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The Massachusetts Whigs and Industrialism

Thomas Brown

Jacksonian era Massachusetts presents the historian with a paradox. While the Commonwealth was at the forefront in the pace and extent of its industrialization, its political system remained stubbornly resistant to change.¹ Indeed, some of the very industrialists who affected and benefitted from the transformation of the Bay States' economy led its dominant Whig party, which exalted the nonpartisan values of unity, harmony, and consensus, and which was slow to adopt advanced techniques of party discipline and organization.² Despite its record of political success, the Whig leadership's ability to uphold established ideals, practices, and institutions was not without difficulties. There were, after all, dissenters, chiefly concentrated in the rival Democratic party, who questioned the beneficence of some of the changes they had wrought.³ Moreover, the Whigs claimed to be the legitimate legatees of republicanism, an ideology associated with fears of manufacturing and the rise of a working class.⁴ Whig spokesmen thus felt obliged, both in the interest of practical politics and intellectual consistency, to articulate a coherent defense of industrialism. This defense merits detailed analysis, as it helps account for the Whig's success in Massachusetts, and provides a valuable case study of how Americans in the vanguard of the Industrial Revolution accommodated republican ideas and values to the modern world.

Understandably, the Massachusetts Whigs devoted considerable effort to demonstrating that the worst horrors of Old World industrialism had not arrived in the United States. In Europe, industrialization was often associated with the uprooting of vast populations from the countryside and their crowding into congested cities and factories. American and foreign observers noted that this process commonly resulted in the degradation of the morals of the worker as he was removed from the social controls of the rural village or small town. But to Alexander H. Everett, the diplomat and editor of the *North American Review*, this problem was not at all relevant to the American situation; he praised the factory system for actually *improving* the morals of native labor. He reasoned that by providing women and children with useful employment, industry kept occupied segments of the population which might otherwise, given the decline of domestic manufactures, fall prey to the temptations of idleness. In the process, it also helped supplement family incomes, providing the male heads of households with an incentive to remain in their communities rather than strike out for the frontier.⁵

Other Whigs, however, did not profess to be as sanguine about the automatically beneficent effects of industrialism in America. They chose instead to praise the "benevolence" of some native industrialists in providing for their workers' welfare, particularly through the paternalistic "Waltham System." According to them, the model factory towns which adopted this system, such as Lowell, demonstrated that American industrialism had not entailed the disruption of the primary human bonds of family and community. Whigs pointed out that through boarding houses maintained in these towns, employers were able to supervise the personal lives and conduct of the single female operatives. Some took special pride in the fact that just as public opinion enforced the moral code in small towns, the workers themselves often applied sanctions against transgressions on the part of their fellows. In addition, Whigs extolled the institutions of the model factory towns which exerted a "wholesome" influence on the behavior of laborers and their children. To Edward Everett, the churches and schools of Lowell had "rolled off from the sacred cause of labor the mountain reproach of ignorance, vice, and suffering under which it lay crushed." Due to such moral agencies, "the home-bred virtues of the paternal roof" could exist and thrive in the midst of the "palaces" of industry.⁶

The Massachusetts Whigs could not rest much of their case for the virtues of industrialism upon the alleged merits of the Waltham System. The model factory towns served an important social function by providing for the absorption into the work force of girls and young women, who would presumably labor in the mills until they had accumulated dowries. Moral custodianship was thoroughly acceptable—indeed, desirable—when exercised over female workers, who were supposed to play subordinate roles in society, and who might be exploited if they were not subject to protection. But in republican America, male workers would have resented the idea that their welfare was contingent upon the benevolence of their employers. Inculcated with an ideology which placed a premium on personal independence and autonomy, they would not have accepted the notion that they should subject themselves to a system of patriarchal authority.

Massachusetts Whigs therefore expended considerable effort to prove that the American workingman retained his full dignity and independence within the industrial system—that, in a word, he was "respectable." They pointed out that there were no guilds or government restrictions to confine the worker's movements or depress his pay below marketplace levels. The state in fact guaranteed the laborer the freedoms of mobility and contract, and protected his right to his wages as a form of property.⁷ The Bay State Whigs also declared that the availability of cheap land in the country also helped elevate the status of American workers. Yet they did not agree on the precise reason why. Caleb Cushing reasoned that the frontier provided the laboring man with a place to which he could escape when the number of inhabitants in his community had "outrun its capacity to afford due recompense to honest industry and ambition." Edward Everett claimed that by drawing off population, the frontier "safety valve" insured that labor would be scarce—and hence highly valued—in manufacturing communities. Robert Winthrop employed a different line of reasoning to arrive at an identical conclusion: the industrialist had to give his workers high wages as an inducement to prevent them from moving westward. Nathan Appleton, himself a manufacturer, suggested another role for the

abundance of cheap land in the United States: it produced such a huge supply of cheap foodstuffs that laborers did not have to spend all of their wages on necessities. Unlike the "pauper" operatives of Europe, they were thus able to accumulate enough money to strike out on their own within a year or two.⁸

But man does not live by bread alone; and American workers could take special pride in the honors accorded all forms of productive labor in their country. Without titles of nobility or laws of primogeniture and entail, the United States had never developed an aristocracy which lived in luxury or disdained honest work. More, the very struggle to subdue the continent had impressed upon Americans a full appreciation of the virtues of hard toil. For these reasons, the American workingman was highly esteemed and no special distinction was accorded to men of inherited wealth. In fact, the native bias in favor of labor was so strong that even those who inherited considerable wealth felt obliged to take up some "useful employment."⁹

