settlers only pretended to fear the Indian menace as a means of justifying war, his evidence fails to show that the fear was not real. He based his contention on the fact that white settlers brought much of the trouble upon themselves by treating the Indians like wild animals.²³ Adams had been aware of this, but nevertheless maintained that the fear of the Indians was genuine.²⁴ Hacker, however, sought to support

19. Louis M. Hacker, "Western Land Hunger and the War of 1812," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, X (1924), pp. 365-395.

20. Ibid., pp. 371, 394.

21. Ibid., p. 366.

22. See below, Chap. IV, p. 34

23. Hacker, "Land Hunger," pp. 372-374.

24. See f.n. 9, this chapter.

his contention by setting up a false standard to judge the problem.

Should not the question be, not were the Indians a menace to some isolated areas of settlement, where both sides erred in their conduct, but, rather, did the Indians as a host threaten the existence of the white civilization in the Ohio Valley?²⁵

This should not be the question. As Adams said of the Indian problem following Tippecanoe: "A general panic seized the people. The militia dared not turn out, for while they collected at one spot, the Indians might attack their isolated cabins. Even Vincennes was thought to be in danger, and the stream of fugitives passed through it as rapidly as possible until depopulation threatened the territory."²⁶ The Indian could strike quickly and disappear quickly. The individual settler had reason to fear for his own safety and that of his family, rather than about the future of the white race.

Hacker took statements out of context in order to illustrate Western desire for Canada. He said, for example, that John Randolph of Virginia uncovered the real motive of the war hawks in his statement that "agrarian cupidity, not maritime rights, urges the war."²⁷ But Randolph, at one time or another, attributed various motives to them.²⁸ Hacker also ignored evidence in travel accounts that the prairies were considered a desirable place to live. He claimed that "returning travelers could write only of the possibilities of grazing

25. Hacker, "Land Hunger," p. 373.

26. Adams, VI, p. 110.

27. Hacker, "Land Hunger," pp. 387, 388.

28. At other times, Randolph said the war was to be fought for the benefit of hemp growers, for those who wished to make profits selling to the Army, and to give the North political dominance. (Annals, 12, I, pp. 450, 553.)

in this region. However, there was no likelihood that the poor immigrant would be tempted on this score, for herds needed capital."²⁹ As Julius Pratt has pointed out, however, John Bradbury, one of Hacker's sources for this statement, called the lands bordering upon the prairies the best in the United States and described Missouri territory as unsurpassed in the opportunities it offered settlers.³⁰ Pratt also has noted that in 1812 the United States still contained within its borders, vast amounts of virtually unpeopled timberland, including about one-third of Ohio, most of Indiana, parts of Illinois, all of Michigan and Wisconsin, much of Minnesota and a hardwood belt 100 miles wide stretching from the Mississippi through Missouri and Arkansas into Oklahoma.³¹

Finally, Hacker read unwarranted meanings into his evidence. For example, in commenting on an article in the National Intelligencer, he said:

The writer, in talking of the lands beyond the Mississippi, of course declared that the river bottoms were most desirable. But he went on to say (the prairies) are by no means contemptible.... Grass, grain, and even hemp and corn, may be raised in abundance. Water is easily obtained by digging, and there are coals for fuel. Fences may be effected by hedging or by plowing up the tough sward of the prairies, cutting it into chunks, and laying them up like stone or brick. As for buildings, earth houses would do very nicely.³²

This statement, according to Hacker, illustrated the contempt in which the idea of settling the prairie was held. It is "an excellent example of what modern psychology has so aptly named the defense

29. Hacker, "Land Hunger," pp. 391, 392.

30. Julius W. Pratt, "Western War Aims in the War of 1812," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, XII (1925), p. 49.

31. Ibid.,

32. Hacker, "Land Hunger," pp. 389, 390.

complex."³³ Perhaps it is a better example of Hacker's historical methodology.

Hacker disagreed with Lewis as to the importance of Canada in the coming of the war. Lewis thought Americans could have been content to continue moving westward if their progress had not been blocked by the Indians. He implied that desire to conquer Canada came into focus only after a long list of grievances against Britain had accumulated.³⁴ Hacker, on the other hand, said frontiersmen had no intention of moving farther west. Their real reason for going to war was lust for Canadian farm lands.

Despite this important difference, however, Lewis and Hacker are vulnerable on similar grounds. For both assumed the existence of a compelling land hunger. Their interpretations both rest on this assumption, which neither of them supported with concrete evidence. Lewis inferred the reality of land hunger from the fact that the center of population was moving westward.³⁵ Hacker simply adopted the hypothesis that land hunger is a characteristic of a pioneering society. He tried to fit the evidence to that hypothesis.

Lack of evidence, together with the findings of George Rogers Taylor, indicates that the assumption is false. Taylor has shown that a brief population boom immediately following the Louisiana purchase slowed to a trickle by 1807 - at least three years before Tecumseh became a threat and four years before the West started talking seriously about the conquest of Canada.³⁶ Thus it seems

33. Ibid., p. 390.

34. Lewis, "Re-analysis," pp. 510-516.

35. Ibid., pp. 511, 512.

36. George Rogers Taylor, "Agrarian Discontent in the Mississippi Valley Preceding the War of 1812," Journal of Political Economy, XXXIX (1931), pp. 472, 473.

improbable that expansionist pressure was great enough during the pre-war period to explain Western motives. The land hunger thesis appears inadequate, even as an explanation of frontier causes of the War of 1812.

CHAPTER IV

The land-hunger interpretations of Lewis and Hacker have won few followers.¹ But some writers have cited Pratt as the authority for statements that contain Hacker's interpretation, as well as Pratt's. For example, Charles and Mary Beard said in The Rise of American Civilization:

If in form the war on England was declared for commercial motives, it was in reality conceived primarily in the interests of agriculture..... This fact the scholarly researches of Julius W. Pratt have demonstrated in a convincing fashion.. ..The men who voted in 1812 for the declaration of war on England represented the agrarian constituencies of the interior and their prime object was the annexation of Florida and Canada. ... for the purpose of adding more farmers and planters to the over-balancing majority.²

And according to Richard Hofstadter, the War of 1812 was caused by:

Expansionism - what John Randolph called 'agrarian cupidity'.... Southern planters wanted the Floridas and Northern farmers wanted Canada....As Julius W. Pratt has shown, enthusiasm for war with England raged along the broad arc of the frontier; resistance to war was hottest in the old Federalist and mercantile sections.³

These statements are misrepresentations of Pratt's position. Despite the title of his book - Expansionists of 1812 - Pratt did not say that expansionism, at least insofar as it manifested itself in desire for Canada, was the primary cause of the war. He did charge

1. One exception to this is Samuel Eliot Morison and Henry Steele Commager, The Growth of the American Republic (New York, 1937), I, pp. 307-310.

2. Charles and Mary Beard, The Rise of American Civilization, 2 vols. (New York, 1928), I, p. 393.

3. Richard Hofstadter, The American Political Tradition (New York, 1951), pp. 39, 40.

that the men of the Southwestern frontier, who wanted Florida, were primarily expansionists. But he connected expansionism with a feeling of manifest destiny, rather than 'agrarian cupidity.' The latter interpretation is that of Hacker. Pratt disagreed with it and wrote an article in which he attempted to disprove it.⁴

Before Pratt's interpretation can be appraised properly, it is necessary to know its sources and its contents. As Kendric Babcock pointed out in reviewing the book, it contained few new ideas.⁵ A re-interpretation of previously developed ideas, it wove together three main strands: The Indian problem of the Northwest, Southwestern dreams of expansion, and the political problems arising out of the conflicting war aims of these two sections.

The Indian problem had been stressed by several of Pratt's revisionist predecessors. It was an important part of Lewis' land-hunger interpretation.⁶ Dice R. Anderson called the conflict between whites and Indians a natural outcome of Western expansion, but put less emphasis on the critical nature of the expansion than did Lewis.⁷ Christopher Coleman likewise stressed the Indian problem.⁸ So did John F. Cady, who said Canada became the center of hostilities between Indians and American settlers following the battle of Tippecanoe, because:

4. Pratt, "Western War Aims." See above, Chap. III, p. 27, .

5. American Historical Review, XXXI (1926), p. 364.

6. See above, Chap. III, p. 23, 24.

7. Dice R. Anderson, "The Insurgents of 1811," American Historical Association Annual Report, 1911 (Washington, 1913), I, pp. 171-176.

8. Christopher B. Coleman, "The Ohio Valley in the Preliminaries of the War of 1812," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, VII (1920), pp. 41, 42, 43.

There was no longer an Indian town to attack; it was no longer possible to strike at the hostile Indians except in connection with their British allies in Canada....Great Britain, in one of her choicest possessions, was open to attack; and the West suddenly became interested in it as a future field for expansion.⁹

As for desire for the Floridas, both Hildreth and Adams were aware of American intrigues in that area preceding the war.¹⁰ Edward Channing called the possibility of conquering the Floridas a motive for war among Southern frontiersmen, and implied there was a conflict in war aims between those who wanted Florida and those who wanted Canada.¹¹ These ideas form the structure upon which Pratt developed his interpretation. But he went into more detail than did his predecessors and did a better job of documenting his assertions. His work also has been better accepted than any of the others. For these reasons, his argument deserves consideration in some detail.

Pratt devoted the first chapter of his book to the Indian problem and to the war fever he said developed out of it. The primary cause of desire for war in the Northwest, he decided, was "the conviction that the British in Canada were in unholy alliance with the Western Indians, and that only by cutting off the Indians from British support could the West gain peace and security."¹²

9. Gady, "Western Opinion," p. 454.

10. Adams, VI, p. 123; Hildreth, VI, p. 311.

11. Edward Channing, A History of the United States, 7 vols., (New York, 1935), IV, p. 456.

12. Pratt, Expansionists, p. 53.

Other motives - commercial, political, punitive - played a part, but the overmastering desire of the people of the Northwest was to feel free to develop their country without peril from those Indian conspiracies which were universally believed to have their origin in British Canada.¹³

Pratt traced the origin of this feeling to the days of the Revolution, when Britain had enlisted the military aid of the Indians. During the period between the peace of 1783 and Jay's treaty, the Indians had resisted American attempts to settle the Northwest territory in order to protect their allies' monopoly of the fur trade. Even at this early time, he said, "relations between the British and Indians became a standing grievance to the United States."¹⁴ Tension eased temporarily along the border after Britain turned over the Northwest posts to the United States in 1796, but began to increase again after the breaking of the Peace of Amiens in Europe.¹⁵ Such war-like talk as came from the frontier between 1807 and 1810 was the result of impressment and other British maritime offenses, said Pratt, but gradually the fear of renewed Indian attacks in case of war became uppermost in Western minds.¹⁶ Also, increasing conflict with the Indians slowly helped to form new Western grievances against Britain and to bring demands that, instead of fighting a defensive, naval war against Britain, the United States should take the offensive, drive Britain from Canada, and thus end the Indian menace for all time.¹⁷

13. Ibid., pp. 58, 59.

14. Ibid., p. 19. See also pp. 20, 27, 23.

15. Ibid., pp. 23, 24.

16. Ibid., pp. 24-33.

17. Ibid., pp. 31-42.

Pratt said this change in attitude was the result of "the rise of Tecumseh and the Prophet, the battle of Tippecanoe, the outspoken position of their Congressmen, together with the current belief that the British were behind all their Indian troubles."¹⁸

Thus far Pratt's interpretation resembles that of Cady and others. But the problem of Indian-British relations was important primarily in the Ohio Valley,¹⁹ which at this time contained only two states. Ohio and Kentucky had a combined total of seven seats in the House of Representatives and cast only six of the 79 votes for war.²⁰ Among their representatives were such outspoken advocates of war as Henry Clay and R. M. Johnson of Kentucky. But earlier revisionists obviously took too narrow a perspective when they said, "that section of the country, aided by elements in the South, virtually brought on the war."²¹ After all, those "elements" in the South cast nearly half the votes for war.

Pratt realized this. He also realized that the Indian problem could not explain the Southern votes. Casting about for a peculiarly Southern reason for wanting war, he hit upon desire for the Floridas and concluded that:

If the frontiersman of the Northwest demanded war with Great Britain as indispensable, his kinsman of the Southern border at least saw in it a means of fulfilling his expansionist dreams.²²

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18. Ibid., p. 54.
 19. Pratt, "War Aims," pp. 36, 37.
 20. Annals, 12, I, p. 1637. Clay, the Speaker of the House did not vote.
 21. Coleman, "Ohio Valley," p. 40. See Appendix I.
 22. Pratt, Expansionists, p. 120.

