

A NEW NATION FACING A REVOLUTIONARY WORLD, 1789–1815

8.1. GREENLEAF'S NEW YORK JOURNAL, ANONYMOUS LETTERS REPORTING ON CROWD PROTESTS AGAINST THE JAY TREATY IN PHILADELPHIA (1795)

On July 8, 1795, the editor of *Greenleaf's New York Journal* printed two conflicting accounts of a protest against the Jay Treaty, the highly controversial treaty stabilizing relations between the U.S. and Great Britain. In the summer of 1795, the terms of the treaty were kept secret while the Senate decided whether to ratify it. But the secrecy did nothing to stop popular opposition. The Federalists and Democratic Republicans battled not only over the treaty itself, but also over the specifics and meaning of protests like this one held by Philadelphia sailors.

Extract of a Letter from a respectable Citizen of Philadelphia, to his friend in this city. I must inform you of a circumstance which took place here on Saturday evening last. At eleven o'clock the ship-carpenters of Kensington, and a number of other citizens, about 500 armed with clubs, paraded the streets with a transparent painting of Mr. Jay; the figure in the attitude of presenting "THE TREATY" to an expecting, admiring Senate, with the left hand, and in the right, a pair of scales suspended—In the elevated scale, "Virtue, Liberty and Independence," were inscribed in large capitals; in the preponderating one "British Gold." After

passing through several streets, they returned again to Kensington, where the painting was committed to the flames. A small party of the Light-Horse attempted to disperse them, but without effect; they were driven from the field amidst a shower of stones, by which some were severely hurt, but no lives lost. I was an eyewitness to the whole proceeding, you may therefore rely on this account.

[Extract of another letter of the same date.]

The 4th of July passed over in quietness, whatever you may have heard to the contrary.

Source: *Greenleaf's New York Journal*, July 8, 1795.

On the fourth [of] July a number of ship carpenters from Kensington, and some of the Democratic Society, intended to burn Mr. Jay's effigy opposite the president's house. They were warned not to attempt it, and the militia officers, light horse, artillery, &c. waited for them in Market-street, till ten o'clock, but deterred them from their design, they came down Second to Market, from thence to Front, about one o'clock Sunday morning, as silent as a funeral procession, till they got above Vine street, and supposing themselves out of danger, when they gave three cheers. I mention this in case it becomes the subject of conversation. You may know how to speak of it.

Not ten persons in all the streets they passed knew any thing of it.

QUESTIONS

1. Judging from these two opposing accounts, what is it possible to discern regarding the attitude of Philadelphia sailors and shipbuilders toward the Jay Treaty?
2. Which letter was likely written by a person with Democratic-Republican sympathies and which one by a person with Federalist sympathies?
3. Why would the New York newspaper publish these two conflicting accounts?

8.3. JAMES BAYARD, EXCERPTS FROM A LETTER TO ALEXANDER HAMILTON DESCRIBING HIS DILEMMA IN THE DISPUTED PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION OF 1800 (JANUARY 7, 1801)

Delaware Congressman James Bayard was a loyal member of the Federalist Party. In this letter, he speculates to one of his party's leaders, Alexander Hamilton, about what might resolve the deadlocked presidential election and whether the Federalists in the House of Representatives would vote for Aaron Burr or Thomas Jefferson. When the ballots were cast in March, it was Bayard's vote that decided the election in favor of Jefferson.

I assure you, sir, there appears to be a strong inclination in a majority of the federal party to support Mr. Burr. The current has already acquired considerable force, and is manifestly increasing. The vote which the representation of a State enables me to give would decide the question in favor of Mr. Jefferson.

At present I am by no means decided as to the object of preference. If the federal party should take up Mr. Burr, I ought certainly to be impressed with the most undoubting conviction before I separated myself from them. With respect to the personal qualities of the competitors, I should fear as much from the sincerity of Mr. Jefferson (if he is sincere), as from the want of probity in Mr. Burr. There would be really cause to fear that the government would not survive the course of moral and political experiments to which it would be subjected in the hands of Mr. Jefferson. But there is another view of the subject which gives me some inclination in favor of Burr. I consider the State ambition of Virginia as the source of present party. The faction who govern that State, aim to govern the United States. Virginia will never be satisfied but when this state of things exists. If Burr should be the President,

they will not govern, and his acceptance of the office, which would disappoint their views, which depend upon Jefferson, would, I apprehend, immediately create a schism in the party which would soon rise into open opposition.

I cannot deny, however, that there are strong considerations, which give a preference to Mr. Jefferson. The subject admits of many doubtful views, and before I resolve on the part I shall take, I shall wait the approach of the crisis which may probably bring with it circumstances decisive of the event. The federal party meet on Friday, for the purpose of forming a resolution as to their line of conduct. I have not the least doubt of their agreeing to support Burr.

QUESTIONS

1. What are Bayard's objections to Jefferson and Burr?
2. Does this document offer evidence that the Federalists had become a well-organized political party by 1801?

Source: Allen Johnson, ed., *Readings in American Constitutional History, 1776-1876* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1913), 214-15.

AMERICAN PEOPLES ON THE MOVE, 1789-1824

9.1. ELI WHITNEY AND THOMAS JEFFERSON, LETTERS ON THE PATENTING OF THE COTTON GIN (1793)

On June 20, 1793, Eli Whitney wrote to Secretary of State Thomas Jefferson requesting a patent for the cotton gin that he had recently invented. Congress empowered the secretary of state to grant a patent to anyone who submitted a description of an invention, drawings, a model, and a fee. Whitney's letter and Jefferson's reply of November 16, 1793 are reproduced below.

[November 16, 1793]

That having invented a Machine for the Purpose of ginning Cotton, he is desirous of obtaining an exclusive Property in the same. Concerning which invention, your Petitioner alledges as follows (viz) first. That it is entirely new and constructed in a different manner and upon different principles from any, other Cotton Gin or Machine heretofore known or used for that purpose. 2d. That with this Ginn, if turned with horses or by water, two persons will clean as much cotton in one Day, as a Hundred persons could cleane in the same time with the gins now in common use. 3d. That the Cotton which is cleansed in his Ginn contains fewer broken seeds and impurities, and is said to be more valuable than Cotton, which is cleaned in the usual way. Your Petitioner, therefore Prays your Honor to Grant him the said Whitney, a Patent for the said Invention or Improvement...

Your favor of October 18, including a drawing [of] your cotton gin, was received....The only requisite of the law now uncomplied with is the forwarding of a model, which being received your patent may be made out & delivered to your order immediately. As the state of Virginia, of which I am, carries on household manufactures of cotton to a great extent, as I also do myself, and one of our great embarrassments in the cleaning the cotton of the seed, I feel a considerable interest in the success of your invention, for family use. Permit me therefore to ask information from you on these points, has the machine been thoroughly tried in the ginning of cotton, or is it as yet but a machine of theory? What quantity of cotton has it cleaned on an average of several days, & worked by

Sources: John Catanzariti, ed., *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, vol. 26 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995); Eli Whitney Papers, Yale University Library.

hand, & by how many hands? What will be the cost of one of these made to be worked by hand? Favorable answers to these questions would induce me to engage one of them to be forwarded to Richmond for me.

QUESTIONS

1. What claims for improvement in cotton gin design does Whitney make?
2. What aspects of the new gin most interest Jefferson?