Massachusetts Whigs clinched their points about the high status of the American workingman by comparing him with his European counterpart. The Old World laborer, of course, had none of the native worker's advantages. He had few, if any, political freedoms, his wages and movements were usually regulated by the state or by private associations, and he was forced to work in factories at the margin of subsistence because land was too expensive. Worse, aristocrats and men of wealth, who reposed in idleness and disdained labor, looked down on him. But even as Whigs celebrated the superior situation of the American worker, they sometimes expressed misgivings that it might not be so very different after all. Although "respectable," the American laborer did not have that measure of personal dignity and autonomy conferred by the possession of his own homestead. Feeling degraded because he lacked a "stake in society" and control over the means of his own livelihood, he might withdraw into immoral self-indulgence, or rise up against the very institutions which exalted him.¹⁰

The problem the Massachusetts Whigs feared, then, was not just the rise of a permanent working class, but especially the attitudes customarily associated with such a class. And it was for this reason that they continually stressed the ability of the wage earner to become, through savings and hard work, an independent farmer, proprietor, or professional. They saw that the working man's discontent with his present condition need not be a socially destructive force. Indeed, if that discontent was channeled into efforts at *self*-improvement, it would implicitly underwrite the existing social order. All the worker needed was the assurance that his strivings to "better" himself would be rewarded, and Whigs such as Webster eagerly supported it:

We are emphatically a country of labor; and labor with us is not reluctant drudgery. It is cheerful, contented, spirited, because it is certain of its reward. Labor everywhere mixes itself with capital. The fields around us, how many of them are tilled by their owners! The shops in our towns, how many are occupied by their proprietors, for the convenient pursuit of their callings!¹¹



Robert Winthrop went even further than Webster, and anticipated the “rags-to-riches” myth which would become popular in a later era. In his opinion, the protection of American wages made it possible for “the printer’s boys, or ploughboys, or mill boys of a few years back” to raise themselves “to the highest stations of social or of public life.” But for Winthrop, too, the effects of the worker’s strivings upon his character were at least as important as their objective consequences. He asserted that the “hope of bettering his condition” was “the

sweetest cordial to the heart of man, and the surest stimulus to industry, economy, and virtue.”¹²

Assertions that the workingman had abundant opportunities to improve his status did not, however, gainsay the fact that there were men who benefited from the industrial system without working in the mills. Some critics were quick to attack these men as aristocratic “non-producers” who lived off the labor of the “productive classes.” Whigs in the Bay State scoffed at such rhetoric. Invoking the familiar “harmony of interests” theory, they argued that the capitalist was as indispensable to the process of production as the wage laborer. Through his investments in factories, mills, and shops, he made possible the employment of workers in the first place. The larger the sums he invested in industry, the more men he provided with work and the greater the rewards that accrued to them for their toil. Additionally, American institutions guaranteed that capital was the fruit of honest industry rather than the unearned wealth of the well-born. This was especially true in Massachusetts, which had a “statute of distributions” that split up inheritances among all legitimate heirs. Whigs claimed that by preventing large estates from being passed on from generation to generation, this law forced the children of the wealthy to engage in productive labor. To some, its “levelling” effects were truly formidable. Edward Everett went so far as to claim that partible inheritance resulted in “the constant revolution of fortune” in the Bay State by making “the possession of property the reward of industry and probity.”¹³ Other Whigs were equally confident that the same condition was assured by fluctuations in the economy. Though they conceded that large fortunes might be acquired through speculation, they also pointed out that the investment market was full of snares for the unfortunate. A similar principle applied even to those whose investments were seemingly secure: “Business fluctuates. He who is rich today may be poor tomorrow.”¹⁴

Application, frugality, and hard work, then, were the only sure roads to success in America. And the temperate habits of the man of wealth prevented him from hoarding or squandering his earnings. Rather, he invested his capital in profitable industry, where it provided a stimulus to enterprise and employment:

in a country like this, where the laws discourage hereditary transmission, and promote equality of fortune, accumulations of capital made by industry, enterprise, and prudence, employed in active investments, without ministering to extravagance and luxury, are beneficial to the public. Their possessor becomes, whether he wills it or not, the steward of others; not merely . . . because he may destine a colossal fortune, after his decease, for public objects, but because, while he lives, every dollar of it must be employed in giving life to industry and employment to labor.¹⁵

At first glance, the Whigs’ emphasis upon American exceptionalism might seem inconsistent with their advocacy of a positive government role in the economy. For if the American economic and social systems were so beneficent in their effects, why should intervention be necessary? The Whigs saw no such

inconsistency. Those things which guaranteed Americans a happy lot in life might not necessarily be *economically* advantageous—the higher wages of the American worker, for instance, placed his products at a competitive disadvantage with those of his “degraded” European counterpart. But if a protective tariff were employed to raise the price of foreign imports before they entered the domestic market, then home manufactures could compete with them on an equitable basis. Otherwise, employers would be compelled to lower their wages to “pauper” levels. For this reason, the Massachusetts Whigs, like their colleagues across the country, advocated protection as a truly “American” measure—a vindication of the native worker’s right to the fruits of his own labor, and of the republican institutions which enabled him to improve himself. A Whig pamphleteer summarized their position nicely: “A mechanic here is a FREE-MAN; a part and portion of the State; with rights to exercise and a station to maintain. He desires to uphold his respectability and that of his family; to give his children education, and to enjoy some of the comforts of his life. He can do none of these things except by the protection of labor.”¹⁶