Southern frontiersmen wanted war in order to conquer not only the Floridas, but the Mexican Empire as well, said Pratt.²³ But he could show evidence of this desire only in the states of Tennessee and Georgia, which sent such war men as Felix Grundy, James Rhea, and George Troup to the Twelfth Congress. This added six more votes to the total cast for war, making a total of only 12 votes for war from the Northwestern and Southwestern frontier states. These states, it may well be noted are the ones which best fit Turner's definition of the frontier as the territory on the hither edge of free land. The relative insignificance of the frontier, as Turner defined it, in the coming of the war is thus obvious. Pratt, however, called the war a frontier measure, and partially solved the problem of a lack of frontier votes by claiming under this category most of the war votes of New Hampshire, Vermont, New York,²⁴ Western Pennsylvania and South Carolina. Under his definition, the frontier consisted of the rim of a huge crescent stretching from New Hampshire to Georgia. It included all the territory bordering on Canada, Indian country, and Spanish holdings.²⁵ Along this rim lived those representatives who were most outspoken in demanding war and in desiring expansion.²⁶ (Pratt implied that Ohio Valley Congressmen had been ahead of their constituents in desiring the annexation of Canada.)²⁷ A vote cast by a representative living on the rim of

23. Ibid., p. 225.

24. Some border constituencies in Vermont and New York did not vote for war, however, while one of the three New York votes was cast by a representative from maritime Long Island. See voting map in Samuel F. Bemis, A Diplomatic History of the United States, (New York, 1955), p. 157.

25. Pratt, Expansionists, pp. 126, 127.

26. Ibid., pp. 126-128.

27. Ibid., p. 54.

the crescent generally was a vote for expansion, he said, while Congressmen living closer to the center of the crescent tended to be disinterested in expansion.²⁸ Even under Pratt's definition the War of 1812 does not appear an overwhelmingly frontier-expansionist enterprise. The votes from the "rim of the crescent" included three each from New Hampshire and Vermont, two from New York (the other vote for war in that state was cast by the representative from Long Island), one from Ohio, perhaps eight from Pennsylvania,²⁹ five from Kentucky, three from Tennessee, possibly six from South Carolina (two other South Carolina votes were cast by Charlestonians whom Pratt admitted were not expansionists), and three from Georgia. The total is 34, or 31 less than the 65 votes that would have given the war measure a bare majority. Even with the possible addition of two votes from what was then the Massachusetts district of Maine, plus the votes of Henry Clay and Peter Porter - war men who did not participate in the voting - less than half the votes cast for war can be interpreted as representing frontier interests. Furthermore, the total is even less impressive if the six South Carolina votes are subtracted, as the findings of Margaret Latimer suggest they should be.³⁰

28. Ibid., pp. 126-128

29. This is based on an estimate by Warren H. Goodman, "The Origins of the War of 1812; A Study of Changing Interpretations," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, XXVIII (1941), pp. 171-186.

30. Margaret K. Latimer, "South Carolina - A Protagonist of the War of 1812," American Historical Review, LXI (1956), pp. 914-929. According to Miss Latimer, South Carolina already was a homogeneous state. Tidewater planter and upland farmer both faced the same major problem - the price of cotton. The effect of Britain's maritime restrictions on that price influenced South Carolina's attitude toward war, according to Miss Latimer.

Thus assuming for the moment that even 34 or 36 votes did represent expansionist sentiment, it seems clear that the outcome of the vote on war cannot be explained in terms of expansion alone. At least 43 votes for war were cast by Congressmen living toward the center of the crescent, who, by Pratt's admission, were not interested in expansion. At least four of these votes were cast by Massachusetts men, one was from New York, two from New Jersey, at least eight from Pennsylvania, 14 from Virginia, and six each from Maryland and North Carolina. Thus it would seem reasonable that a meaningful analysis of the vote should consider their motives, as well as those of frontiersmen, since it is evident that the men from the rim of the crescent, who admittedly included in their number most of the talent of the war party, did not have enough votes to pass the war measure by themselves.³¹ Pratt's analysis of the proceedings of the Twelfth Congress does not take the motives of non-expansionists into account.

Pratt believed that the War of 1812 was the result of a deal between Northern and Southern frontiersmen, who entered the Twelfth Congress in a mood to fight a war for expansion but nearly changed their minds after the debate over Congressional reapportionment underscored the differences between Northern and Southern interests. They finally agreed to declare war only on the condition that both Canada and the Floridas would be incorporated into the Union to preserve the sectional balance of power.³²

31. War leaders who did not represent frontier interests included Robert Wright of Maryland, Langdon Cheves and William Lowndes of Charleston, South Carolina, and perhaps John C. Calhoun, if Miss Latimer's analysis of South Carolina causes is correct.

32. Pratt, Expansionists, Chap. III.

Even if this analysis were correct, a full explanation of the war vote would still require a study of the motives of the more than 40 men who apparently voted for war for some reason other than expansionism. However, even this partial explanation cannot be supported.

The Congressional apportionment of 1811 was the one bit of concrete evidence which Pratt could present to support his interpretation. Apportionment in the Twelfth Congress (1811-13) had been based on the ratio of one representative to every 33,000 residents of a state. Following the census of 1810, several other ratios were proposed, including 35,000, 37,000, 38,000, and 40,000. The one finally decided upon in the House of Representatives was 37,000 - the highest ratio at which no state would lose a representative. The Senate, however, changed the ratio to 35,000, which would give New York, Massachusetts, and Pennsylvania two extra seats each, and New Hampshire, Vermont, Delaware, Virginia, and Georgia one additional seat.³³ The House turned down this amendment but voted again when the Senate refused to yield. This time it approved the 35,000 ratio, 72 to 62.³⁴

Pratt saw this vote as evidence of a serious North-South cleavage in the country, with Northern Republicans and Federalists voting together against their Southern counterparts and Northwestern frontiersmen voting with the North against the South and Southwest. An almost solid North faced an almost solid South across the Potomac,

33. Niles Register, I, (Nov. 30, 1811), p. 237.

34. Ibid., I, (Dec. 21, 1811), pp. 295, 296.

illustrating a "cleavage between the commercial and planter states, the free and the slave states."³⁵ As a result, the war party split and plans for war nearly were discarded.

If political leaders of each section, regardless of party, distrusted any addition to the power of the other, it would seem natural that Northern and Southern Republicans should have viewed differently the program of territorial expansion now before the country. Northern Republicans, though till now they had supported the occupation of Florida and the admission of new states to the Southwest, would fear the additional power that such measures would eventually give the South. And on the other hand, could a Southern Republican...favor wholeheartedly the annexation of Canada, which would mean eventually the addition of several northern states? Kentuckians, perhaps, might wish with equal zeal for expansion north and south,....But the states north and northeast of Kentucky could hope to receive no benefit, and must see a political danger in annexing Florida, while the states to the south and southeast must feel a similarly lukewarm interest in the annexation of Canada.³⁶

This interpretation is highly questionable. There is evidence that other interests were at least as important as sectional ones in determining the reapportionment vote. If the vote was strictly a sectional one, it would mean that Georgia, Maryland, and Delaware, which voted for the amendment, must have identified their interests with those of the North, while New Jersey and Ohio, which voted against it, apparently were aligning themselves with the South. With the exception of Maryland, however, the vote of each of these states coincided with the state's own interest.³⁷ In the case of Georgia and Delaware, each stood to gain an additional seat under the

35. Pratt, *Expansionists*, pp. 135-138.

36. *Ibid.*, p. 139

37. Statistics relating to the reapportionment vote are to be found in Appendix II.

amendment, which was introduced by Senator James A. Bayard of Delaware.³⁸ Ohio and New Jersey, on the other hand, faced larger unrepresented fractions if 35,000, rather than 37,000, were divided into their populations. This meant they would be relatively less well represented than states whose fractions were smaller, and would have to pay higher taxes per representative.³⁹ Thus self-interest, rather than sectional feeling, probably governed the votes of these four states.

Self-interest may have influenced the vote of every frontier state, as well. In addition to Georgia, the states of Vermont and New Hampshire each stood to gain a seat. Each voted for the amendment. So did New York and Pennsylvania, which had frontier districts, and which stood to gain two seats each. Kentucky, Tennessee, and South Carolina, which faced much higher unrepresented fractions at 35,000 than at 37,000 voted against the amendment. Thus it is perhaps significant that the votes of every frontier state except Georgia and Ohio coincided with both state and sectional interests, but that in those two instances, it was state interest that took precedence. In addition, Ohio's vote can be seen as failing to coincide with sectional interest only if one assumes that Ohio considered itself a Northern, rather than a Western state. There is no evidence that it did.

This is not to say that sectional feelings played no demonstrable role. If the discussion is expanded to include non-frontier states, it will be noted that both Rhode Island and Connecticut,

38. Miles' Register, I (December 7, 1812), p. 252.

39. Annals, 12, I, p. 409.

which faced larger unrepresented fractions under the amendment, nevertheless voted for it. But New Englanders had objected strenuously to the idea of admitting Louisiana and other new agrarian states to the Union, out of fear that their own section would be stripped of its political power. Under the amendment, New England stood to gain four seats, which would increase its representation in the House by more than 10 per cent.⁴⁰

Virginia, which voted unanimously against the amendment, may also have been motivated by fear of losing political power. The "cradle of Presidents" was in some danger of losing its near-monopoly of that office. DeWitt Clinton, a New York Republican, was attempting to rally Northern and Western support to end Virginia's domination.⁴¹ And the Republican faction that included Senators Samuel Smith of Maryland and Michael Leib of Pennsylvania and Editor William Duane of the Philadelphia Aurora, already had broken with Madison over his dismissal of Smith's brother as secretary of state and his retention of Albert Gallatin as secretary of the treasury. This group was moving into the Clinton camp.⁴² Thomas Gholson of Virginia pointed out that the Northern and eastern states stood to gain nine seats under the amendment while the South and West would only gain two. Gholson may well have been referring to the backers

40. At a ratio of 37,000, New England would have had 37 representatives in the Thirteenth Congress; at 35,000 it was to have 41.

41. Irving Brant, James Madison, The President, 1809-1812, (New York and Indianapolis, 1956), pp. 452, 453.

Clinton was unsuccessful in his efforts to gain the support of Western Republicans. However, it is ironic that the Erie Canal, the construction of which Clinton was urging in 1811, was to play an important role two or three decades later in helping to galvanize the West to the Northeast politically and economically.

42. Ibid., p. 455.

of Clinton when he charged the Northern states with seeking political preponderance.⁴³ For Charles Cutts of New Hampshire, a Madison supporter, interpreted the Senate amendment as an attempt by Northerners to gain electoral votes.⁴⁴ At any rate, Virginia was the only state which voted against the amendment in the face of a potential extra seat.⁴⁵ The amendment would have given her 23 representatives. But according to Cholson, Virginians originally favored making the ratio 40,000, even though that would have given them 20 seats - two fewer than they already possessed.⁴⁶ Under that particular ratio, the states to the north and east of Virginia would have gained only five seats over their representation in the Twelfth Congress, while the South and West would have gained nine seats, despite Virginia's loss.⁴⁷ Thus the South and West would have made a net gain of four seats. At the ratio of 37,000, the South and West would have had a net gain of three seats. But at 35,000, the North and East were to gain a net of four seats.⁴⁸ Virginia's vote thus may represent a sectional interest. But her own ambition to remain the home of Presidents may have caused her to identify herself with a certain section.⁴⁹

Other than in Virginia and the two New England states previously mentioned, the votes on reapportionment in only two other states seem to justify the conclusion that any factor beside state

43. Annals, 12, I, pp. 411, 412.

44. Brant, The President, p. 384.

45. See Appendix II.

46. Annals, 12, I, pp. 411, 412.

47. Miles' Register, I (Nov. 30, 1811), p. 237.

48. Ibid.

49. Perhaps it is not entirely coincidental that Virginia and the states to the south and west of her all voted for Madison in 1812. Only three other states - Vermont, Pennsylvania, and Maryland - joined them.

interest was decisive. Maryland cast only one vote against the amendment, despite the fact that she was thereby voting for a larger unrepresented fraction. And Pennsylvania voted for the amendment only by a vote of 11 to 7, despite the fact that it offered her two additional seats.⁵⁰ Both of these votes, however, may reflect the quarrel of the political leaders of Maryland and Pennsylvania with the administration. It is interesting to note in this regard, that the House of Representatives, which turned down the Senate amendment Dec. 5, voted to accept it Dec. 18 primarily because three representatives from Maryland and one from Pennsylvania changed their votes in favor of it, while two other Pennsylvanians who failed to vote the first time also voted for it.⁵¹ The Pennsylvania and Maryland votes thus appear to represent political maneuvering, rather than the deep-seated, sectional interests suggested by Pratt. Pennsylvania was still a strong-hold of Jeffersonian Republicanism.⁵² And Pennsylvania and Maryland were to join Virginia in voting for Madison in 1812, thus thwarting the Clintonians and other opponents of Madison, who could have defeated him with their co-operation.⁵³

As for the states on the edge of Pratt's Crescent, there is little to indicate that they would have voted against state interest if sectional or factional interests had failed to coincide with it.

