Andrew Curtin and the Politics of Union

Hindsight has a funny way of altering perspectives. Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg address received relatively little attention at the time it was delivered, as it was overshadowed by a far more elaborate and highly anticipated speech by the celebrated orator Edward Everett. For example, the *Philadelphia Press* dubbed Everett's speech "complete and perfect," while Lincoln's two-hundred and fifty word address was printed with no comment whatsoever.[1] And yet Lincoln's dedication at Gettysburg has become one of the most renowned pieces of oratory in history, while Everett is remembered, if at all, only as the man who spoke before Lincoln. Another figure seated on the stage at Gettysburg was Pennsylvania's Governor, Andrew Gregg Curtin, who has been rendered even more obscure than Everett in the public memory and modern accounts of that November 1863 day. And unfairly so: for it was an agent of Curtin's, David Wills, who put forward the idea of creating a cemetery, and who had invited President Lincoln to come and give his famous address.[2] Wills had been instructed by the governor to ensure the burial, with fitting honors, of Pennsylvania's fallen soldiers. This concern for the troops was the hallmark of Curtin's policies, and the source of his widespread reputation as the "soldier's friend." Wills was just one of many agents whom he appointed to see to the needs of enlisted men and their families, in life and in death. Curtin was governor of one of the most important states in the Union - Pennsylvania was behind only New York in population, in providing troops, in electoral college votes, and in its position as a financial and manufacturing center. Recent years have seen the burgeoning of a rich historiography on Civil War Pennsylvania, and particularly Philadelphia, but the last book length

[1] *Philadelphia Press*, November 20, 1863, accessed through Pennsylvania Civil War Era Newspaper Collection, Penn State University Libraries, online at http://digitalnewspapers.libraries.psu.edu (hereafter all newspapers, unless otherwise stated, taken from Pennsylvania Civil War Era Newspaper Collection); also see Gary W. Gallagher, *The Union War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011), 84-85.

[2] David Wills to Andrew Curtin, July 24, 1863, RG -26, Records of the Department of State, Secretary of the Commonwealth – Executive Correspondence, 1790 – 1968, 47th roll – Jan 1, 1863 to December 24, 1863, microfilm, Pennsylvania State Archives, Harrisburg (hereafter cited as Executive Correspondence, PSA).

study of Curtin's life dates from 1895, and modern scholarship has not yielded a sustained consideration of his record as governor of this pivotal state.[3]

Governors have been overlooked in Civil War literature, probably because the last major study, William B. Hesseltine's *Lincoln and the War Governors*, portrayed them as a generally spineless, unimaginative, and incompetent collective. In Hesseltine's words, "the state executives yielded…to the Washington authorities."[4] Curtin provides a powerful counterpoint to this now antiquated characterization. Scholarly neglect of governors has permitted misconceptions to persist. For example, historians such as Mark E. Neely. Jr. introduce Curtin, when he appears in their narratives, as "a Republican."[5] Although this is how he is commonly labelled, Curtin never actually ran at the top of a state-wide Republican Party ticket. In 1860, he was the candidate of the

[3] Pennsylvania has been the focus of, or featured very prominently in, works such as William Blair and William Pencak, eds., *Making and Remaking Pennsylvania's Civil War* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001); Grace Palladino, *Another Civil War: Labor, Capital, and the State in the Anthracite Regions of Pennsylvania, 1840-68* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1990); Arnold M. Shankman, The *Pennsylvania Antiwar Movement, 1861-1865* (Toronto: Associated University Presses, 1980); Judith Giesburg, *Army at Home: Women and the Civil War on the Northern Home Front* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009); Robert M. Sandow, *Deserter Country: Civil War Opposition in the Pennsylvania Appalachians* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2009); Edward L. Ayers, *In the Presence of Mine Enemies: War in the Heart of America, 1859-1863* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2003); Michael F. Holt, *Forging a Majority: The Formation of the Republican Party in Pittsburgh, 1848-1860* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1969). Philadelphia has been the focus of works such as J. Matthew Gallman, *Mastering Wartime: A Social History of Philadelphia during the Civil War (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990)*; J. Matthew Gallman, *Northerners at War: Reflections on the Civil War Home Front* (Kent: Kent State University Press, 2010); William Dusinberre, *Civil War Issues in Philadelphia, 1856-1865,* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1965); Russell F. Weigley, ed., *Philadelphia: a 300 year history* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1982); Daniel R. Biddle and Murray Dubin, *Tasting Freedom: Octavius Catto and the Battle for Equality in Civil War America* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2010). The last book length work to focus specifically on Andrew Curtin was William H. Egle, ed., *Life and Times of Andrew Gregg Curtin* (Philadelphia: Thompson Publishing Company, 1895). A three part article was written on Curtin in 1965: Rebecca G. Albright, "The Civil War Career of Andrew Gregg Curtin, Governor of Pennsylvania," *Western Pennsylvania Historical Magazine*, Volume 47-48 (October 1964 – April 1965).