The unique virtues of republican institutions were also uppermost in the minds of Whigs when they defended the grant of privilege-conferring charters to private corporations. To their Democratic critics, such charters represented a regression to some of the evils of the Old World—special rights granted to select individuals and groups so they could live off the honestly industrious members of the community. But to their Whig defenders, they were quite the opposite: devices for broad popular participation in the bounties of burgeoning American capitalism. The need for special corporate privileges, asserted Jonathan Chapman, sprang from the distinctively egalitarian nature of American society—the broad dispersal of property among a huge “middling interest” rather than its concentration in the hands of a small number of aristocrats or capitalists. Chapman conceded that this situation of dispersed wealth was desirable in a republic. But he pointed out that it also made it difficult to amass the large sums of capital needed to finance measures which did not yield an immediate profit. To remedy this problem, Chapman claimed, the corporation had been devised to mobilize the capital of small investors. Corporations were hence truly “republican” in their nature and effects, as they called upon the assets of the modestly endowed and dispersed their earnings broadly among the general population.¹⁷

In Massachusetts, Whig supporters of the positive state could exploit the historical appeal of the time-honored ideal of the “commonwealth.” This conception, which had its roots in the Puritan legacy of the state, traced the origins of government to a covenant instituted among men to further their collective welfare.¹⁸ To Whig spokesmen, the commonwealth idea was best realized in the United States’ unique republican institutions and *mores*. In the Old World, the state was considered nothing more than a tool with which monarchs and aristocrats could oppress and plunder the common people. But in the United States, there was no separation between the rulers and the ruled. The people governed themselves, and since their interests coincided with that of the state, they need not fear the government as a hostile force. So long as they remained wise and virtuous, and elected public-spirited men to office, they could look to the republic for aid and succor. In the United States, the benevolence of the fostering state reflected nothing so much as the harmony of purpose among its

people; not divided by rigid barriers of caste or class, or overborne by aristocrats or monarchs, Americans shared in a glorious community of interests:

Families, neighborhoods, towns, states, comprising millions of human beings—are here affianced together in the same common interest, protected by the same civil power. Not only is each individual as safe and happy as though he were alone, but they all find safety and happiness in each other . . . Here, industry is encouraged with a sure promise of reward; genius is sought out and incited to effort; property has a true and permanent value; the path of learning, fame, influence, wealth and glory, open to all. None suffer but the indolent and vicious, none are countenanced but the industrious and virtuous; while all are equally protected and encouraged in serving their Maker, and securing the great object of their being.¹⁹

All of the arguments outlined above had a single, unifying purpose: to demonstrate that industrialism and measures to foster it had not brought Old World evils to the United States, and could not do so, given the country's unique advantages. The Massachusetts Whigs demonstrate the irony that in the United States, industrialism was made palatable by assimilating the preindustrial ideals of family, community, and individual self-sufficiency. But if the public was to be persuaded that it should lend its support to industrial development, the Whigs had to show that industrialism had intrinsic virtues, that it represented a contribution to human betterment. Fortunately for the Whigs, a significant group of thinkers, the Scottish "moral philosophers" of the eighteenth century, had already pondered this problem. The Scots had concluded that the development of manufacturing was a crucial aspect of the culminating stage—the "civilized" or "polished" stage—in the "progress" of mankind. The distinctive virtue of manufacturing, they reasoned, was that through the division of labor, it vastly increased the productivity of the work force. The resulting prosperity contributed to the general felicity of society by enabling men to satisfy their wants and encouraging them to seek new "improvements" in the productive process. With each new subdivision of the laborer's task, both man and machine became more efficient, whereupon better and cheaper goods were given an ever-broadening market of consumers. Material privation gradually disappeared and, with abundance assured, the people's lot became even more happy.²⁰

Although they did not credit the Scots, the intellectual spokesmen of Massachusetts Whiggery were clearly influenced by their theory of "progress."²¹ In all fairness to the Scots, however, it must be pointed out that they perceived that "progress" had its costs. They observed that specialized work entailed a serious loss of human versatility, and a consequent stifling of the laborer's personality and capacity for citizenship.²² But the Whigs repudiated this aspect of the Scots' social thought. They argued, rather, that the division of labor actually *enhanced* the capabilities of the worker by making it possible for work tasks to be more precisely suited to the unique abilities and talents of each individual. For the same reason, it added to every workingman's contribution to the public good. Rufus Choate, speaking in defense of industrial "employments," observed that:

in connection with the other tasks of an advanced civilization . . . they offer to every faculty and talent and taste, in the community, the specific work best suited to it; and thus effect a more universal development and a more complete education of the general intellect than otherwise would be practicable. It is not merely that they keep everybody busy . . . but it is that everybody is enabled to be busy on the precise thing the best adapted to his capacity and his inclinations . . . a diversified, advanced and refined mechanical and manufacturing industry, cooperating with those which always surround it, offers the widest choice, detects the slightest shade of individuality, quickens into existence and trains to perfection the largest conceivable amount and the utmost possible variety of national mind.²³

It was, of course, a central notion of Protestantism that, through one's worldly "calling," one served God.²⁴ And this notion fused easily with the idea that the division of labor manifested the unique ways each individual could serve and glorify his Maker. It only remained for Edward Everett to effect the marriage of mundane and transcendent concerns:

The same Creator who made man a mixed being, composed of body and soul, having designed him for such a world as that in which we live, has so far constituted the world, and man who inhabits it, as to afford scope for a great variety of occupations, pursuits, and conditions, arising from the tastes, characters, habits, virtues, and even vices of men and communities. Though all men are alike composed of body and soul, yet no two men, probably, are exactly the same in respect to either; and provision has been made, by the Author of our being, for an infinity of pursuits and employments, calling out, in degrees as various, the peculiar power of both principles . . . every man in society, whatever his pursuit, who devotes himself to it with an honest purpose, and in the fulfillment of the social duty which Providence devolves upon him, is entitled to the good fellowship of each and every member of the community.²⁵