50. Appendix II.

51. Miles' Register, I, pp. 256, 295, 296. The amendment was defeated Dec. 5, 65 to 64; it was passed Dec. 18, 72 to 62. Those who changed their votes in favor of it were Joseph Kent, Peter Little, and Samuel Ringgold, of Maryland, and Aaron Lyle of Pennsylvania. William Rodman and Adam Snybert, of Pennsylvania, were the two who had not voted the first time. All were Republicans.

52. Adams, VI, pp. 170, 171.

53. Madison defeated Clinton in the electoral college, 123 to 89. The 36 electoral votes of Pennsylvania and Maryland were necessary for his victory.

Cutts, who supported the administration, nevertheless voted for the amendment, which gave New Hampshire an extra seat in Congress. So did James Fisk and the rest of the Vermont delegation. Vermont, the only New England state to vote for Madison in 1812, also stood to gain one seat. Fisk, who was a war man, justified the amendment on the ground that it provided well-deserved seats for Vermont and Federalist Delaware, both of which previously had had large unrepresented fractions.⁵⁴ And James Rhea of Tennessee, the vote of which state coincided with that of Virginia, nevertheless lumped Virginia with the other large states - New York, Pennsylvania, and Massachusetts - denouncing a measure that would give Tennessee a fraction larger than the combined total of these four states.⁵⁵

From a study of the Congressional debates and the results of the vote on reapportionment, it is evident that state interest was the dominant issue. There is no evidence that this vote illustrates sectional interest in any of the states which Pratt claimed were represented by expansionists. Thus there seems to be no basis for Pratt's conclusion that the reapportionment vote proves the existence of a split within the war party which had to be mended before war could be declared.

Whether one accepts Pratt's interpretation of a split in the war party thus depends largely on whether he is convinced that the apportionment vote proves the existence of such a split. Most of his other evidence is circumstantial and, as Pratt admitted, would

54. Annals, 12, I, p. 408.

55. Ibid., p. 407.

prove little except for the "known situation" that he claimed his analysis of this one vote demonstrated. This evidence consists primarily of a statement by Grundy, replies to it by John Randolph, the results of the debate over use of militia, and the conjectures of two Federalist senators.

Grundy's statement is the often-quoted one in which he said he was willing to receive both Canada and the Floridas into the Union in order to preserve the political balance.⁵⁶ It may be significant that this statement was made while the apportionment bill was being decided and was presumably of great importance in the minds of Congressmen. It would be even more significant to know to whom the statement was directed. If it was intended for fellow members of the frontier war party, this is evidence of a split. However, if Henry Adams was correct in assuming that this and all other remarks of the war hawks were directed at the "40 or 50" House members who "would vote for war only if they must," this does not indicate that members of the war party were worried about annexation.⁵⁷ A study of the apportionment debates and vote indicates, as has been stated previously, that representatives from the "center of the Crescent," such as Robert Wright of Maryland and Gholson of Virginia were more concerned about the sectional balance of power than were frontiersmen, who tended to think in terms of their own states' interests.⁵⁸ Thus if there was any fear at this time as to the consequences of a war for expansion, it probably was being expressed by members of a group that was not interested in expansion anyway.

56. See above, Chap. III, p. 24.

57. Adams, VI, pp. 153, 159.

58. Annals, 12, I, pp. 404-412.

If the "school of Virginia and Pennsylvania" actually was the target of this and other Congressional speeches, Randolph's reply makes more sense than it otherwise would. There would be advantages in war for men from both "Tennessee and Genessee," he said. Both the Northwest and the Southwest would profit from the acquisition of Canada. It was the Eastern seaboard, said Randolph, that had nothing to gain and much to lose from war. It would be defenseless in the face of British invasion and probable slave uprisings, while he said he could see the capital moving progressively westward.⁵⁹

Randolph, as Pratt admitted, stood alone at the time and picked any argument he could find to discredit the war party.⁶⁰ This does not mean, however, that he hoped or attempted to discredit these men in their own eyes. His chief hope of preventing war lay in convincing the "40 or 50" that war was not in their interest. It was probably to them that he addressed these remarks.

Pratt, however, concluded that for once Randolph's remarks made such an impression on Southern war men that they refused to grant permission to the President to use militia for the conquest of Canada.⁶¹ The vote on that issue is not recorded in the Annals of Congress, but the "wearying debate," which Pratt neglected to analyze, gives some indication of the reasons permission was not granted.

59. Ibid., p. 441.

60. Pratt, Expansionists, p. 144. See above, Chap. IV, f.n. 28.

61. Ibid., pp. 144, 145.

A few speakers - notably Cheves of South Carolina, Wright of Maryland, and Samuel McKee of Kentucky, argued that although the Constitution limits the use of militia to executing the laws of the nation, suppressing insurrection, and repelling invasion, the section that grants Congress the right to declare war and raise armies permits it to designate other uses to which the militia may be put, as long as those uses are "necessary and proper."⁶² Federalists and Old Republicans, on the other hand, took the view that Congress must limit the use of militia to the specific situations prescribed by the Constitution, rather than read implied powers into the right to declare war.⁶³ The question thus was a constitutional one, and Grundy, who believed it would be unconstitutional to use the militia to invade Canada, said he favored keeping it within the United States to release volunteers for the invasion. The action of Congress, he said, could not make an unconstitutional measure constitutional. Therefore, the decision as to how to use the militia should be left up to Madison.⁶⁴ There is no evidence that any member of the war party was trying to prevent the conquest of Canada. The party traditionally had championed strict interpretation of the Constitution, and most of its members undoubtedly found it difficult to see how implied powers could be read into the use of militia, when the Constitution specifically listed the conditions under which militia could be employed. Again a "known situation" would have to be assumed in order to read anything more than an honest difference of Constitu-

62. Annals, 12, I, pp. 735, 739, 743, 792.

63. Ibid., pp. 740, 760, 765-768, 774, 775, 777, 778, 791, 798, 799.

64. Ibid., pp. 723, 773.

tional interpretation into the debates on this matter.

The remainder of Pratt's evidence consists primarily of guesses by Bayard and William Hunter as to the motives of the war men. Bayard wrote to his nephew in May, 1812, that the war vote had been held up by a split in the war party over incorporating Canada into the United States.⁶⁵ Hunter, speaking against a declaration of war upon Spain in 1813, charged that Northerners and Southerners had made a deal to split the spoils of war. "We consent that you may conquer Canada, permit us to conquer Florida."⁶⁶

Bayard admitted that his conjecture was based on rumor, although "I am inclined to think it true."⁶⁷ But it may be significant that he said no more about the matter, although he could write on June 11, "there is no secrecy between the members of the two houses." In the same letter, he said:

You will perceive the propriety of not quoting my name for any opinions you may form inferred from my letters. What I suggest is conjectural and has no advantage over your own conjectures.....⁶⁸

As for Hunter's charge, Pratt noted that Hunter "was a Federalist, and his testimony relative to Republican log-rolling is to be received with caution, but this statement fits so neatly with the known situation that we cannot disregard it."⁶⁹ Again it must be stressed that Pratt never successfully established the existence of this "known situation."

65. Papers of James A. Bayard: Annual Report of the American Historical Association, (1913), II, pp. 196, 197.

66. Annals, 12, II, pp. 528, 529.

67. Bayard, p. 197.

68. Ibid., p. 200.

69. Pratt, Expansionists, pp. 149, 150.

Thus far the discussion has been concerned with demonstrating the lack of evidence for Pratt's interpretation of a split between northern and southern expansionists. Now a further question must be asked. Did the war party want war primarily as a means of bringing about territorial expansion?

As Pratt said, Congressmen from the Northwest gradually came to call for an offensive war against Britain, "perhaps most of all [because of] sheer exasperation at the long continued dilatory fashion of handling the nation's foreign affairs."⁷⁰ Furthermore, according to his testimony, if Northwestern Congressmen wanted war for expansion, they evidently did not reflect the attitudes of their constituents.⁷¹ Thus on the basis of his own admissions, it is difficult to see how Pratt could justify his expansionist interpretation of the causes of the war.

It should be remembered in this connection that there had been war hawks in Congress before 1811. As Norman Risjord has shown, the elections of late 1810 and 1811 added considerably to the talent of the war party in the persons of Calhoun, John Harper of New Hampshire, Peter Porter of New York, and others. But this party was no stronger numerically than it had been in the Eleventh Congress, from which Pratt cited only three speeches urging the conquest of Canada or expounding manifest destiny.⁷² In one of those speeches Clay told the Senate, "the conquest of Canada is in your power," and said he saw a "new United States...embracing not only the old

70. Ibid., p. 42. This is similar to what Adams had said. See Adams, VI, pp. 115, 123, 155.

71. See above, Chap. IV, pp. 33, 34.

72. Norman K. Risjord, "1812: Conservatives, War Hawks, and the Nation's Honor," William and Mary Quarterly, XVIII (1961), p. 200.

thirteen states, but the entire country east of the Mississippi, including East Florida, and some of the territories to the north of us also."⁷³ Virginia Senator William Giles, who later voted against a resolution calling for the invasion of both Canada and East Florida,⁷⁴ urged during the Eleventh Congress the expulsion of the British from Canada. So did Johnson of Kentucky, who saw the conquest of Canada as a means of maintaining the "maritime and territorial" rights of the nation.⁷⁵ Other than these three speeches, all the statements Pratt cited as indicating desire for Canada were made after the battle of Tippecanoe in November, 1811. Nor did Pratt show any evidence of such sentiment in the Northwestern press before Tippecanoe. Yet a war party existed for some reason in the Eleventh Congress and was elected to the Twelfth Congress as much as a year before the West and its representatives began to call seriously for the conquest of Canada. It appears, then, that even as an explanation of the actions of Congressmen from the northern frontier, Pratt's expansionist interpretation is superficial.

The same statement can be made about his explanation of causes of war in the South, where he claimed both Congressmen and their constituents wanted war for expansion. A recent article by William A. Walker, jr. supports Pratt's contention that Tennesseans, at least, were expansion-minded prior to the War of 1812.⁷⁶ But neither Walker nor Pratt has shown that Tennesseans needed or even

73. Annals, 11, I, pp. 579, 580.

74. Pratt, Expansionists, pp. 39, 151.

75. Annals, 11, I, pp. 579, 580.

76. William A. Walker, jr., "Martial Sons: Tennessee Enthusiasm for the War of 1812," Tennessee Historical Quarterly, XI (1961), pp. 20-37.

thought they needed a war in order to fulfill the destiny they imagined was theirs. Until the time war was declared, it was far from certain that the United States would have to fight the most powerful nation in the world in order to take the Floridas from a weak Spain.⁷⁷ West Florida revolted and was incorporated into the United States by Executive order even before the war party was elected to the Twelfth Congress.⁷⁸ In January, 1811, Congress gave Madison authority to occupy East Florida either as a result of peaceful negotiations with the Spanish authorities or as a means of preventing British occupation.⁷⁹ Even after April, 1812, when the President's agent, George Mathews, had to be dismissed for violating the neutrality laws of the United States so flagrantly as to bring strong protests from both Spain and her British ally, there is no evidence that the American policy of supporting insurgent factions, as continued by D. B. Mitchell, was not expected to bring all of Florida under control of the United States eventually.⁸⁰ As it was, Pratt showed no evidence that the press of Tennessee and Georgia linked the conquest of Florida with a war with Britain before the Twelfth Congress met, at which time, as Adams put it, war fever swept the nation.⁸¹

In view of the above discussion, Pratt's interpretation seems neither new, profound, nor correct. Yet it enjoys prestige

77. A. L. Burt, The United States, Great Britain, and British North America (New Haven, 1940), p. 206.

78. Brant, The President, pp. 182-186.

79. Pratt, Emancipators, p. 74.

80. Ibid., pp. 115-119.

81. Adams, VI, p. 113.

among text-book writers,⁸² while historians developing totally different interpretations have accepted parts of its thesis without question.⁸³

The reason for this prestige may lie in the fact that Expansionists of 1812 reflects an approach to history that was popular 40 years ago and still finds supporters. Pratt's generation was disillusioned by the course of development the United States had taken since the Civil War. American society had become class-ridden and dominated by irresponsible capitalists. The country had taken a brief fling at imperialism. The war to "make the world safe for democracy" had ended in another grab for spoils and in the failure of the Senate to ratify the Treaty of Versailles. The United States was settling into smug complacency, with the zeal of the progressive movement apparently gone and its goal of a more democratic society apparently forgotten. The intellectuals of Pratt's generation saw no reason for Americans to feel morally superior to the rest of the world and to absolve themselves from a share in the blame for the world situation. The historians of this generation, who looked at history through the disillusioned eyes of the 1920's, attacked much of what they found in American historiography as pious, nationalistic mythology. They attacked long-standing interpretations of colonial society and the American Revolution, as well as interpretations of

82. Boris, Diplomatic History, p. 156; William Miller, A New History of the United States (New York, 1958), pp. 147-149; Henry B. Parkes, The United States of America (New York, 1959), p. 163; George M. Stephenson, American History to 1865 (New York, 1940), pp. 217-219; W. E. Woodward, A New American History (New York, 1936), p. 324.