[4] W.B. Hesseltine, *Lincoln and the War Governors* (New York: A. A. Knopf, 1948), 274. A more up to date work on Lincoln and the Governors is starting to correct this traditional depiction of the state executives. This brief volume has very recently emerged as part of the Concise Lincoln Library series - William C. Harris, *Lincoln and the Union Governors* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2013).

[5] Mark E. Neely, Jr., *The Fate of Liberty: Abraham Lincoln and Civil Liberties* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 57; Doris Kearns Goodwin, *Team of Rivals: The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2005), 573; Richard J. Carwardine, *Lincoln* (Harlow: Pearson Longman, 2003), 262; William C. Harris, *Lincoln and the Union Governors* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2013), 7.

People's Party, and in 1863, of the Union Party.[6] These parties were undeniably the anti-Democratic organization in the state, but that does not mean they were synonymous with the Republicans.[7] And this distinction matters if one aims to fully understand parties, policies, and ideology in this era.

This article uses Curtin's career as governor as a window into the politics of the Union war effort. Examining Curtin's elections and record allows two core arguments about Unionism to be made: one about Union parties as a substantive political movement; and the other about Unionism as a meaningful political ideology undergirding those parties, and embodied in Curtin's policies and principles. Historians have generally overlooked Union parties, and emphasized the survival of the two-party system in the wartime North. Those who have looked at Union parties in more detail, with a few notable exceptions, have all come to a similar conclusion about their significance. Scholars such as Joel H. Silbey, James M. McPherson and Melinda Lawson have cast Union parties as calculated constructions with flimsy popular support: a cynical ploy by Republicans to stifle partisan opposition, tease support from wavering Democrats, and drive a wedge between War and Peace Democrats. This view hinges on the notion that the two-party system was rigid and locked by 1860, and that therefore Union Parties could not be anything but Republican parties renamed. An alternative framework for understanding Northern wartime

[6] These were the official names of the parties, used by state committees and conventions. In 1860, in more radical parts of the state, the Republican moniker was commonly used by newspapers. This reflected the fact that the Republicans were a faction within the People's Party, dominant in certain areas, such as around Pittsburgh. Elsewhere, such as Philadelphia, the Republican label was very rarely mentioned. In 1863, the Union label was ubiquitous across the state, though again, as this paper shows, Republicans were identified as a faction within that coalition.

[7] This is a fact recognized by several studies more explicitly focused on either Pennsylvania or party politics in this period. Adam I. P. Smith, for instance, only mentions Curtin briefly but when does he identifies him with the People's Party and the Union Party, and grapples with the significance of these organizations. Adam I.P. Smith, *No Party Now: Politics in the Civil War North* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 27, 162. Eric Foner's does not mention Curtin but does consider Pennsylvania's People's Party and the ways it diverged from mainstream Republican ideology. Eric Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party before the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), 202-3.

politics is offered by historians such as Mark E. Neely, Jr., and Adam I. P. Smith. Smith stresses that "the two party system of Republicans and Democrats…was not yet securely in place" and that "party identities and alignments were fluid not fixed."[8] Building on Smith's framework, and using Curtin and Pennsylvania as case studies, this essay will argue that Union parties had an ideological appeal in their own right, and that they were not merely Republican wartime constructions. Michael F. Holt has referred to the Republican Party as a "crazy quilt coalition" in its formative years in the 1850s.[9] The Pennsylvania People's Party represented a crazy quilt coalition up to and beyond 1860, and the state's Union Party evolved from this organization's already diverse membership. War undoubtedly triggered a broadening of that coalition, but the wartime party had strong antebellum roots.

To understand why Union parties had an appeal separate from the Republicans, one must fathom the resonance that Unionism had in the nineteenth century. The word "Union" had, since the founders, been imbued with sacred meaning. Two recent studies have dwelt on the meanings associated with Union in this period. Elizabeth R. Varon's *Disunion* considers that 'disunion' was "once the most provocative and potent word in the political vocabulary of Americans."[10] It

[8] Dale Baum, *The Civil War Party System: The Case of Massachusetts, 1848-1876* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984); Joel H. Silbey, *A Respectable Minority: The Democratic Party in the Civil War Era, 1860-1868* (New York: Norton, 1977). Smith, *No Party Now*, 6; Mark E. Neely, Jr., *The Union Divided: Party Conflict in the Civil War North* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2002). Scholars have also tended to see Union Parties as flimsy and limited in their appeal. Michael Holt has concluded that "most historians, echoing contemporary Democrats, have regarded this action as a transparently cosmetic attempt by cynical Republicans to lure gullible Democrats and Unionists into supporting Republican candidates and Republican policies." One recent example would be Melinda Lawson, who has dismissed the movement as a "political strategy, a tactic employed when useful and abandoned when less so." Michael F. Holt, "Abraham Lincoln and the Politics of Union," in Michael F. Holt, *Political Parties and American Political Development from the Age of Jackson to the Age of Lincoln* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1992), 338; Melinda Lawson, *Patriot Fires: Forging a New American Nationalism in the Civil War North* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2002), 80.