The division of labor might be providential in both its origins and effects, but its rewards were distributed unequally. Since they lived in an age of professed egalitarianism, the Whigs hesitated to deal with the issue of inequality openly. Characteristically, they tended to leave it to the one articulate group in the Commonwealth who were usually beyond the reach of popular censure—the clergy. The ministers' response to the problem, which they adapted from the Scots' social thought, was elegant in its simplicity. They argued that, though all "employments" in the division of labor were socially useful, some were of greater public utility than others. Moreover, some vocations, though of immense importance, were so difficult and burdensome that men naturally tended to avoid them. Assuming (as did the Scots) that men in "civilized" communities were primarily actuated by the pursuit of material gain, the ministers argued that it was sensible that these positions should be rewarded more highly than others. Only then would men have a spur to prepare and strive for such employment,

with the best being the most successful. Contrariwise, if society rewarded all positions equally, it would provide no incentives to diligence, industry, and personal excellence. Its population would inevitably sink into a general indolence and mediocrity. The ministers, it should be noted, never closely analyzed the social hierarchy to see if it conformed to their description. But they did not hesitate to derive an important piece of advice from their model of the social structure: that personal property must be secure against intrusions so the able and successful need not fear they would be deprived of their deserved gains. Such intrusions would be assaults upon "civilization" itself!²⁶

Since the social inequalities associated with industrialism were essential to social progress, Whigs were confident that everyone had a stake in their preservation. Without a hierarchical social structure, men would have no incentive to improve their condition, and the large-scale corporate enterprises made possible by concentrations of wealth would not be possible. Society would regress to a primitive state because men lacked motivation and drive, and because there would be no division of labor to maximize productivity. For such reasons, Edward Everett denounced any system of beliefs which condemned the accumulations of wealth in a "civilized" society as a "philosophy of barbarism." Everett warned that without the "arts" made possible by industrial progress, man would be reduced to a "pastoral and savage life," forced, "like the wandering Arab or Tartar, to roam, with his flocks and herds, over arid deserts and dreary *steppes*; or like the aborigines of this continent, to earn a precarious living by hunting and fishing."²⁷

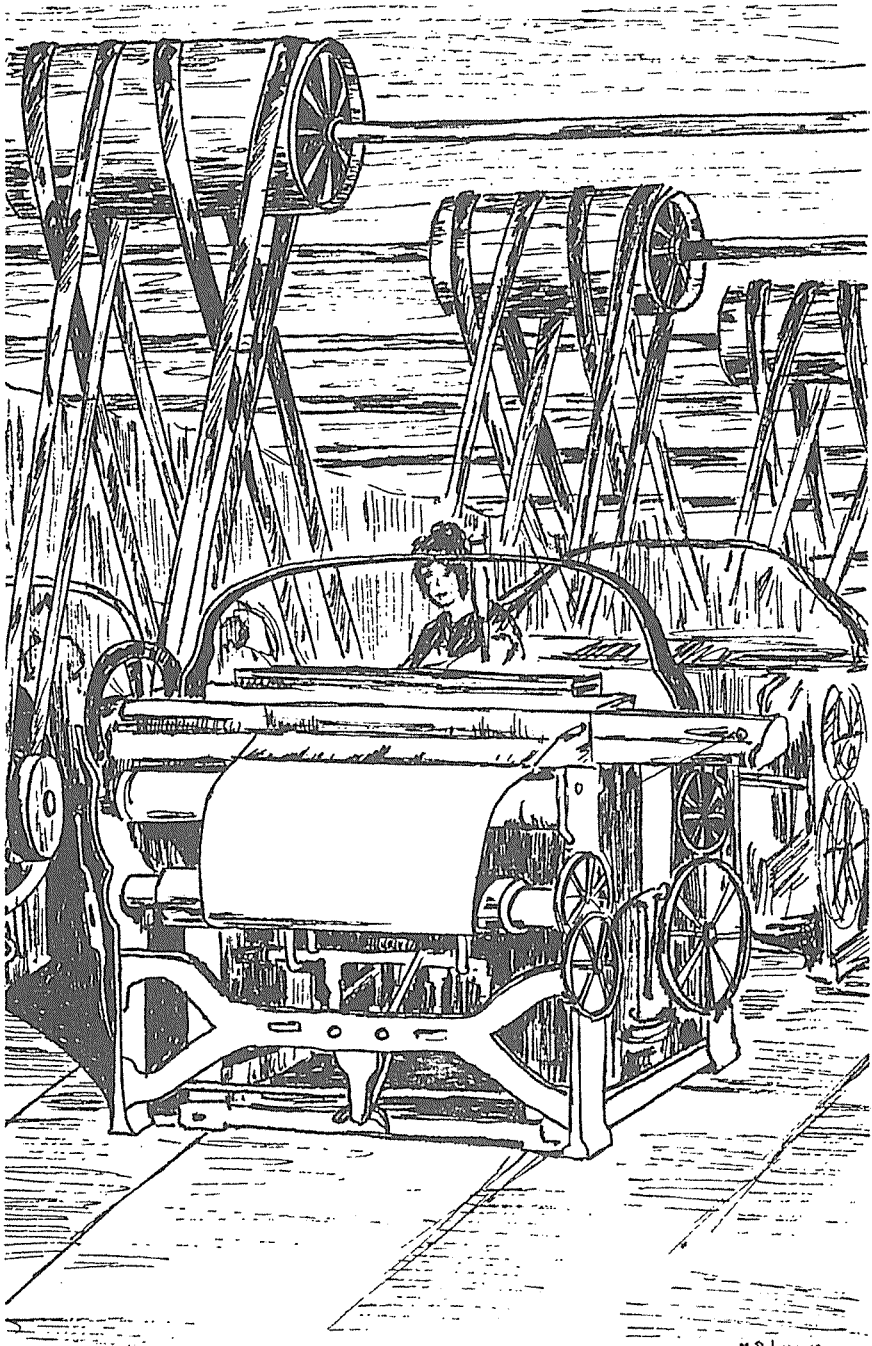
But modern industrial society depended upon the machine. And mechanization seemed to threaten the worker's status. It made his labor more monotonous, it reduced his control over the work process, and sometimes provided employers with a reason to cut wages. Bay State Whigs preferred instead to stress the ways in which machinery allowed workingmen to share in the amenities of a refined, "civilized" existence. Although this argument served as a rejoinder to the critics of industrial technology, it implicitly conceded that machine labor was not virtuous in and of itself. Edward Everett, for example, extolled the use of machines in factories for decreasing the hours of labor, and thus allowing the worker more time in which he could morally and intellectually "improve" himself. He boasted that the "immediate result" of every improvement in the "mechanic arts" was, "by making less labor and time necessary for the supply of human wants," to "raise the standard of comfortable living, increase the quantity of leisure time applicable to the culture of the mind, and thus promote the intellectual and moral progress of the mass of the community."²⁸