83. Brant, The President, p. 112. See also below, Chap. VI. p.66.

post-Civil War events. They were also willing to take a hard look at the War of 1812, which, next to the Revolution, "has been...most exploited by the patriotic type of historians."⁸⁴

Harry Elmer Barnes put his generation's quarrel with the maritime rights interpretation in an early-twentieth century context. "Anyone who holds today that England was extortionate in exploiting our weakness should delve into the history of American financial and commercial negotiations in Latin America and the Far East during the last generation." England, he said, merely "looked upon the United States after 1783 with the same amused and semi-benevolent contempt with which, for example, the United States viewed Cuba and Puerto Rico in 1898."⁸⁵

Such an attitude reflects less desire to discover the actual causes of the war than simply to deflate American nationalism. The views expressed in Expansionists of 1812, of course, fit easily into such an iconoclastic atmosphere. Pratt's work is relatively well documented in comparison with other revisionist writings from which it borrowed. Beard called it scholarly.⁸⁶ But the fact that Beard and others have misconstrued Pratt's interpretation itself indicates that Expansionists of 1812 has been more valuable as an illustration of the materialistic and selfish motives behind American nationalism than as an example of accurate historical research. As an interpretation of the causes of the War of 1812, Pratt's work is inaccurate and misleading.

⁸⁴. Harry Elmer Barnes, "The Second War for Independence," American Mercury, IV (1925), p. 469.

⁸⁵. Ibid., pp. 469, 471.

⁸⁶. See above, Chap. IV, p. 30.

CHAPTER V

War hawks blamed British commercial restrictions for the low prices of certain agricultural products and argued that improved prices would be one result of war.¹ Henry Adams, however, found this an unconvincing argument,² and Pratt and many other historians of the war have discounted low farm prices as an important factor in the coming of the war - especially as an important factor on the frontier. Their attitude has been that "if the real grievances which caused the war were interference by Great Britain with American commerce...., why was war to redress those grievances opposed by the maritime section of the nation and urged by the inland section, which they scarcely affected?"³

Such a question implies two false assumptions. The first is that New England opposition to the war can be explained primarily in economic terms. The second is that the West had no economic interest in commerce and therefore was not genuinely interested in protecting it.

John Adams, who called the New England Federalists of the time the "calves of John Bull," implied in a letter to Jefferson that opposition to war measures on commercial grounds was a pretense upon which ex-Senator Timothy Pickering and others hoped to build a spirit of disunion in the Northeast.⁴

1. Annals, 12, I, pp. 414, 424, 470, 471, 482, 503, 517, 518, 647, 686, 805, 806, 977.

2. Adams, VI, pp. 139, 140.

3. Pratt, Expansionists, p. 9.

4. Lester J. Cappon, editor, The Adams-Jefferson Letters, 2 vols. (Chapel Hill, 1959), II, p. 303.

I have long opposed these people in all such projects; but the national government by embargoes, non-importations, non-intercourses, and above all, by the opposition to any naval power, have been constantly playing into their hands.⁵

Thus, although commercial considerations apparently were a popular rallying point for New England opponents of the war, there evidently were other motives also, which can be explained only in light of the political climate of New England. At any rate, a recent study of the Madison administration indicates that while Madison believed national honor dictated a defense of commercial rights, he realized the "bitter" Federalists were the one faction in the country that would unalterably oppose such a policy.⁶

Feelings of kinship for Britain and hatred for France probably helped to cause New England opposition. As Hildreth put it:

To the Federalists of this school a war with England was exceedingly abhorrent; not merely as a throwing away of great commercial opportunities; nor solely nor chiefly by reason of the alarm and the danger to which it would expose the whole maritime section of the country, and the blood and money it would uselessly cost; but on far more fundamental considerations, moral and political. To take sides with France in the pending struggle - and to make war on England would be to take sides with France - appeared to them a high crime against the best interests of humanity, the taking sides with a tyrant hostile alike to the rights of nations and the rights of men, whom to help to overthrow England was to help in preparing a terrible yoke for ourselves.⁷

It is therefore apparent that New England opposition to the War of 1812 cannot be explained solely in economic terms. But on the

5. Ibid.

6. Brant, The President, pp. 111, 112.

7. Hildreth, VI, p. 324.

other hand, the fact that maritime New England opposed war does not necessarily exclude the possibility that the West supported it partly because of maritime grievances. Pratt erred in dismissing the possibility that Westerners "felt the humiliation if not the pecuniary loss" brought about by the belligerents' maritime restrictions.⁸ To suppose that depth of patriotic feeling can be measured in terms of economic interests is to set up a false standard.⁹ However, even if such a standard is used, there is reason to believe that the West was concerned over what was happening to American commerce. It had an interest in the export trade. Grundy put it this way:

It is not the carrying trade, properly so called, about which this nation and Great Britain are now contending. Were this the only question now under consideration, I should feel great unwillingness (however clear our claim might be) to invoke the nation in war for the assertion of a right in the enjoyment of which the community at large are not more deeply concerned. The true question in controversy, is of a very different character; it involves the right of the whole nation: It is the right of exporting the productions of our own soil and industry to foreign markets.¹⁰

The carrying and re-export trades had accounted for much of the growth of American commerce between 1790 and 1807. While the value of domestic exports merely doubled during the period, the earnings of the carrying trade increased from \$5.9 million to \$42.1 million, and the re-export trade mushroomed from \$300,000 to \$59.6 million. The

8. Pratt, Expansionists, p. 9. Pratt conceded in his introduction that the above might be a partial explanation of Western sentiments. But he thereafter ignored such a possibility.

9. By analogy, it might be wondered if the only Americans genuinely disturbed by Fidel Castro's recent seizure of American properties in Cuba were those who held stock in the companies involved.

10. Annals, 12, I, p. 424.

last figure exceeded the value of domestic exports by \$11 million in 1807.¹¹ The re-export trade brought to commerce a temporary, war-borne prosperity that would disappear as soon as the war in Europe ended.¹² Primarily it involved trade in such products as coffee, cocoa, sugar, and pepper, from the West Indian and South American colonies of France, Spain, and, to a lesser degree, England. Britain's naval power had cut off France and Spain from direct trade with their colonies. The war also had created a burden which English commerce could not bear alone. Although the belligerents had excluded foreign ships from their colonial trade during peacetime, they were forced to open a large amount of it to neutrals during the war. American merchants, in order to comply with a liberal interpretation of the British Rule of 1756, which proclaimed that a country which excluded other nations from its colonial trade in time of peace could not open that trade to neutrals in time of war, were required to land colonial goods in the United States and pay duty on them before re-shipping to Europe. Thus the re-export trade got its name. This trade produced the first American millionaires, for example, Robert Oliver of Baltimore, who quickly earned a fortune from a complicated series of transactions involving both British and French merchants, which resulted from Spain's need of specie from her South American colonies to pay tribute to Napoleon.¹³ Fortunes earned

11. Douglass C. North, The Economic Growth of the United States, 1790-1860 (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1961), pp. 25, 221, 249.

12. Its value slipped from \$46.6 million to \$13.6 million during the period of peace between 1801 and 1803. (North, Economic Growth, p. 221.)

13. Stuart W. Bruchey, Robert Oliver, Merchant of Baltimore, 1783-1819 (Johns Hopkins University Studies in Historical and Political Science, Baltimore, 1956), Vol. LXXIV, Number 1, Chap. VI.

in the re-export trade later were invested in American industry, but the immediate benefits of the trade were concentrated in the country's four largest ports - New York, Philadelphia, Boston, and Baltimore.¹⁴ As Grundy said, "the community at large" was not greatly concerned with the re-export and carrying trades and was more interested in the effects of belligerent restrictions on the domestic export trade, in which producers as well as shippers were concerned.

Before 1931, historians evidently did not believe that even the domestic export trade was of importance to the community at large. Southern planters, of course, had an interest in it and suffered in the years preceding the War of 1812 from falling tobacco and cotton prices. Robert Wright of Maryland blamed these falling prices on Napoleon's continental system, which created a paper blockade of the British Isles and prohibited ships coming from England to enter European ports, and on the retaliatory British orders in council, which first sought to prohibit trade with French-held ports and then sought to license such trade.¹⁵

The price of cotton depended on the demand for the manufactures of the article; the English-made cottons depended on the continental markets, from which British manufactures were excluded. The price of tobacco never was materially varied by the consumption in England, but depended on the foreign demand from Great Britain, which, by their exclusion from the continent, is almost entirely arrested.¹⁶

John Bach McMaster, writing toward the end of the nineteenth century, implied that economic distress influenced Southerners to seek a

14. North, Economic Growth, p. 43.

15. Bruchey, Cliver, pp. 335-338.

16. Annals, 12, I, pp. 470, 471.

war, which, if successfully prosecuted, would force the re-opening of old-world markets.¹⁷ But neither he nor any other writer saw any truth in Grundy's complaint:

Inquire of the western people why their crops are not equal to what they were in former years, they will answer that industry has no stimulus left, since their surplus products have no markets.¹⁸

Evidently no one could believe that the primitive West had been able to produce enough of a surplus to worry about foreign markets.

In 1931, however, George Rogers Taylor undertook a study of "Prices in the Mississippi Valley Preceding the War of 1812," on the assumption that there had been a connection between war sentiment and falling farm prices in that area as well as in the Southeast.¹⁹ He found that hemp, cotton, and tobacco already were being grown in large quantities in the Southwest and that the prices of these and all other Western farm products at the port of New Orleans followed a steadily downward trend from 1805 until late in 1811. A slight rise at that time was not large enough to help producers.²⁰ Cotton prices in December, 1811, were about one-third of the ruling price in December, 1805, and had hit a low they would not reach again until 1826.²¹ While export prices dropped, production costs and prices of imports remained high.²²

17. John Bach McMaster, A History of the People of the United States, 8 vols. (New York, 1900), III, p. 417.

18. Annals, 12, I, p. 426.

19. George Rogers Taylor, "Prices in the Mississippi Valley Preceding the War of 1812," Journal of Economic and Business History, III (1931), p. 143.

20. Ibid., pp. 157, 159.

21. Ibid., p. 159.

22. Ibid., p. 161.

In a second article, Taylor sought to explain why falling prices had a devastating effect upon the West and why the effect is pertinent to any analysis of the causes of the war.²³ When world prices were high, he said, Western products could be sold at a profit abroad. But in a dull market, such as the one brought about by the maritime restrictions of France, Great Britain, and the United States, Western farmers operated at a loss. The West was a marginal area for a number of reasons, including high transportation costs, long distances to markets, lack of marketing organizations and market data, a shortage of cash and capital, inferiority of agricultural products, and poor methods of packaging. Export goods had to be shipped down the Mississippi because of the prohibitive costs of overland transportation, but imports had to be brought in across the mountains until the introduction of the steamboat permitted upriver navigation. Furthermore, because of the lack of marketing organizations, farmers often had to take their own goods to New Orleans on flat boats. Because of the great distances involved, New Orleans market news often was two months old before it reached the farmer and he could reach New Orleans. Once arrived, he usually was forced to sell his products as soon as possible, regardless of the type of market he found, because of the unhealthy climate. Finally, Western goods shipped from New Orleans, such as cotton, tobacco, hemp, sugar, and corn, not only were inferior to the same products grown elsewhere in the country, but often spoiled enroute to market because of incorrect packaging.²⁴

23. Taylor, "Agrarian Discontent."

24. Ibid., pp. 471-481.

Despite these profit-limiting factors, said Taylor, the West experienced a brief population boom following the Louisiana purchase. But when maritime restrictions caused prices to fall, the boom collapsed and "acute depression" set in by 1808. "Except for hemp growers in Kentucky and infant manufacturing interests at Pittsburgh and Lexington, practically the whole West was prostrated."²⁵ Hemp prices eventually dropped, too.

According to Taylor, Westerners believed the embargo would force Britain and France to lift their restrictions. They supported it even after its repeal.²⁶ Not for long, however. As the depression worsened, "frontiersmen showed no desire to repeat the attempt at commercial coercion; past failures had shaken their faith in pacific measures."²⁷ They were ready to press for war.

By Taylor's own admission, his work was an analysis of only one set of causes, just as Pratt's had been.²⁸ He made no attempt to assess the importance of falling prices in relation to such other elements in the causal complex anteceding the war as the Indian problem, Spanish restrictions on trade through the Floridas, Republican dislike of Britain, and reaction to impressment and the other maritime grievances, all of which he admitted were important factors in the coming of the war.²⁹ Thus his article threw another frontier cause of the war onto the scale without attempting to assess its relative weight.

