

*WEST AND SOUTH*  
ITS STRUGGLE AGAINST THE TIDE

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The cloud still hovers overhead,  
And still the midnight sky is red;  
As the lost wanderer strays alone  
To seek the place he called his own,  
His devious footprints sadly tell  
How changed the pathways known so well;  
The scene, how new! The tale, how old  
ere yet the ashes have grown cold!

*Oliver Wendell Holmes*

So often when one thinks of journalism in Cincinnati the mind paints a picture which includes Charles Hammond's *Gazette*; the *Commercial Register*; Ohio's first daily, the *Enquirer*, edited notably by Charles and John Brough, James J. Faran, and Washington McLean; and the *Commercial*, steered by Murat Halstead. But, while these were the giants of the trade, there were numerous little papers with big messages to print. One such paper in the Queen City following the Civil War was the *West and South* backed by the conservative-minded Peace Democrat, Alexander Long.

During the Civil War the Peace Democrats, rooted in party rivalry and Democratic partisanship, carried on a survival struggle with the Lincoln Administration. Out of power, they appealed for votes to the more often than not uncultured and illiterate inhabitants of the less fertile soils of Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois.<sup>1</sup> Here the homesteads were small and poor when measured by accumulated wealth; and their owners, dressed in homespun clothing dyed with the bark of the butternut tree, eked out a meager living, and disliked the New Englander or Abolitionist who was a shopkeeper, mill-owner, land speculator, or banker. Like his counterpart in the city, the Irish or German immigrant, he feared the black horde of freedmen who would overrun his land or take his job, the railroad controlled by the eastern capitalists, the protectionists, the increased strength of the Federal Government, and the loss of constitutional liberty.<sup>2</sup>

With the return of peace in 1865 most of the former "peace at any price" advocates returned to the fold of the Democratic Party and regained the civic leadership they had lost during the conflict.<sup>3</sup> Long,

however, refused to accept the idea that the theoretical line between the powers of the states and the central government was weakened and greater authority had shifted to the latter. Rather than admit defeat he formed the State Sovereignty Party, with the *West and South* as the organ, to perpetuate its gospel. The three-year-life of this sectional paper, which began on September 26, 1865, is a study in mid-nineteenth century journalism as well as a struggle of older Jeffersonian views against the changing tide of Hamilton views.

The originator and principle financial guarantor of this political organ was Alexander Long. Born in Mercer County, Pennsylvania, he was forty-nine years old in 1865 and carried on a five-foot ten-inch frame the markings of a well-formed man. His high forehead topped with auburn hair, brown eyes looking over an aquiline nose, a large mouth resting on a prominent chin — all went into making up a rather large, oval, florid-complexioned face. This hard-working, money-saving, church-going and, at times, recalcitrant Peace Democrat had served his apprenticeship as a school teacher, lawyer, and state legislator. Elected by the voters of Hamilton County to the House of Representatives in the anti-war and anti-Lincoln election of 1862, this defender of civil liberties sat out the first session in a quiet and reserve manner. On April 8, 1864, he spoke out against the Administration's handling of the war and by doing so placed himself on the extreme left of his party's political spectrum. Censured by his Democratic Party peers as well as the House of Representatives, the bold, dogmatic, and defiant applicant for political philosophical recognition had to look elsewhere for a suitable "soap-box." And the *West and South* served this purpose.<sup>4</sup>

There is little doubt that *West and South* was a personal instrument for the State Sovereignty cause. As such it was a throw-back to the special audience papers of the 1785-1830 period and was thus from the beginning out-dated. During the post-Civil War era the newspaper industry underwent preliminary changes in transforming from a personal weapon to one of community service ideals. In essence this era witnessed a turning away from the image of newspapers as reflecting a strong publisher, with a special cause to champion, to a role as servants of the people and the community. The years after the Civil War also saw the emphasis start to shift from circulation to advertising as the lifeblood of the paper.

When in the fall of 1865 the editor, William H. Munnell,<sup>5</sup> announced in Volume I that the newspaper would be "devoted especially to defining, protecting and defending the political, social and financial interests" of the two sections, he referred to the coalition between the West and the South that had existed during the period of 1830-1850.

In fact, the name *West and South* with the clasped hands across the masthead was symbolic of the sisterhood that the Long followers thought still existed in the great valleys of the Ohio and Mississippi rivers.

In appearance the bipartisan paper was neat but in no way novel. Its format resembled that developed by the weekly journals of the preceding decades. The prospectus, which appeared twice in the first issue, sought to introduce the paper's designs, to arouse every man's curiosity, and to interest him in the success of the undertaking. The *West and South*, it stated, believed that both sections of our country "are deeply interested in a cheap and responsible Union of consent between the states" and shall "advocate the doctrine of State Sovereignty and Federal Subordination." In full color the paper expressed its belief in Thomas Jefferson's Kentucky Resolution of 1798, that the Federal Government was not the exclusive judge of its powers since the compact of the Union had been made by sovereign nations and approved and adopted by each of the subsequently admitted states. As far as this journal was concerned the civil conflict between the North and South had settled nothing. Appealing to all southerners and skilled and unskilled northern economic classes, the prospectus stressed a strong belief in social and political white supremacy over the Negro. On the surface these ideas sounded very noble for the mid-nineteenth century, but they were not the dominant sentiments of the Nation. The *West and South* erred in not recognizing the changes that had occurred as a result of the Civil War.