It was Daniel Webster, however, who anticipated—albeit in rudimentary form—the apologists of a mass consumer society. Machines, in Webster's view, were to be praised most of all because they helped 'democratize' the economy—they made possible the widespread possession of goods which were beyond the reach of the masses in the Old World. These were not the frivolous and morally debilitating "luxuries" which European manufacturers typically produced, but utilitarian "comforts" which served the basic needs of consumers. Technology, Webster announced,

multiplies laborers without multiplying consumers, and the world is precisely as much benefited as if Providence had provided for our use millions of men, like ourselves in external appearance, who would work and labor and toil, and who yet required for their own subsistence neither shelter, nor food, nor clothing The improved condition of all classes, more ability to buy food and raiment, better modes of living, and increased comforts of every kind, are exactly what is necessary and indispensable that capital invested in automatic operations should be productive to the owners.²⁹

In their arguments for the new industrial order, the Whigs professed their adherence to republican values. Yet what did the traditional ideal of virtue mean in such an order, with its many incentives to status and gain? Of course, there was the promise, continually held out by the Whigs, that through hard work, the worthy worker would be able to become an independent citizen-freeholder, the ideal repository of republican virtue. But this did not address the question of how “virtue” would manifest itself in a society of mills, machines, and factories. The Whigs’ response was to divorce the concept from its association with agrarian simplicity, and revise it to suit the needs of industrialism. Virtue, in their definition, still required control of the passions and appetites. But rather than simply *repress* these “lower” faculties, it called for *rechanneling* them into the constructive activities which contributed to the maintenance of a “civilized,” “refined” existence. Subjectivized in this manner, “virtue” became an attribute which could be inculcated by the institutions which strengthened and reinforced “character”—chiefly, the churches and the schools. The Whigs were accordingly especially concerned that such agencies teach citizens to seek their fortunes within the bounds of restraint and reason, and not to blame social arrangements for their failings.³⁰

There were, however, men who played upon the darker passions aroused by a competitive, industrial society. These were the Jacksonian place-seekers and demagogues, the visionaries and “agrarian” radicals, who stirred up and exploited resentment against social inequality. More concerned with achieving power than improving the condition of the people, they encouraged men to act out of their present discontents rather than uplift themselves through the practice of virtue. The parasites and radicals of the Democracy were sappers and miners of republican institutions. Knowing that their fortunes were tied directly to those of Democratic presidents, they supported every “usurpation” of executive power—the removal of the deposits, the subtreasury plan, and so on. These abuses threatened to make the people subject to despotic power, but that was all to the advantage of the Democratic party. If the people were subservient to presidential power, they would not try to overthrow the rule of the executive party. But the strongest shackle the Jacksonians fastened upon the minds of the masses was that of “party spirit.” They could not call upon the people to be rational and disinterested citizens, for then there would be no toleration of their evil intrigues. For this reason, they deluded the populace into believing that the Democratic party and its tyrannical chiefs could do no wrong.³¹



M. P. HINGNO

How could the fall of the republic be prevented? By electing Whigs to office. In Massachusetts, as elsewhere, the Whigs presented themselves to the people as a party of selfless "statesmen" and "patriots." But in the setting of industrial society, the concept of statesmanship, like that of citizenship, took on new meaning. Models of modern civic virtue, statesmen were leaders who retained their strength of character in the face of temptations to corruption and demagoguery. They "maintain[ed] their principles pure, whatever may be the corruption of the times, or the demands of popular prejudice." The mere politician might succeed most of the time, for he pandered to men's passions and appetites. But when "evil days, at length, fall upon the State," men turned to the Whig "patriot." They looked to his "steadfastness, his purity—to the direct and manly purposes which exemplify the clear mind, that dwells only, in its highest excellence, in company with the soundest heart; and he thus uses his power which he has kept in store, to renovate and reinstate the falling fabric of the Commonwealth."³²

To the Whigs, statesmanship was far more than a matter of political style. It called for a specific set of government policies at the national level—a protective tariff, federally-financed internal improvements, and a centralized banking system. These, of course, were well-suited to the industrialists and businessmen involved in intersectional trade. But to Whig spokesmen, they were something more: measures which, by strengthening the bonds of Union, would counter the centrifugal and atomistic tendencies of modern democracy. To Daniel Webster, the American people were a "family" whom the Whigs wanted to bind more closely together in a communion of interests and attachments.³³

It may make sense, then, that nationalistic Whiggery should have had such great appeal in Massachusetts. For what was the Whig program but an attempt to realize on a national scale the idealized harmony of the Commonwealth? It is in this light that one may understand the horror with which the leading representatives of Bay State Whiggery greeted talk of secession and disunion. When men such as Choate, Webster, Winthrop, and Edward Everett considered the prospect of national division, images of anarchy and fratricide leaped to their minds. Disunion would shatter the faith which they hoped to make a national creed—that the bond of fraternal fellow-feeling could channel and direct the potentially destructive passions aroused in a modern, industrialized society.