25. Ibid., pp. 434, 435.

26. Ibid., pp. 437-439.

27. Ibid., p. 497.

28. Ibid., p. 504.

29. Ibid.

The exact weight of this or any other cause probably never will be known. However, it seems possible to reach the tentative conclusion that it was of considerable importance in the West. That section was still sparsely settled and probably a majority of its inhabitants was not producing for the export market regularly.³⁰ Nevertheless, the West already was becoming important as an exporter. In 1799, downriver trade reaching New Orleans amounted to approximately \$1 million; eight years later the total was \$5.4 million.³¹ In view of the obstacles to profitable production, this was a sizeable increase. Had world prices remained high, it is possible that the population boom would have continued and that many farmers who remained peripheral to the market would have entered it. At any rate, the evidence presented by Taylor indicates that the West was bitter over falling prices and placed the blame on the belligerents - particularly on Great Britain. Thus as Taylor, said, "the attitude of the Western settler can hardly be evaluated without an understanding of his economic position."³²

It probably would be a mistake, however, to assume the existence of anything resembling a direct, one-for-one relationship between prices and war sentiment. Napoleon announced his continental system in November, 1806, and the total value of American domestic exports did not decline until 1808. A large drop in Western public land sales during the fiscal year ending Sept. 30, 1806, however,

30. North, Economic Growth, p. 64.

31. Ibid., p. 35.

32. Taylor, "Agrarian Discontent," p. 504.

indicates that other problems in addition to falling prices helped to end the population boom.³³ These problems, whatever they were, may also have to be taken into consideration in order to understand Western war sentiment. In this regard it is perhaps significant that while Thomas Berry was able to find a fairly close relationship between variations in agricultural prices and variations in land sales during the period between 1802 and 1817 as a whole, the relationship was only a rough one between 1802 and 1812.³⁴ Logically, land sales, as well as war sentiment, should have been strongly affected by falling prices of agricultural goods.

It would thus appear that Taylor's findings are not the last word in regard to economic causes of war sentiment in the West. However, they do suggest a great deal that was not known previously, and it is unfortunate that with the exception of Margaret Latimer, who stressed the problem of falling cotton prices in non-frontier South Carolina, only one recent writer has given serious consideration to Taylor's interpretation.³⁵

Taylor's small number of followers, however, may not indicate the importance of his contribution to the historiography of the War of 1812. For it may be no coincidence that his first two successors turned to more traditional interpretations of the coming of the war.³⁶ Taylor's own point of view was revisionist. He confined his discussion to social and economic problems of the

33. See Appendix III and Appendix IV.

34. Thomas S. Berry, Western Prices Before 1861 (Harvard Economic Studies, Cambridge, 1943), Vol. LXXIV, p. 373. See Appendix IV.

35. Reginald Horsman, "Western War Aims, 1811-1812," Indiana Magazine of History, LIII (1957), pp. 1-18.

36. See below, Chap. VI.

frontier, But he may have provided a link of understanding between his contemporaries and the historians of the nineteenth century - a link that had been missing since Henry Adams charged the war hawks with hidden motives. Taylor made it unnecessary to continue the search for hidden motives and clandestine deals. He showed that the war hawks claimed an economic interest in war and meant it. They were as frank in admitting "interest" as in claiming a feeling for "honor."³⁷ Clay, for example, said failure to fight Britain would mean the loss of both commerce and character. "If pecuniary considerations alone are to govern, there is sufficient motive for war."³⁸

Unlike other revisionists, who concerned themselves with a search for "interests" and were suspicious of the idea of "honor," Taylor insisted that "national honor and national interest seldom fail to coincide."³⁹ This idea can be applied in two ways. It suggests that the war hawks may also have believed the nation's interest required the protection of her honor from all foreign maritime restrictions. Thus Taylor's economic interpretation of frontier causes of the war suggests a broader application, in which all the factors pertinent to the coming of the war would be considered. Such an approach would appear needed: Although Taylor's successors have switched their point of view away from the frontier, they have failed to broaden their outlook.

37. Taylor, "Agrarian Discontent," p. 502.

38. Annals, 12, I, pp. 599-600.

39. Taylor, "Agrarian Discontent," p. 502.

CHAPTER VI

The first decade following the publication of Taylor's articles saw a return to older points of view. Two major interpretations appeared during the period. In one of them, Bernard Mayo reemphasized the importance of frontier nationalism in the coming of the war.¹ In the other, A. L. Burt returned to a maritime rights interpretation.² Both writers made use of the findings of the revisionists, although Burt did so to a lesser degree than did Mayo. But each stressed a point that had been emphasized by maritime rights historians - the emotional sensitivity of Westerners and the importance of maritime grievances. Neither Mayo nor Burt used the vehicle of the monograph, which had been popular with the revisionists.³ Nor did either write solely to explain the causes of the war. Mayo was interested primarily in the role played by Henry Clay, while Burt's study covered American-British relations during the period between 1776 and 1820.

Mayo's interpretation of frontier nationalism contained elements of both the revisionist and maritime rights interpretations. Frontiersmen were so sensitive to insults against the nation's honor that they felt outrage at the plight of far-away seamen.⁴ However, he implied that he thought the war was not fought primarily for maritime rights.⁵ Rather, local problems were a more direct cause of frontier

1. Bernard Mayo, Henry Clay (Boston, 1937).

2. Burt, United States (New Haven, 1940).

3. See above, Chap. III, pp. 21, 22.

4. Ibid., p. 326.

5. Mayo, Clay, p. 328.

sensitivity. Mayo relied on the findings of Pratt, Taylor, and others as explanations of these problems. He accepted Pratt's conclusions concerning the Indian situation, expansion, and conflict within the war party. He also made use of Taylor's interpretation of the causal effect of falling farm prices upon war sentiment.⁶ But whereas most revisionists had put primary emphasis on the importance of "interest" and only paid lip service to the role played by "honor", in the coming of the war, Mayo attributed as much importance to the latter as to the former. The War of 1812 was not fought primarily for material gain, he said. Rather, it was brought about by "Free Sons of the West," who were "uncontaminated by the seaboard's intimate British ties," and "had a deeper understanding of nationalism and democracy" than did the European-oriented Easterners.⁷ The West's nationalism was emotional, rather than rational and calculating. And Westerners felt that:

Outright war was preferable, and even desirable, to a mongrel peace in which America, left naked and unarmed by a logocratic Congress, was assaulted and robbed with impunity, subjected to a Canning-Jackson insolence, and taunted by Pickeronians (who frustrated all efforts to avoid both war and outright submission) without being so craven that she could never even be kicked into war.⁸

Although the influence of Turner and Adams can be seen in these statements, Mayo's position also resembles that of the maritime rights writers.⁹

6. *Ibid.*, pp. 329-332, 392, 394, 430.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 326.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 327.

9. See above, Chap. I, pp. 9, 10.

Each of the revisionist writers whose findings he used had attempted to prove that one particular cause was decisive. Mayo, however, was unwilling to call one frontier cause decisive or even to call one more important than another. Many factors played a part in the coming of war. All were important, he implied.

It may well be that the coming of the War of 1812 can be explained only in terms of a multiplicity of causes. But it is also probably true that some factors weighed more heavily than others. Thus Mayo's approach would seem to be valid only if it were impossible to differentiate between factors. As Reginald Horsman has suggested, however, it probably is possible to differentiate.¹⁰ The historian can set up a critical standard to judge any cause and compare it with others. By asking questions about the number of votes in Congress it could have influenced, the number of people affected by a particular grievance, its importance at critical times when war was being advocated most strenuously, and the importance which contemporaries seemed to attribute to it, he can begin to understand which causes were of major importance and which were not. Such an approach admittedly would work best in analyzing those grievances in which interest, rather than honor, was at stake. But having checked the validity of war-hawk statements in regard to those grievances in which material interests were measurably affected, one would also have an improved basis for judging the trustworthiness of pronouncements in regard to impressment and other non-economic grievances.

10. Horsman, "War Aims," p. 4.

Mayo, in asserting the equal importance of many causes, may have been reacting against the tendency of revisionists (and other historians of the war as well) to be uncritical of the particular causes whose importance they stressed. Revisionists had failed to take into consideration such evidence as might disprove the decisiveness of their causes, and confusion had resulted. However, it might be wondered if Mayo's approach is any less confusing. To make no effort to differentiate when differentiation is seemingly possible is to give undue importance to some causes and too little importance to others. Such an approach stops far short of the knowable truth about the causes of the war.

The charge of failing to differentiate cannot be made against Mayo's successor, Burt. A diplomatic historian, Burt viewed the coming of the war primarily from a maritime-rights point of view. During the previous 30 years or so, maritime causes had been largely ignored. Those historians who discussed them at all, such as Harry Barnes, Allen Johnson, and Ralph Paine, considered maritime factors less important than the Indian problem and desire for Canada.¹¹ Burt, on the other hand, discussed the problems of the frontier only briefly and dismissed them as of decidedly less importance than maritime causes.

According to Burt, the problem of maritime rights opened and continually widened the rift between the United States and Great Britain. The two nations had conflicting interpretations of national

11. Barnes, "War for Independence," pp. 473, 474; Allen Johnson, Jefferson and His Colleagues (Chronicles of America Series, New Haven, 1921), XV, pp. 204, 205; Ralph D. Paine, The Fight For a Free Sea (Chronicles of America Series, New Haven, 1921), XVII, pp. 3, 4.

rights to jurisdiction on the high seas, and these interpretations reflected vital interests which could not be compromised.¹² Britain was fighting for existence, and therefore felt entitled to claim all the rights to which the superiority of her navy entitled her. She previously had accepted the principle that neutrals could trade with belligerents in any articles except contraband. But now she claimed that necessity gave her the right to stop any vessel attempting to reach a continental port, regardless of cargo.¹³ Furthermore, she claimed that the necessity of maintaining a powerful navy entitled her to board neutral ships at sea in search of deserters,¹⁴

Americans, on the other hand, believed Britain was using wartime necessity as an excuse for gaining a monopoly over the commerce of the world.¹⁵ Lacking a powerful navy to protect her merchant marine, the United States insisted upon what was then a new principle: That American private ships, as well as public ones, were subject only to American law at sea.¹⁶ If British law and practice were to rule the waves because of British power to enforce them, Americans believed their commerce could not be independent.¹⁷

Neutral trading rights were an important aspect of the struggle for jurisdiction, according to Burt, and the United States had a greater grievance against Britain in this respect than against France.¹⁸ For most of Britain's seizures were made at sea, where,

12. Burt, United States, p. 212.

13. Ibid., p. 214.

14. Ibid., p. 212.

15. Ibid., p. 223.

16. Ibid., p. 212.

17. Ibid., p. 224.

18. Ibid., p. 222.

according to her former practice, she had no right to interfere with neutral ships not carrying contraband. Napoleon, on the other hand, usually made his seizures in continental ports, where his jurisdiction could not be disputed.¹⁹ In addition, French seizures could not be construed as an effort to injure American shipping in order to aid French commerce, since France's merchant marine had virtually ceased to exist.²⁰ But England's seizures could be and were thus construed. The orders in council seemed to be "designed to establish the economic superiority of England."²¹

As great as were the problems associated with the right to trade, however, the problems resulting from impressment were even greater. Lives, rather than goods, were touched by impressment. And abuses on both sides continually contributed to international ill-will. British boarding parties often were brutal in their treatment of American crews, while the American practice of providing identification which our sailors could easily sell to British deserters kept the British suspicious of the United States.²² "At any time [impressment] might cause violent clashes, and all the time it was producing little incidents which had a cumulative effect."²³

These incidents, according to Burt, influenced the American decisions to invoke embargo, non-intercourse, and other forms of economic coercion. With its roots in the American Revolution,

19. Ibid.

20. Ibid.

21. Ibid.

22. Ibid., p. 213

23. Ibid., p. 297

economic coercion appeared to be a weapon that nature "had placed in the American armory."²⁴ It involved less danger than war, and was the only compromise that could be reached between those who wanted war and those who favored submission.²⁵ According to Alexander Balinký, the fiscal policies of Jefferson and his secretary of the treasury, Albert Gallatin, played a decisive role in the choice that was made. Their emphasis on the primary importance of debt retirement had not only deprived the nation's defenses of adequate financial support, but had also swept away the legislative and administrative machinery whereby needed revenue might be recovered.²⁶ Thus when economic coercion failed to force Britain to revoke the orders in council or relinquish the right of impressment, Americans had to choose between submission and a war for which they were unprepared.²⁷

According to Burt, Britain's refusal to revoke the orders in council until the week that war was declared was the immediate cause of war.²⁸ As Madison said in later years, the decision to ask for war was based on a letter from Castlereagh to Foster, read by Madison May 27, 1812,²³ in which "it was distinctly and emphatically stated that the orders in council, to which we had declared we would not submit, would not be repealed....With this formal notice, no choice remained but between war and degradation, a degradation inviting fresh provocations and rendering war sooner or later