While this 18x24, four-page, seven-column weekly paper devoted the first issue exclusively to promoting the State Sovereignty program and printing the several campaign speeches of the gubernatorial nominee Long, numerous changes were made rather quickly during the first year in order to broaden the base of circulation which was its main source of support. Along with editorials on white supremacy, hard money, centralized government, reconstruction, and the reminiscences of the war, special features such as "Letters from Europe," market quotations, train schedules, etc., also made their appearance. When the editorials lacked the "vinegar and vigor" punch, the editor used the "Correspondence around the Country" column as a means of exciting his readers. Letters, supposedly from subscribers, were signed "True Democrat," "A Democrat," "Ohio," and "Investigator." From time to time a short story entitled "An Elephant Hunt — Exciting Adventure in Abyssinia," or "The Great Amazon Basin," et cetera, would be printed. A certain cultural respectability was added also, such as poetry of Edgar A. Poe, Owen Meredith, Mary Neville, and Charles W. Stoddard.

The remaining space of this political-sectional organ was taken up with "scissors and paste" material, lifted in total from other newspapers, and with business cards set in inch squares that resembled a ladder placed against the paper. The most frequently copied papers were the *Philadelphia Ledger*, *Mobile Register*, *La Crosse Democrat*, *Columbus Crisis*, *Hamilton True Telegraph*, and the *Kentucky Gazette*.<sup>6</sup> The advertisers were the usual community attorneys, jewelers, hotel keepers, grocers, land speculators, and undertakers who could give a whole list of references. One should not overlook, however, the special notices that sold the medical remedies. Here was offered for sale anti-cholera builders, Grimault's Iodized Horse Radish to take the place of cod liver oil, Lyons drops for female irregularities, Dr. Tobias Venetian Liniment, Cristadoro's hair tonic, and when all this failed to restore one's health, there were Brandreth's pills. Aside from the interest of these items, there is an awareness that the advertisements in no way attempted to appeal to the buyer's imagination. No variety of display, "brand names," or prominence to merchants was attempted, but rather just notices of wares for sale.

But despite the efforts of Long and Munnell to attract subscribers and advertisers, the *West and South* was not well received and, one year after its conception, the paper was given a new editor — William M. Corry. He was a personal friend of Long, a former member of the Ohio General Assembly and the chairman of the convention that attempted to nominate Long for president of the United States in 1864. Under his editorship the paper changed from a moderate to an extreme spokesman for the popular rights doctrine and defender of western interests against eastern protectionists.<sup>7</sup> It was obvious to this able constitutional lawyer and unsuccessful candidate for the Ohio Supreme Court in 1866 that the paper, if it was to survive as the journal for the State Sovereignty Party, had to appeal to a larger clientele. Taking advantage of Southern Reconstruction and Johnson's fight with Congress an appeal was made to the "fence-straddlers" and "middle of the road" voters. The *West and South* will "favor the freest possible discussion, knowing full well that it is only by the constant opposition of opinion within and without our party that the truth can be vindicated, and all our interests protected."<sup>8</sup>

To reach this objective the format, length, and price of the paper was changed in the fall of 1866. It became an eight- instead of a four-page paper and the cost was reduced from \$2.50 to \$2.00 a year. The first page now carried "letters," presumedly from particular states, to show that the sectional philosophy was really national; poetry; and articles clipped from other newspapers. The second page contained the editorials signed by "Criticus," "Jefferson," "Junius," "Caesars,"

"Aspasian Pocahontas," and "the Grumbler." Page three contained additional borrowed material, the State Sovereignty Democratic platform, and the prospectus. Local news of Cincinnati and surrounding areas was printed on pages four and five; the last three pages contained advertisements and any additional newsworthy items that might attract readers. This was especially true of page eight where everything and anything, from election returns to railroad travel in England on Derby Day, could be found.

With Corry as editor and the Long followers attempting to gain recognition as the true leaders of the Democratic Party, the *West and South* began a dogmatic campaign on the leading issues of 1865-1868. Probably the most important issue, especially in Ohio, was control of the Democratic party machinery. The Democratic State Sovereignty followers charged that Democratic Party leadership philosophy was the same as that of the Republicans. "It is now as difficult to tell which is which as it was when they all dressed in blue uniforms and wore the same shoulder straps."<sup>9</sup> The leadership was editorially questioned by stating that if the Democratic Party had men in whom the masses could "confide, there would be no need of bespeaking a popular revolution, it would bespeak itself."<sup>10</sup> This situation, according to the editor, could be traced to the fact that the party leaders had no principles.<sup>11</sup> In the 1868 presidential election the Long supporters were so disillusioned with the Democratic Party leaders that they flirted with the possible candidacy of Chief Justice Solmon P. Chase.<sup>12</sup> When this failed, the appeal was again made for a Mississippi Valley convention to rise up against the