Like any ideology, that of the Massachusetts Whigs derived its popular appeal from its ability to embody a view of the world which was consonant with the beliefs and aspirations of ordinary men. In Massachusetts and other states as well, the Whigs' ideology of abundant opportunity and class interdependence seems to have appealed to inner-directed, future-oriented workers who, aspiring to the status of independent property-ownership, felt an identity of interest with their employers. By contrast, the Democrats seem to have received more support from tradition-directed workers who experienced industrialism as a wrenching dislocation of established ways of life.³⁴ But the Whigs could only hold onto their working-class constituency so long as their ideology accorded with its perceptions. By the late 1840s, the Whig world-view became widely discrepant from the everyday experiences of workingmen in the Bay State. One source of the Whigs' troubles was the influx of "new immigrants" into the state. This

influx had effects which were hard to square with the Whig portrait of Massachusetts as a harmonious republican community. Predominantly Irish in nationality and Catholic in religion, these newcomers divided the Commonwealth along ethnic and religious lines. Because of their "clannishness," their alien ways, and reputed subservience to the Papacy, many of their neighbors suspected that they could never become good citizens. Moreover, they were willing to work for low wages, so they drove down pay rates in the mills and factories, provoking intense resentment among native-born workers. When the new immigrants began to vote in substantial numbers in the early 1850s, the revulsion against them acquired great political significance. Many feared that, as an organized bloc under the direction of priests, they might become a tool of the Catholic hierarchy for intimidating politicians into following its directions. This anti-immigrant reaction inspired a brief, but massive nativist upsurge in Massachusetts, which brought the Know-Nothing party to victory in 1854.³⁵

The downfall of the Whigs was also brought about by divisions within the party itself. In the mid-1840s, there arose a generation of young Whig politicians who refused to defer to the established party leadership. Known first as "Young Whigs," then as "Conscience Whigs," they agitated within the party for a militant stand against the annexation of Texas. When the Whigs nominated the slaveholder Zachary Taylor for president in 1848, they bolted and joined the Free Soil Party. In this new organization, they helped form a coalition with the Democrats in 1850 that overthrew Whig rule in Massachusetts. Several years later, they spearheaded the formation of the state's Republican party.³⁶

The effectiveness of the antislavery Whigs' rebellion against the established party leadership was due to their exploitation of strains which the slavery issue exposed in Whig ideology. Slavery, the Whig rebels pointed out, was the very negation of everything the party elite had praised in Massachusetts. It was an institution which stigmatized labor, shut off the avenues of upward mobility for non-slaveholding whites, and led to the suppression in the South of energy and ambition in the people. More, if slavery were to dominate the territories, workingmen would be denied access to cheap land on which to settle and become independent farmers.³⁷ The members of the Whig elite, for the most part, agreed with this indictment of slavery. But, anxious to preserve their business and political ties to the South, and terrified by the social disorder that might arise from disunion, they refused to join the movement to positively restrict the expansion of slavery.³⁸ However, by this refusal, they seemed to betray the very ideals they had propagated as necessary in a free society. Having presented themselves as virtuous, morally responsible statesmen, they found themselves condemned as timid and corrupt trucklers to the "Slave Power." In the scathing language of their critics, they were "lords of the loom" who had abandoned their commitment to liberty, morality, and progress because they valued "cotton" over "conscience."³⁹

NOTES

1. For statistical evidence of Massachusetts' intensive industrial development before the Civil War, see Carl Siracusa, *A Mechanical People: Perceptions of the Industrial Order in Massachusetts, 1815-1880* (Middletown, Conn., 1979), 18-23.
2. Kinley J. Brauer, *Cotton versus Conscience: Massachusetts Whig Politics and Southwestern Expansion, 1843-1848* (Lexington, Ky., 1967), 14-16; Robert J. Haws, "Massachusetts Whigs, 1833-1854" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Nebraska, 1973), 6-8, 65, 258, 263; Thomas H. O'Connor, *Lords of the Loom: The Cotton Whigs and the Coming of the Civil War* (New York, 1968), ch. 2. This article includes members of the Adams party and the National Republicans under the "Whig" rubric.
3. For critiques of industrial capitalism in Massachusetts, see S. C. Allen, *An Address Delivered . . . Before the Hampshire, Franklin, and Hampden Agricultural Society, October 27, 1830* (Northampton, 1830), 11-30; and Seth Luther, *An Address to the Working-Men of New England* (Boston, 1832).
4. John F. Kasson, *Civilizing the Machine: Technology and Republican Values in America, 1776-1900* (New York, 1976).
5. [Alexander H. Everett], *America: or a General Survey of the Political Situation of the Several Powers of the Western Continent . . .* (Philadelphia, 1827), 156-71; [idem.], "The American System," *North American Review*, 32 (January 1832), 128, 172. One of the major concerns of the Massachusetts Whigs was the progressive depopulation of their state due to westward migration. For this reason, they tended to oppose liberalized land policies, which they feared would encourage migration to the West. See Roy M. Robbins, *Our Landed Heritage: The Public Domain, 1776-1936* (Princeton, 1947), 32-38; and Peter J. Parish, "Daniel Webster, New England, and the West," *Journal of American History*, 54 (December 1967), 524-26. As pointed out below, however, the Whigs' attitudes toward the westward movement became more favorable with time.
6. "Fourth of July at Lowell," *Orations and Speeches on Various Occasions*, 2nd ed., 4 vols (Boston, 1850-1868), II, 63-64. See also *ibid.*, II, 297; A. H. Everett, *America*, 140-41.
7. Ivers J. Austin, *An Oration Delivered . . . Before the Citizens of Boston . . . July 4, 1839* (Boston, 1839), 11; Samuel Gilman Brown, *The Works of Rufus Choate with a Memoir of His Life* (Boston, 1862), I, 401-02; E. Everett, *Orations and Speeches*, I, 250, 309-23; Siracusa, *Mechanical People*, 101-02.
8. Cushing, *An Oration, . . . Delivered on the Fourth of July, 1839* (Springfield, 1839), 32; E. Everett, *Orations and Speeches*, I, 260-61; Robert C. Winthrop, *Addresses and Speeches on Various Occasions*, 4 vols. (Boston, 1852-1868), II, 64; Nathan Appleton, *Labor, Its Relations in Europe and the United States Compared* (Boston, 1844), 12-13. The Whigs' emphasis on the virtues of the frontier "safety valve" was inconsistent with their desire for a restrictive land policy. But with time (and their failure to block