24. Ibid., p. 255.

25. Ibid., p. 231.

26. Alexander Balinký, Albert Gallatin, Fiscal Theories and Policies (New Brunswick, N.J., 1958), pp. 130, ff.

27. Burt, United States, pp. 315, 316.

28. Brant, The President, p. 466.

inevitable."²⁹

Had the repeal of the orders been substituted for the declaration that they would not be repealed, or had they been repealed but a few weeks sooner, our declaration, of war as proceeding from that cause would have been stayed, and negotiations on the subject of (impressment), that other great cause, would have been pursued with fresh vigor and hopes, under the auspices of success in the case of the orders in council.³⁰

However, despite the repeal of the orders in council, it was impressment that prevented an early armistice. Lord Cartlereaugh told Jonathan Russell, the American charge d'affaires, who had been instructed to make Britain's abandonment of impressment a necessary condition of armistice:³¹

You are not aware of the great sensibility and jealousy of the people of England on the subject; and no administration could expect to remain in power that should consent to renounce the right of impressment, or to suspend the practice, without the certainty of an arrangement which should obviously be calculated to most unequivocally secure its object.³²

Like a number of historians of the War of 1812, Burt seems to have gone too far in attempting to portray maritime causes as the decisive ones. The national-rights implications of the orders in council were extremely important to American diplomats. But Burt's argument that maritime causes were the decisive one in the minds of frontiersmen was not adequately supported. It is possible that Westerners were emotionally involved in the problems of American commerce and seamen. But it might be wondered how Burt could

29. Gaillard Hunt, editor, The Writings of James Madison, 9 vols. (New York, 1910), IX, pp. 272, 273.

30. Ibid., IX, p. 273. See also, pp. 195, 196.

31. American State Papers: Class I: Foreign Relations (Washington, 1832), Vol. III, p. 585.

32. Ibid., III, p. 594.

justify his dismissal of the Indian problem because its roots were "in a remote corner" which had few representatives in Congress.³³ For he contended, on the other hand, that Westerners felt the shame occasioned by British maritime restrictions more deeply than did Easterners, primarily because they were farther removed from the dangers of a maritime war and had no direct interest in commerce.³⁴ In addition, Burt's assertion that the problem of falling prices was not important outside the South - "the one section of the country that was vitally dependent upon the markets controlled by Napoleon"³⁵ seems highly questionable in view of Taylor's evidence of Western belief that only if continental markets were opened would American goods cease glutting the market and inferior Western goods be sold at a profit.³⁶

As a detailed, well documented discussion of the maritime causes of the war, however, Burt's study is probably without equal. His findings in regard to the importance which Madison placed upon the revocation of the orders in council have been corroborated in a recent, equally well documented study of the Madison administration.³⁷ His apparent overstatement of the importance of maritime grievances to the West is more than offset by the light he shed on an aspect of the coming of the war that had too long been neglected.

33. Burt, United States, p. 309.

34. Ibid., p. 308.

35. Ibid.

36. Taylor, "Agrarian Discontent," pp. 484-496.

37. See below, Chap. VII.

CHAPTER VII

Two recent interpretations suggest a revival of interest in key political ideas contained in Henry Adams' History.¹ In one of them, Irving Brant closely scrutinized the role of President Madison in the coming of the War of 1812.² In the other, Norman K. Risjord analyzed the part played by Southern conservatives in the Twelfth Congress.³

According to Brant, Madison had been a strong nationalist at the time of the Constitutional Convention, began to champion state rights primarily because he disliked the nationalistic program of Alexander Hamilton and the Federalists, and acted as a nationalist again as President. Although dedicated to peace, he was willing to risk a war with either Britain or France in order to compel them to respect the rights of the United States. He played an active part in the events leading to war.

Brant's interpretation differs considerably from that of Hildreth, who claimed that Madison secretly opposed the policy of the war hawks, but exercised such feeble leadership that they were permitted to gain control of Congress. The war men became so powerful, he said, that they were able to offer Madison the choice of either supporting their war measures or being defeated for re-nomination in 1812.⁴ The President was forced to come to terms with them in a secret meeting in which:

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1. See above, Chap. II.
 2. Irving Brant, James Madison, The President, 1809-1812 (New York and Indianapolis, 1956).
 3. Risjord, "Conservatives."
 4. Hildreth, VI, pp. 289, 316.

The leaders of the war party were inexorable. The war must not seem to be forced on the president; it must be, not their war - but his. A committee headed by the imperious Clay, waited upon him with assurances to that effect. He must consent to recommend a declaration of war, or they would not accept him as President.⁵

Von Holst, McMaster, and Schouler accepted Hildreth's interpretation.⁶ Adams, however, declared there was no evidence of a deal and no reason to suppose that Madison had to be won over to the war-hawk cause. "The President, as his office required, stood midway between the masses of his followers, but never failed to approve the acts and meet the wishes of the war members."⁷ When even the war hawks appeared to falter in the face of continued grievances against France, Madison helped to rekindle the spark. He made public the Henry letters, which, he claimed, proved the existence of a treasonous tie between New England Federalists and the British.⁸ He was not forced into calling for war. On the contrary.

No sign of hesitation could be detected in Madison's conduct between the meeting of Congress in November and the declaration of war in June. Whatever were his private feelings, he acted in constant agreement with the majority of his party, and at most asked only time for some slight armaments.⁹

Adams was unsympathetic with Madison's policy. He said the President clung to the fiction that Napoleon had revoked his decrees "until the world laughed in his face," in an effort to force Britain

5. Ibid., VI, p. 296.

6. Von Holst, I, pp. 235-238; McMaster, III, p. 448; Schouler, II, p. 388.

7. Adams, VI, p. 175.

8. Ibid., pp. 176, ff.

9. Ibid., VI, p. 197.

to revoke the orders in council.¹⁰ When the British refused to comply, Madison saw no choice but to call for war. In order to win votes for war in Congress, he designed his war message to make it appear that impressment, rather than Britain's refusal to revoke the orders, was the casus belli.¹¹ Thus:

If students of national history can bear with patience the labor of retaining in mind the threads of negotiation which President Madison so thoroughly tangled before breaking, they can partially enter into the feelings of citizens who held themselves aloof from Madison's war.¹²

This interpretation of Madison made little impression on Adams' immediate successors. Francis Walker said the charge that Madison sold out to the war hawks in return for their political support could neither be proved nor disproved.¹³ Babcock, who withheld the charge that a deal had been made, implied that Madison had gradually been won over by the war hawks.¹⁴ And D. R. Anderson, one of the first revisionists, implied that if the war hawks did not actually put pressure on Madison, at least he recognized the importance of politics in the coming of the war. Pratt, the one notable exception, confined his discussion to sectional politics within the war party.¹⁶ Madison's role was largely ignored.

In 1932, however, Theodore Smith sought to revive interest in Madison as a progenitor of the war.¹⁷ Like Adams, he believed Madison

10. Ibid., VI, pp. 117, 118.

11. Ibid., VI, pp. 220-224.

12. Ibid., p. 225.

13. Frances Walker, Making of the Nation, 1783-1817 (New York, 1895), p. 224.

14. Babcock, American Nationality, pp. 51, 52.

15. Anderson, "Insurgents," p. 170.

16. See above, Chap. IV.

17. Theodore C. Smith, "War Guilt in 1812," Massachusetts Historical Society Proceedings, LXIV (1932), pp. 319-345.

should be censured, rather than praised for his role. But Federalists and historians had blamed Madison for the wrong reasons, he said.

According to Smith, the standard interpretation of Madison, first stated by Hildreth, was based on several false conjectures. Hildreth read an unwarranted meaning into the fact that the Republican caucus, which ordinarily met in April of a presidential election year to endorse a candidate, did not meet to endorse Madison until May 18, 1812. He also accepted a rumor, begun by Foster and Federalists Alexander C. Hanson of Maryland and Josiah Quincy of Massachusetts, that the war hawks forced Madison to accede to their demands.¹⁸ And Hildreth incorrectly supposed, as Smith put it, that "Madison was known in the winter and spring of 1812 to be positively averse to war and that some form of coercion, open or veiled, was needed to overcome his reluctance."¹⁹

Smith, asserted that Madison's actions had been misinterpreted. Quiet and aloof, the President never bothered to answer his attackers. He permitted himself to be misunderstood.²⁰ But according to Smith, a study of Madison's letters and papers indicates that the President was neither indifferent nor hostile to the war spirit. On the contrary, Madison was privately impatient with the slowness of the nation to act. Smith cited a letter written to Jefferson in February, 1812, in which Madison criticized the recently passed army bill as inadequate.²¹ In another letter to Jefferson, Madison wrote that the House finally had "got down the dose

18. Ibid., p. 338.

19. Ibid., p. 329.

20. Ibid., p. 320.

21. Ibid., pp. 329, 330.

of taxes. It is the strongest proof they could give that they do not mean to flinch from the contest to which the mad conduct of Great Britain drives them."²² Again, when Congress seemed to falter from its movement toward war in March, Madison complained to the French minister, Louis Serrurier, that France's continued policy of seizing American vessels had prevented a declaration of war against Britain. At the same time his secretary of state, James Monroe, warned Foster that the United States still considered the French decrees repealed.²³ Even when he called for an embargo against Britain in April, 1812, Madison made it clear in his correspondence that he was not resorting once more to economic coercion, as the Federalists accused him of doing. He told Jefferson:

It appears that...(the British) prefer war with us to a repeal of their orders in council. We have nothing left, therefore, but to make ready for it. As a step to it an embargo for 60 days was recommended to Congress.²⁴

Thus, according to Smith, "there is no need of the bargain story to explain anything, for it lacks any basis of fact as to its main assumption."²⁵

Smith believed that the question of war or peace actually was decided in a meeting between Madison and the war hawk leaders. But it was not a matter of Madison acceding to an ultimatum. For although the prospects of securing a declaration of war had been dimmed again in May by the continued actions of France, "so far was Madison

22. Madison Papers, VIII, p. 182.

23. Smith, "War Guilt," pp. 331, 332.

24. Madison Papers, VIII, pp. 185, 186.

25. Smith, "War Guilt," pp. 334, 335.

from holding out against a war fever that it was he who expressed disquiet over the weakness of Congress."²⁶ He had warned Foster in November, 1811, that if the American ship Hornet, about to sail for Europe, should return with news that Britain still persisted in the orders in council, the United States would have to alter its policy. When the Hornet finally arrived May 23, it brought the following message from Castlereagh to Foster:

Great Britain always avowed...her readiness to rescind her orders, so soon as France rescinded absolutely and unconditionally her decrees. She never engaged to repeal these orders, as affecting America alone, leaving them in force against other states, upon condition that France would except singly and specially America from the operation of her decrees. She could not do so, without the grossest injustice to her allies as well as all other neutral nations.²⁷

Having been shown this note, Madison now hesitated only because he doubted the willingness of a majority of Congress to vote for war.²⁸ This doubt was removed during the visit of the Congressional leaders. Joseph Gales, editor of the semi-official National Intelligencer, at the time war was declared, described the meeting in later years as follows:

A deputation of members of Congress...waited upon the President, and, upon the representations of the readiness of a majority of Congress to vote the war if recommended, the President, on the first Monday in June, transmitted his message submitting that question to their decision.²⁹

Madison's war message was preceded by a manifesto of the Committee on Foreign Relations. Although the report long was

²⁶. Ibid., p. 335.

²⁷. A.S.P.F.R., III, p. 457.

²⁸. Smith, "War Guilt," p. 340. See above, Chap. VII.

²⁹. Gaillard Hunt, "Joseph Gales on the War Manifesto of 1812," American Historical Review, XIII (1903), p. 309.

attributed to Calhoun, Smith cited the testimony of Gales as evidence that the administration prepared it. "It was an elaborate manifesto.. ..and concluding in...language which no one who had ever heard Mr. Monroe [sic] discourse upon the subject could doubt to have been his."³⁰ Thus, according to Smith, Madison helped to bring about the war of his own volition. Federalists had reason to detest him, but Madison was neither a weakling nor a tool of the war hawks.

Madison had the kind of tenacity, stubbornness, and steadiness which a small, dried-up man sometimes develops, that can outlast the most vociferous energy of a dominating personality. He was not impressive, but he had a backbone, and indefensible as his diplomacy was, he went to war with his eyes open and as the necessary consequence of his own decisions.³¹

Brant agreed with Adams and Smith that Madison played an active, willing role in the coming of the War of 1812. But he did not agree that Madison's policies were indefensible. Brant departed from his predecessors primarily in matters of interpretation. Although his argument was more fully documented than those of either Adams or Smith, its factual basis was similar to theirs. Brant interpreted the facts in a manner favorable to Madison.