Sword and purse of Grant and Colfax  
Purse and sword of Seymour and Blair<sup>18</sup>

There were, however, other issues which the *West and South* was just as strongly against. The strong centralized government with eastern control was argued as the reason for the calamities which befell the nation and not the nullification and secession of the South.<sup>14</sup> Increased taxes during peacetime were criticized as being unnecessary and tended only to place hardships on the destroyed South and yeoman West. The emancipation of the slaves was as unacceptable after the war as it had been during the war. The Negroes cannot be emancipated, the argument went, until they are capable of freeing themselves, and a vote for either the Republican or Democratic Party candidate is an "endorsement of negro [sic] suffrage and negro [sic] equality in Ohio, and negro [sic] supremacy and white subordination in the South."<sup>15</sup> The Greenback program or "Ohio Idea," introduced by the Ohio Democrat George Pendleton, was also opposed on the grounds that this would only cause inflation and place a burden on the lower economic classes.<sup>16</sup>

On the subject of reconstruction, the *West and South* could support neither President Andrew Johnson nor the Congress. Johnson was opposed on the grounds that he accepted the Republican Party thesis that the South was a conquered area and thus must cleanse itself before readmission into the Union. He was also accused of not being a strict constructionist.<sup>17</sup> Republican Congressional reconstruction was rebuked because of Thaddeus Stevens' confiscation policy, Charles Sumner's Negro suffrage, and the organization of five military districts with "two Federal regiments of mongrel whites and blacks [*sic*] in every congressional district." Reconstruction, as well as the Civil War, was seen as a fraudulent speculation to continue and to intensify the Yankee tariff, whereas the trend should have been toward free trade.<sup>18</sup>

While the subscribers, supporters, and financial backers of the *West and South* could view reconstruction, corruption, industrialization, and centralized Federal administration with an "I told you so" remark, they, like the Democratic Party, could offer no concrete program of reform and thus lost, or never gained, a large following.

The spirit of '76, '87, and '98 gave ground to a new spirit of industry, technology, and personal wealth. The United States could not, after the Civil War, return to the "Constitution as it is, the Union as it was." Even the *West and South* finally saw the merit in this and, after all sorts of gimmicks to attract subscribers, the newspaper's name was changed to the *Commoner*.<sup>19</sup>

In explaining the name change it was admitted that the *West and South* suggested the idea of sectionalism and "a journal seeking wide circulation should include the strife of labor and capital."<sup>20</sup> Although many of the Jeffersonian and agricultural-minded ideas were retained by the *Commoner*, these politically conservative Democrats at least recognized the industrial potential of a new nation.

The three frustrating years of the *West and South* had been "a struggle against the tide."

#### FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Although Peace Democrats were found throughout the North during the Civil War, their strength was centered in southern Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois.

<sup>2</sup> For a detail look at the Peace Democrats and their activities see: John Lloyd Stipp's "Economic and Political Aspects of Western Copperheadism"—unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Ohio State Univ., 1944; and Frank L. Klement's *The Copperheads in the Middle West*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960.

<sup>3</sup> The outstanding Peace Democrats during the Civil War were—Samuel Medary, Clement L. Vallandigham, and Alexander Long of Ohio; Daniel Voorhees of Indiana; Marcus Pomeroy and Edward Ryan of Wisconsin; Henry Clay Dean and Dennis Mahony of Iowa; and Benjamin and Fernando Wood of New York.

<sup>4</sup> Alexander Long Papers. Box D-2, Cincinnati Historical Society, Cincinnati, Ohio.

<sup>5</sup> Munnell was the former editor of the *Hillsboro Gazette*. He opened a real estate agency after leaving the *West and South* in 1866.

<sup>6</sup> All of these journals had been critical of the Civil War and anti-Lincoln in their editorials.

<sup>7</sup> Except for the hard money issue, the *West and South* under Corry's leadership took the same editorial slant as the Populist Party did in the 1890's.

<sup>8</sup> *West and South*, October 15, 1866.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, January 28, 1867.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, April 11, 1868.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, February 8, 1868.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, April 4, May 23, June 6, 12, 20, 27, 1868. There is also considerable correspondence on this subject in the Long Papers, Box B-4.

<sup>13</sup> *West and South*, July 11, 1868.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, October 8, 1865; January 22, 1866; April 20, 1867.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, January 15, 1866; April 20, October 5, November 30, December 21, 1867.

<sup>16</sup> The entire front page was devoted to attacking this program on February 1, 1868. The Ohio Idea was a plan for paying the national debt in greenbacks rather than hard-money. The speculators and investors were reluctant to see this change.

<sup>17</sup> *West and South*, April 20, 1867, February 29, 1868.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, April 20, December 28, 1867.

<sup>19</sup> When Corry first took over clubs of five or more were encouraged and they received the journal for \$1.75 instead of the usual \$2.00. If a club of ten or more was formed they received a free subscription to the *West and South*. In 1868 a copy of the conservative-Democratic monthly the *Old Guard* was offered along with each subscription.

<sup>20</sup> *West and South*, September 12, 1868; *Commoner*, September 19, 1868.