the enactment of permissive land policies), they developed a more favorable view of the frontier, seeing it (especially those parts settled by New Englanders) as a preserver of conservative values. See Rush Welter, *The Mind of America: 1820-1860* (New York, 1975), 315-19.

9. Appleton, *Labor*, 9. See also Austin, *Oration*, 9-10; E. Everett, *Orations and Speeches*, I, 253-63; Caleb Cushing, *An Oration Delivered . . . on the 56th Anniversary of American Independence* (Newburyport, 1832), 10; Daniel Webster, *The Writings and Speeches of Daniel Webster*, Federal Edition, 18 vols. (Boston, 1903), III, 174-75.
10. For comparisons between the condition of the American laborer and his European counterpart, see Siracusa, *Mechanical People*, 77-79. For evidence of lingering fears of worker discontent, see Phillips, *Manual*, 141-51; Jonathan Mayhew Wainwright, "Inequalities of Wealth the Ordinance of God," *Thirty-Four Sermons* (New York, 1856), 178-81; Hubbard Winslow, *The Means of the Perpetuity and Prosperity of our Republic. An Oration Delivered . . . July 4, 1838, . . .* (Boston, 1838), 26-28.
11. "Convention at Andover," *Writings and Speeches*, III, 175.
12. "The Wants of Government and the Wages of Labor," *Addresses and Speeches*, I, 543.
13. "Address of His Excellency Edward Everett, . . . for the Political Year Commencing January 6, 1836," *Mass. House Document*, No. 6 (Boston, 1836), 5.
14. [Anon.], *The Andover Husking: A Political Tale, . . . Dedicated to the Whigs of Massachusetts* (Boston, 1842), 6.
15. "Accumulation, Property, Capital, Credit," *Orations and Speeches*, II, 302.
16. *Andover Husking*, 8.
17. Chapman, *An Oration Delivered . . . July 4, 1839* (Taunton, 1839), 23-24.
18. For the evolution of the Commonwealth idea, see Oscar Handlin and Mary Flug Handlin, *Commonwealth; A Study of the Role of Government in the American Economy: Massachusetts, 1774-1861* (New York, 1947), chs. III-X.
19. Winslow, *Means of Perpetuity*, 6.
20. See David Kettler, *The Social and Political Thought of Adam Ferguson* (Columbus, Ohio, 1965), 234, 279-86; Gladys Bryson, *Man and Society: The Scottish Inquiry of the Eighteenth Century* (Princeton, 1945), 87-95, 209-10, 212-14; Jane Rendall, *The Origins of the Scottish Enlightenment* (London, 1978), 176-80.
21. Evidence of the Scots' influence (and especially that of their theories of social evolution) may be found in Alexander H. Everett, *New Ideas on Population: With Remarks on the Theories of Malthus and Godwin* (Boston, 1823), 29-37, 75-77; E. Everett, *Orations and Speeches*, I, 283-93, 613;

- Phillips, *Manual*, 9-10, 34, 163-65; [John Quincy Adams], "Society and Civilization" *American Review*, 2 (July 1845), 80-89.
22. See Kettler, *Ferguson*, 204-05, 279; Rendall, *Origins*, 178; J. G. A. Pocock, *Politics, Language, and Time* (New York, 1971), 188-90.
 23. "Speech upon the Subject of Protecting American Labor By Duties on Imports," Brown, *Works of Choate*, II, 213.
 24. Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. and intro. by Talcott Parsons (New York, 1958), 79ff.
 25. "Lecture on the Workingman's Party," *Orations and Speeches*, I, 293, 303.
 26. Bigelow, *God's Charge*, 16-17; George Putnam, *Our Political Idolatry: A Discourse Delivered . . . April 6, 1843* (Boston, 1843), 10; Richard S. Storrs, *A Sermon Delivered Before . . . Edward Everett . . . January 3, 1838* (Boston, 1838), 12-15; Wainwright, "Inequalities of Wealth," 164-68, 175. For the Scots' views on this issue, see Bryson, *Man and Society*, 214-15; Kettler, *Ferguson*, 273-74.
 27. "Accumulation, Property, Capital, and Credit," *Orations and Speeches*, II, 291-92 (first quotation); "The Husbandman, Mechanic, and Manufacturer," *ibid.*, III, 88-89 (second quotation).
 28. "The Importance of The Mechanic Arts," *Orations and Speeches*, II, 249.
 29. "Lecture Before the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge," *Writings and Speeches*, XIII, 69, 73. See also Siracusa, *Mechanical People*, 69-71. On "comforts," see Joyce Appleby, *Capitalism and a New Social Order: The Republican Vision of the 1790s* (New York, 1984), 90.
 30. See *Andover Husking*, 6-7, 22; *Answer of Whig Members of the Legislature . . . to the Address of . . . Marcus Morton . . .* (Boston, 1840), 10-11; Jonathan Chapman, *An Oration Delivered . . . July 4, 1837* (Boston, 1837), 14, 21-22; Brown, *Works of Choate*, I, 397-400; E. Everett, *Orations and Speeches*, II, 315-21; William W. Greenough, *The Conquering Republic. An Oration Delivered Before the Municipal Authorities of the City of Boston, July 4, 1839* (Boston, 1839), 18-22; Horace Mann, "The Necessity of Education in a Republican Governemnt" [1838], Mary Mann, ed., *The Life and Works of Horace Mann*, 2 vols. (Cambridge, 1867), II, 143-58; Wainwright, "Inequalities of Wealth," 184-88; Winslow, *Means of Perpetuity*, 18-23.
 31. See *Andover Husking*, 11; *Answer of Whig Members to Morton*, 5-6, 8, 10; Caleb Cushing, *A Reply to the Letter of J. Fenimore Cooper, By One of His Countrymen* (Boston, 1834), 9-38, 47-50, 54, 58-65, 74; [Massachusetts State Whig Central Committee], *To the People of Massachusetts* (Boston, 1838), 2-9; Webster, *Writings and Speeches*, III, 42-49; Winslow, *Means of Perpetuity*, 18-19; Winthrop, *Addresses and Speeches*, I, 254-55.
 32. *Andover Husking*, 27 (both quotations). See also Brown, *Works of Choate*, II, 171-72; E. Everett, *Orations and Speeches*, I, 210; Mark Hopkins, *A Sermon Delivered . . . January 2, 1839* (Boston, 1839), 32; [Joseph Story], "Statesmen: Their Rareness and Importance," *New England Magazine*, 7 (August 1834), 89-95; Webster, *Writings and Speeches*, III, 47.