According to Brant, Madison was dedicated to peace, but was extremely sensitive to slights upon the character of his country. He was willing to risk war if war was needed to make the United States respected by other nations.³² Thus, although he hoped war

30. Ibid., p. 310. The draft of the manifesto - in Monroe's handwriting - was acquired by Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1914. See Brant, The President, illustration facing p. 416.

31. Smith, "War Guilt," p. 345.

32. Brant, The President, p. 112.

would not be necessary, he unhesitatingly moved "along a path that put peace in ever deeper jeopardy."³³ From the time he became President until the decision was made to ask for war, Madison sought to play one belligerent against the other in an effort to get them to remove their maritime restrictions.

Before Madison had been two weeks in office he had put the full weight of the Presidency behind a secret understanding with either England or France, involving a call for war against the other unless it too stopped molesting American commerce.. ..This does not mean that he either wished for or expected war in 1809. His hope was to use an agreement with either belligerent to obtain one with the other.³⁴

About six weeks after he entered office, Madison became a hero to Republicans and Federalists alike by signing the Erskine agreement. Under this agreement Britain was to revoke the orders in council insofar as they affected American shipping, and the United States was to withdraw non-intercourse against Britain and keep it in effect against France.³⁵ However, England's envoy, David M. Erskine, failed to inform Madison that the British government had demanded a written guarantee from the United States that it would submit to enforcement of non-intercourse against France by the royal navy.³⁶ Britain's subsequent repudiation of the agreement brought quick disillusionment. Madison believed the British had "reverted to type."³⁷

The failure of the Erskine agreement brought about two developments in Madison's policy, according to Brant. Abroad, he

33. Ibid.

34. Ibid., pp. 42, 43.

35. Bemis, Diplomatic History, p. 153.

36. Brant, The President, pp. 73, 74.

37. Ibid., p. 71.

ceased to hope that either belligerent would repeal all its restrictions at once. Therefore, he attempted "to spur the two belligerents to a series of alternate jumps," in which they would remove their restrictions gradually. "The difficulty was to make either of them jump first."³⁸ At home, in order to win support for this "foreign policy based on the economic self-interest and chesty pride of a young and growing nation," he began advocating industrial development and national self-sufficiency.³⁹ His aim was to unite behind him "all factions, except the bitter Federalists led by Pickering."⁴⁰

Politically this meant that the Madison administration could safely accept increasing hazards in a 'risk of war' policy. If it succeeded in protecting commerce by negotiation, all but the most fanatic Federalists would be won over. If negotiation failed, every step that led toward war would be backed by the self-interest and high nationalism of the fast-spreading manufacturing element and the territorial expansionists. Every political loss growing out of damage to foreign trade would be offset among the new industrialists. War itself - fatal to overseas trade - would bring self-containment to a climax, sustaining the government against those injured by the disruption of commerce.⁴¹

As a means of implementing his foreign policy, Madison took an extraordinary step for a Republican. He asked the Eleventh Congress for increased funds for military spending, despite Gallatin's advice that defense appropriations be cut in half.⁴² Congress, however, was

38. Ibid., p. 120.

39. Ibid., p. 111.

40. Ibid.

41. Ibid., p. 112.

42. Ibid., pp. 124, 125.

not ready for such a step.⁴³ Nor was it ready to replace the dying non-intercourse bill with a stronger form of economic coercion, as Madison wished.⁴⁴ But it did pass Macon's Bill Number Two, which gave Madison a small lever to use against the belligerents. The bill restored trade with both England and France, but provided that if either of them should revoke its restrictions before March 5, 1811, non-intercourse would be restored against the other in the event that it did not follow suit within three months.⁴⁵

After November, 1810, Madison sought to use the lever provided by the Macon bill against Britain. The Duc de Cadore, Napoleon's minister of foreign affairs, had announced August 5 that as of November 1, France's decrees would cease to have effect, "it being understood that, in consequence of this declaration, the English shall revoke their orders in council and renounce the new principles of blockade....or that the United States...shall cause their rights to be respected by the English."⁴⁶ Madison had reservations as to the reality of the repeal. France still claimed the right to license American ships and to limit the number admitted to continental ports.⁴⁷ She also continued to seize ships under the guise of the right to make municipal regulations, rather than under international law.⁴⁸ But, according to Brant, Madison was willing to accept the fiction of repeal because his only hope of getting Britain to make the "next jump" was to do so, and because America's grievances

43. Ibid., pp. 135, 136.

44. Ibid., pp. 126, 127.

45. Ibid., p. 138.

46. A.S.P.F.R., III, pp. 386, 387.

47. Brant, The President, p. 217.

48. Ibid., p. 252. See above, Chap. VII.

against Britain were greater than her grievances against France.⁴⁹ Thereafter, he consistently worked to gain the repeal of the orders in council. When Congress voted to declare war in June, 1812, no one in the United States realized that Madison finally had succeeded.⁵⁰

Brant's interpretation fortifies the contention of Adams and Smith that Madison has been misunderstood. He presented evidence to show that it was Madison who wrote tough diplomatic notes over the signature of his incompetent first secretary of state, who published diplomatic dispatches containing news of new belligerent outrages in order to encourage the election of a militant Twelfth Congress, and who time and again warned English and French ministers of the possible consequences of their governments' actions.⁵¹ As Brant also pointed out, if Madison actually had been at the mercy of the Twelfth Congress, he could not have assured Foster in November, 1811, that there would be no serious change in relations between the United States and Great Britain before the return of the Hornet with Britain's answer to the demand that she revoke the orders in council.

(This) was in effect an assurance that there would be no declaration of war before April or May. Coupled with other remarks...it furnished clear proof that the President regarded himself as guiding national policy. This was made even plainer by his blunt refusal to let the controversy with England hinge on the misconduct of France. Madison was offering Great Britain a period of grace in which to change her policies without a sacrifice of pride and escape an otherwise inevitable war.⁵²

49. Ibid., pp. 339, 340. According to Brant, Impressment was the grievance that set off Britain from France.

50. Britain removed the orders in council June 16; the United States declared war June 18.

51. Brant, The President, Passim.

52. Ibid., pp. 370, 371.

Despite the evidence that Madison has been misunderstood, it may still be wondered if the fact that he was misunderstood was not in itself a factor in the coming of the War of 1812. The failure of Congress to pass a strong coercive bill in 1810, for example, may have been partly due to the fact that Congressmen did not know where Madison stood.⁵³ Brant could say:

From Foster's own dispatches it is clear that the President laid down a policy with full knowledge that it would lead to war if Great Britain did not change her course....Had the British envoy transmitted the bare verbal records of his talks with Madison and Monroe, and had no Federalist speeches or editorials reached England, the British cabinet might have been able to discern American intentions and act on the basis of its knowledge.⁵⁴

But Foster, who had direct contact with Madison, nevertheless accepted the Federalists' interpretation of him as weak and indecisive and tempered his dispatches accordingly. He interpreted the "period of grace" as evidence that Madison wanted to delay the actions of a Congress he was too weak to resist.⁵⁵ Federalists, who convinced Foster that their interpretation of Madison was the correct one, were prejudiced and undoubtedly guilty of wishful thinking. But even war hawks were sometimes unsure of the President's leadership. "If the trumpet give an uncertain sound," said Calhoun of Madison, "who shall prepare for the battle?"⁵⁶

The coming of the war probably cannot be explained without an understanding of the President's role. But that role seems to have had negative aspects as well as the positive ones Brant

53. Ibid., pp. 126, 127.

54. Ibid., p. 374.

55. Ibid., pp. 371, 372.

56. Mayo, Clay, p. 430.

stressed. Madison lacked leadership. Contemporaries often were unaware of his true feelings. He was unable to convince his own party in the Eleventh Congress of the necessity for military preparedness. It would seem that Brant failed to emphasize these negative factors properly.

Brant emphasized one of the two key factors in Henry Adams' interpretation of the causes of war - the role of Madison. Norman Risjord emphasized the other - the role of conservative Republicans in the Twelfth Congress. Risjord's findings supported those of Adams.

Risjord analyzed the contests for individual Congressional seats in the South in 1810 and found no evidence that the winners were given a mandate to vote for war. Most of the Southern representatives in the Twelfth Congress were holdovers from previous Congresses, and many of them were re-elected without opposition.⁵⁷ Some of the new members replaced like-minded representatives who had chosen not to seek re-election. Even in those cases where a seat was closely contested, "the election seldom turned on the issues of foreign policy."⁵⁸ Some of the Southerners who entered the Twelfth Congress did so with a decided preference for war. Others, including some who later voted for war were decidedly for peace.⁵⁹ Thus, although the Southeastern states of Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, and South Carolina were to cast 34 votes for war and only 11 against it, Risjord found no evidence that the vote reflected widescale discontent with the status quo among the electorate of these states.

57. Risjord, "Conservatives," p. 197.

58. Ibid. pp. 198.

59. Ibid., pp. 197-200.

Like Adams, Risjord believed many Southern Congressmen were reluctant to see the nation go to war.⁶⁰ Some of those who did vote for it gradually became convinced that war was inevitable because of the failure of economic coercion and the intransigence of Britain.⁶¹ Others, such as Nathaniel Macon of North Carolina, came to believe that only war would prevent Britain from tightening her maritime restrictions still further.⁶² Still others supported the military preparedness measures of the war hawks, but "could not make up their minds on the issue of war or peace until the last minute."⁶³ This group finally voted for war because of loyalty to Madison and because they believed the country had already moved too far in the direction of war to back down without disgracing itself.⁶⁴ Thus the South voted for war in the belief that war was the only honorable policy remaining for the United States.

The war, at least as far as the South was concerned, was brought on by men who had had a bellyful of England, not by men who were interested in western lands, or Indians, or prices in the lower Mississippi Valley.⁶⁵

Risjord directed his argument against those who continued to believe that the social and economic problems of the frontier are the key to the coming of the war. Thus he indirectly paid tribute to the durability of the revisionist point of view, which persists in general studies of the period, if not in the writings of historians

60. Adams, VI, pp. 170, 171.

61. Risjord, "Conservatives," p. 206.

62. *Ibid.*, p. 207.

63. *Ibid.*

64. *Ibid.*, pp. 208, 209.

65. *Ibid.*, p. 200.

concerned primarily with the causes of the war.⁶⁶ He contended that the causes stressed by the revisionists were not important even in the West, and asserted that "the only unifying factor, present in all sections of the country, was the growing feeling of patriotism, the realization that something must be done to vindicate the national honor."⁶⁷ He also placed great emphasis on the ideas that Congressmen from the South and the Middle Atlantic states "furnished the major support for war," and "had little to gain economically from the conflict."⁶⁸

Some of the statements made by Risjord in support of these assertions appear inaccurate and poorly chosen. For example he said that "the War of 1812 was the most uneconomic war the United States has ever fought."⁶⁹ But he later had to qualify this by saying that economic factors were present, especially in the West. And although economic factors cannot by themselves account for "the general demand for war," he said that "the final synthesis of the causes of the war will have to take into account various material factors."⁷⁰ He dismissed Taylor's interpretation by saying that the extent of British responsibility for falling prices cannot be determined.⁷¹ However, Taylor's interest was not in whether Britain actually was responsible, but whether Westerners thought she was. Also, in criticizing Pratt, Risjord said that the idea of the

66. One of the most recent studies of the early national period accepts the Pratt thesis. See Charles M. Wiltse, The New Nation, 1800-1845 (New York, 1961), pp. 41-43.

67. Risjord, "Conservatives," pp. 204, 205.

68. Ibid., p. 204.

69. Ibid., p. 196.

70. Ibid., pp. 204, 205.

71. Ibid., pp. 202, 203.

frontier crescent "seems an arbitrary conjunction of dissimilar areas. Why should New Hampshire or Vermont have been interested enough in the Wabash lands to go to war?"⁷² Pratt, of course, said that both Ohio Valley frontiersmen and their New England counterparts wanted Canada as a prize of war.

Risjord's generalizations about Western causes illustrate a common tendency among historians of the War of 1812: To study only one set of causes and to generalize too freely about other factors. His findings in regard to the role of Southern Conservatives appear to be significant. It is to be hoped that future historians of the war will take them into consideration, along with those of Brant. The coming of the war cannot be understood without a knowledge of the motives of the President who asked for war with Britain and the Congressmen who cast nearly half the votes for it. But it would be unfortunate if these motives should become the basis of a new school of thought which ignored the role of the war hawks, who also played an important role. In order to gain a fuller understanding of the causes of the War of 1812, it is necessary for historians to take a more balanced approach than Risjord, Brant, or any of their predecessors have been willing to take.