33. "Convention at Andover," *Writings and Speeches*, III, 179. For a perceptive discussion of conservative Whigs' use of familial and sentimental rhetoric, see George Forgie, *Patricide in the House Divided: A Psychological Interpretation of Lincoln and His Age* (New York, 1978), 4-5, 15-18. The passionate resistance of the conservative Whig elite to the sectionalization of the party system is well documented in O'Connor, *Lords of Loom*.
34. On the characterological differences between the working class supporters of the Jacksonian parties, see Stuart Blumin, *The Urban Threshold: Growth and Change in a Nineteenth Century American Community* (Chicago, 1976), 133, 142-44, 181-83; Paul G. Faler, *Mechanics and Manufacturers in the Early Industrial Revolution* (Albany, N.Y., 1981), ch. 6; Susan E. Hirsch, *Roots of the American Working Class: The Industrialization of Crafts in Newark, 1800-1860* (Philadelphia, 1978), 112-15, 120-26; Paul E. Johnson, *A Shopkeeper's Millennium: Society and Revivals in Rochester, New York, 1815-1837* (New York, 1978); Jonathan Prude, *The Coming of Industrial Order: Town and Factory Life in Rural Massachusetts, 1810-1860* (New York, 1983), 218-19; Sean Wilentz, *Chants Democratic: New York City and the Rise of the Working Class* (New York, 1984), ch. 4. For discussions of cultural and behavioral divisions within the American working class in the nineteenth century, see Alan Dawley and Paul Faler, "Working-class Culture and Politics in the Industrial Revolution: Sources of Loyalism and Rebellion," *Journal of Social History*, 9 (1976), 466-80; Paul Faler, "Cultural Aspects of the Industrial Revolution: Lynn, Massachusetts Shoemakers and Industrial Morality, 1826-1860," *Labor History*, 15 (1974), 367-94; Bruce Laurie, "'Nothing on Compulsion': Life Styles of Philadelphia Artisans, 1820-1850," *Labor History*, 15 (1974), 337-66.
35. Dale Baum, "The Political Realignment of the 1850s: Know-Nothingism and the Republican Majority in Massachusetts," *Journal of American History*, 64 (March 1978), 959-86; William G. Bean, "Puritan versus Celt, 1850-1860," *New England Quarterly*, 7 (March 1934), 70-89; Haws, "Massachusetts Whigs," ch. VII; Kevin Sweeney, "Rum, Romanism, Representation, and Reform: Coalition Politics in Massachusetts, 1847-1853," *Civil War History*, 12 (June 1976), 116-37. Though for analytical purposes I have discussed the antislavery and nativist movements separately here, there was of course much overlap between the two.
36. On the rise of the "Conscience Whigs," see Brauer, *Cotton versus Conscience*; Haws, "Massachusetts Whigs," 172-201.
37. See John Gorham Palfrey, *Papers on the Slave Power* (Boston, 1846); Palfrey, *Five Years' Progress of the Slave Power* (Boston, 1852); Charles Sumner, "Antislavery Duties of the Whig Party. Speech at the Whig State Convention of Massachusetts, in Faneuil Hall, Boston, September 23, 1846," *The Works of Charles Sumner*, 15 vols. (Boston, 1870-1883), I, 304-16.
38. For the conservative Whigs' passionate rejection of sectional politics, see Brown, *Works of Choate*, II, 327-41, 387-414; Senator Edward Everett, *Congressional Globe*, 33rd Cong., 1st Session, App., 158-63 (February 8, 1854); Winthrop, *Addresses and Speeches*, II, 225-36, 244-57, 292-308.

39. On the decline of the Whig elite and its displacement by politicians of lower social status, see Paul Goodman, "The Politics of Industrialism: Massachusetts, 1830-1870," Richard L. Bushman, et al., eds., *Uprooted Americans: Essays to Honor Oscar Handlin* (Boston and Toronto, 1979), 163-65, 181-202.