72. Ibid., pp. 201, 202.

CONCLUSION

In 1941, Warren H. Goodman wrote a historiographical essay on the coming of the War of 1812 in which he called for a "definitive study of the sources." Until such a study was made, he said, the causes of the war would remain 'singularly uncertain.'¹ Two decades later, the findings of Furt, Brant, Risjord, and others have provided additional information about those causes. These findings indicate that the causes of the war were more complex and less certain than either the maritime rights historians or the revisionists supposed. They add emphasis to Goodman's belief that a definitive study is needed.

The historian who attempts such a study will find that a great deal of the necessary work already has been done. Such factors as American reaction to maritime restrictions, the Indian problem, manifest destiny, desire for Canada and the Floridas, prices of Western produce, the role played by the President, and the motives of Southern Republicans all have been developed by previous historians. Although more can be learned about all these problems, the principle task is to discover their effects upon each other and to attempt to measure their relative importance. This is a job that historians of the War of 1812 have tended to avoid. The importance of rectifying this omission has been one of the major concerns of the foregoing discussion.

1. Goodman, "Changing Interpretations," p. 189.

In addition to uncovering new knowledge about previously developed causes and seeking to establish relationships between them, the author of a definitive study will have to do a great deal of original research. A number of possible factors in the coming of the war remain unexplained. For example, the reasons why 16 of Pennsylvania's 18 representatives voted for war are still unknown. There is evidence that Pennsylvania farmers enjoyed prosperity in the pre-war years.² There is also evidence that Pennsylvania Republicans were not united in supporting the administration.³ But Pennsylvania cast more than one-fifth of the total votes for war. Had those 16 votes been cast against it, the measure would have been defeated. Another area in which much remains to be learned is the reasons for New England opposition to war. It has sometimes been said that New England opposed war for economic reasons. But that explanation appears overly simplified in light of evidence that New Englanders' love of British institutions and their hatred of French ones also played a part.⁴ There is also much to be learned yet about the reasons Britain and France persisted in their restrictions. Englishmen declared a "great sensibility" over the right of impressment.⁵ And there is evidence that one reason for Napoleon's seizure of American ships was his need for money.⁶ Burt's study has shown the degree to which the United States government resented the maritime restrictions. Studies related to the reasons for restrictions might go far in showing to what

2. Risjord, "Conservatives," p. 204.

3. See above, Chap. IV.

4. See above, Chap. V, pp. 54, 55.

5. See above, Chap. VI.

6. Brant, The President, pp. 155, 156.

entire war was inevitable.

Research into subjects such as these should be undertaken for the purpose of acquiring information needed for a definitive treatment of the causes of the war. The pitfalls associated with attempts to present particular causes as the decisive ones have also been an important concern of this study.

Much remains to be learned before the coming of the War of 1812 can be fully understood. The field is far from being exhausted.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL ESSAY

As has been maintained throughout the above discussion, the War of 1812 has not received a definitive treatment. The reader or scholar who wishes to understand its causes must piece them together himself from a number of sources. The purpose of this essay is to indicate the literature which would be a necessary part of such a venture.

I. Primary Materials. A great deal has been written about the Congressional debates. Much of it has been taken out of context to illustrate points of view that are not necessarily justified if the weight of the debates as a whole is considered. It is therefore advisable that the student read them in the Annals of Congress. Particularly pertinent is a series of speeches made in November and December, 1811, shortly after the meeting of the Twelfth Congress, in which both the advocates and the opponents of the war set forth their positions. In conjunction with a study of the debates and votes in Congress, The Biographical Directory of the American Congress (Washington, 1950), is a useful reference tool.

The papers of the leading figures of the period throw some light onto their private feelings about the war, although most of the readily available editions are rather sketchy on this point. It is to be hoped that Julian P. Boyd's The Papers of Thomas Jefferson, completed thus far only to 1789, and similar definitive compilations of other important figures eventually will furnish new information. At present, the most valuable editions relating to the period of the War of 1812 include Francis Hopkins' The

Papers of Henry Clay (Lexington, 1959-60), two volumes of which have been published thus far; F. L. Ford, The Writings of Thomas Jefferson, 10 Vols. (New York, 1928); Gaillard Hunt, The Writings of James Madison, 9 Vols. (New York, 1910) and Henry Adams, The Writings of Albert Gallatin, 3 Vols. (New York, 1879). The Gallatin papers were reissued in 1960.

A great many documents relating to the diplomacy of the period are contained in archives and private manuscript collections. However, the basic American diplomatic correspondence is to be found in American State Papers: Foreign Relations (Washington, 1832), the third volume of which relates to this period. Also valuable is Bernard Mayo's edition of Instructions to the British Ministers to the United States, 1791-1812, American Historical Association Annual Report, (1936).

II. Secondary Sources. Henry Adams' History of the United States, 9 Vols. (New York, 1890), remains one of the best political accounts of the period and of the coming of the war. Adams' literary style has made him one of the few historians whose work has lasting appeal. The history should be supplemented by Irving Brant's James Madison: The President, 1809-1812 (New York and Indianapolis, 1956). Brant's work is a study of the early years of the Madison administration, as well as part of a six-volume biography of Madison. Brant and Adams take opposing points of view as to the expediency of Madison's policies. In addition, Norman K. Risjord, "1812: Conservatives, War Hawks, and the Nation's Honor," William and Mary Quarterly, XVIII (1961), pp. 196-210, discusses the political motives of a heretofore largely ignored group - the Southern

Conservatives - in helping to bring about the war.

There are a number of excellent economic studies that help to throw the coming of the War of 1812 into perspective. Douglass C. North, The Economic Growth of the United States, 1790-1860 (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1961) analyzes foreign trade, the effect of foreign relations upon that trade, its vital importance to economic growth between 1790 and 1815, and its decline in the face of American, British, and French restrictions, and of war. Stuart W. Bruchey's Robert Cliver, Merchant of Baltimore (Baltimore, 1956) is a case study showing the importance of foreign trade in relation to its effects on Cliver, whose ventures in the re-export trade made him a millionaire within a short time. Like many another suddenly rich merchant, he was forced to withdraw from trade as a result of the embargo. More specifically related to the coming of the war are two articles which deal with the economic problems of the Mississippi Valley and South Carolina respectively. George Rogers Taylor demonstrated a relationship between falling commodity prices and Western resentment at Britain's orders in council in "Agrarian Discontent in the Mississippi Valley Preceding the War of 1812," Journal of Political Economy, XXXIX (1931), pp. 471-505. Margaret K. Latimer found a similar reaction in cotton-reliant South Carolina in "South Carolina - A Protagonist of the War of 1812," American Historical Review, LXI (1956), pp. 914-939.

Conflicting interpretations of frontier causes of the war are to be found in Julius W. Pratt's Expansionists of 1812 (New York, 1935), and Louis H. Hacker's "Western Land Hunger and the War of 1812," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, X (1924), pp. 365-369.

Frett stressed the importance of the conflict between settlers and Indians and of a feeling of manifest destiny on the frontier in bringing about a war for expansion. Hacker charged that crude agricultural techniques and the undesirability of settling the prairies combined to cause frontiersmen to seek a war in which they hoped to seize the rich farm lands of Canada. The two interpretations are separate and conflicting, but have tended to become amalgamated in the minds of textbook writers.

The maritime causes of the war are discussed in A. T. Mahan, Sea Power in its Relation to the War of 1812, 2 Vols. (London, 1905), and in A. L. Surt, The United States, Great Britain, and British North America (New Haven, 1940). Mahan's interpretation is meant to illustrate the importance of a nation possessing a powerful navy, while Surt's principal concern is with the legal aspects of the maritime causes. New England opposition to a war for maritime rights is defended in Theodore Dwight's History of The Hartford Convention (New York, 1833).

Finally, the principal historiographical study of the causes of the war is Warren H. Goodman's "The Origins of the War of 1812: A Survey of Changing Interpretations," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, XXVIII (1941), pp. 171-186. Goodman's principal interests are the development of frontier interpretations and of a consciousness of Canada's importance in the coming of the war.

APPENDIX I

VOTE IN HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES ON RESOLUTION OF AMN (BY SECTIONS AND STATES)

<u>NEW ENGLAND</u>	<u>FOR</u>	<u>AGAINST</u>
Massachusetts	6	8
New Hampshire	3	2
Vermont	3	1
Connecticut	0	7
Rhode Island	<u>0</u>	<u>2</u>
Total	12	20

MIDDLE ATLANTIC

New York	3	11
New Jersey	2	4
Pennsylvania	<u>16</u>	<u>2</u>
Total	21	17

SOUTH ATLANTIC

Maryland	6	3
Delaware	0	1
Virginia	14	5
North Carolina	6	3
South Carolina	8	0
Georgia	<u>3</u>	<u>0</u>
Total	37	12

WEST

Kentucky	5	0
Ohio	1	0
Tennessee	<u>3</u>	<u>0</u>
Total	9	0

Grand Total	79	49
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Sources: Annals, 12, I, p. 1637; Biographical Directory of the American Congress, 1774-1942 (Washington, 1950) pp. 99-103.

APPENDIX II: STATISTICS RELATING TO REAPPORTIONMENT OF 1811

STATE	1810 POP- ULATION (CENS. NO.)	SEATS IN 12th CONG.	NO. OF SEATS		POP.		HOUSE OF REP. VOTE ON SENATE AMENDMENT TO CHANGE RATIO FROM 37,000 TO 35,000		
			AT 37,000 RATIO	AT 35,000 RATIO	NOT REP. AT 27,000	NOT REP. AT 25,000	EFFECT OF Larger Fraction	For	
Connecticut	261,218	7	7	7	2,813	16,813	One more Seat	For	(Unanimous)
Delaware	71,004	1	1	2	24,004	1,004	One more Seat	For	(One Vote Only)
Georgia	210,246	4	5	6	25,246	546	One more Seat	For	(Two to One)
Kentucky	274,237	6	10	10	4,236	24,237	Larger Fraction	Against	(Unanimous)
Maryland	235,946	9	9	9	2,946	20,946	Larger Fraction	For	(Eight to One)
Massachusetts	700,745	17	18	20	34,747	745	Two more Seats	For	(Unanimous)
New Hampshire	214,460	5	5	6	24,460	39,460	One more Seat	For	(Unanimous)
New Jersey	214,222	6	6	6	19,222	31,222	Larger Fraction	Against	(Five to One)

Chart continued on page 99.

APPENDIX II: STATISTICS RELATING TO REAPPORTIONMENT OF 1811 (Cont.)

STATE	1810 POP- ULATION (CENS. NO.)	SEATS IN 12th CONG.	NO. OF SEATS		NO. OF SEATS		POP.		EFFECT OF CHANGE RATIO FROM 37,000 TO 35,000 PATIC	HOUSE OF REP. VOTE ON SENATE ATTACHMENT TO CHANGE RATIO FROM 37,000 TO 35,000
			AT	RATIO	AT	RATIO	NOT REP.	NOT REP.		
New York	953,042	17	25	27	23,044	3,043			Two More Seats	For (Unanimous)
North Carolina	487,971	12	13	13	6,971	22,971			Larger Fraction	Against (Unanimous)
Ohio	230,760	1	6	6	8,760	20,760			Larger Fraction	Against (One Vote Only)
Pennsylvania	802,773	13	21	23	30,773	4,773			Two More Seats	For (11 to 7)
Rhode Island	76,888	2	2	2	2,888	6,888			Larger Fraction	For (Unanimous)
South Carolina	336,569	8	9	9	3,569	21,569			Larger Fraction	Against (Unanimous)
Tennessee	243,913	3	6	6	21,913	33,912			Larger Fraction	Against (Unanimous)
Vermont	217,895	4	5	6	32,895	17,895			One More Seat	For (Unanimous)
Virginia	817,620	22	22	23	3,620	12,620			One More Seat	Against (Unanimous)

Sources: Miles' Register, pp. 237, 295, 296.

APPENDIX III

VALUE OF AMERICAN DOMESTIC EXPORTS, 1790-1815 (Thousands of Dollars)

<u>Year</u>	<u>Exports</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Exports</u>
1790	19,905	1803	42,406
1791	18,512	1804	41,467
1792	19,753	1805	42,387
1793	24,260	1806	41,253
1794	26,544	1807	46,699
1795	39,689	1808	9,434
1796	40,764	1809	31,405
1797	29,850	1810	42,367
1798	28,527	1811	45,294
1799	31,143	1812	30,028
1801	47,473	1813	25,003
1802	36,708	1814	6,782
		1815	45,975

Source: North, Economic Growth, p. 221

APPENDIX IV

WESTERN LAND SALES, 1802 - 1817 (Thousands of Acres)

<u>Year</u>	<u>Acres</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Acres</u>
1802	340	1811	207
1803	199	1812	392
1804	314	1813	256
1805	619	1814	823
1806	473	1815	1,093
1807	284	1816	-
1808	196	1817	1,415
1809	143		
1810	159		

Source: American State Papers, Class III, Finance, Vol. I, p. 715;
Vol. II, pp. 7, ff.; Vol. III, pp. 39, 224.

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