[9] Michael F. Holt, "Making and Mobilizing the Republican Party," in *The Birth of the Grand Old Party: The Republicans' First Generation*, Robert F. Engs & Randal M. Miller, eds. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), 35.

[10] Elizabeth R. Varon, *Disunion! The Coming of the American Civil War, 1789 – 1859* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 1.

invoked a dystopian vision of the failure of the Republic, condemning the great experiment in democracy, both in America, and across the globe. Gary W. Gallagher's *The Union War* recaptures what Union meant as a positive ideal that formed a primary motivation to soldiers who fought for the North. When European revolutions in the 1840s seemed to be returning their people to oligarchy and oppression, America still seemed the best hope to prove that a polity could succeed based on "liberty, freedom, and opportunity." A sacred inheritance from the Founders, the Union was a fragile experiment in self-government that offered an unprecedented level of economic opportunity and social mobility. Preserving it was the reason "why the mass of northern people supported crushing the rebellion." [11] When Curtin invoked "Union" in his 1863 campaign he drew heavily on both the negative and positive connotations of a concept that had a potent place in American culture. He was trying to tap into a vast, existing reservoir of national feeling to harness its latent electoral appeal–not just putting a gloss on controversial Republican measures.

Curtin's ideology had roots in his past as a devout and active member of the Whig party. In his initial election in 1860, and in the early months of his tenure, Curtin's principles strongly mirrored those of his former party. On the tariff, on the promotion of industry, on education, and indeed in his anti-partyism and devotion to Union, Curtin was following much Whig orthodoxy. On the stump in 1860 he drew huge applause mentioning the "immortal leader of the Whig Party, Henry Clay," adding "from him I received my early teachings in politics."[12] Even more resounding were the "cheers" when he averred that "the People's Party of Pennsylvania is now, and ever has been, loyal to the Union."[13] But it is not sufficient to look at Curtin's Unionism and dismiss it as pure Whiggery. The Whig Party had disappeared and Curtin had evolved. War further dismantled

[11] Gallagher, *The Union War*, 34.
[12] *Pennsylvania Daily Telegraph* (Harrisburg), September 29, 1860.
[13] Lehigh Register, August 1, 1860.

any hopes of following a 'Whig' domestic agenda. But Curtin's background, and attachment to Union, do help locate him on the ideological spectrum: nationally a moderate, or centrist, he was towards the right of the Republican spectrum.

The best guide characterizing the Republican ideological spectrum remains Eric Foner's *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men*. Among Foner's characterizations, Curtin is by Foner's definition a conservative: one whose "devotion to the Union was the cornerstone of their political outlook." Mostly Old Line Whigs, these conservatives had been taught that "party and sectional considerations must give way if the integrity of the Union were in danger."[14] It was an ideology well suited to Pennsylvania, a state that, in temperament and principles, inhabited the middle ground between extremes of North and South. Indeed, in an 1860 biographical sketch of the candidate, *The Agitator* described him as "exhibiting, on every occasion, that dignified moderation which is so peculiar to the Pennsylvania character."[15] The words Curtin most often used to denote himself on the stump in 1863 were 'moderate,' 'patriot,' and 'conservative.' Together they connoted his position between the extremes of abolitionism and Peace Democrat, seeking to appeal to all other shades of opinion through unwavering commitment to the Union and to winning the war.

In many ways, Curtin's ideology and actions mirror those of another former Whig: Abraham Lincoln. No one invoked Union more eloquently and powerfully than the President, who mentioned it twenty-one times in his inaugural address. There are a number of echoes between the political careers of Curtin and Lincoln. Both men competed for moderate constituencies, and used patronage to reach beyond their party. In wartime, each sought to ally and identify with the

[14] Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men*, 187.
[15] *The Agitator (*Wellsboro*)*, April 19, 1860.

soldiers, both as a means to gain direct support, and as a way to position themselves above party and representative of the broader Union. Each faced attempts to unseat them from within the left of their own movement. Ultimately, both prevailed. In their interactions Curtin and Lincoln seem to have understood each other's positions, and to have recognized that they were trying to achieve similar outcomes, facing similar obstacles.

Before the War came

Andrew Curtin was born in 1815 and brought up in Bellefonte, Pennsylvania, about 90 miles north-west of Harrisburg. His parents were of prosperous Irish lineage and his father's successful career as an iron manufacturer ensured that their son wanted for little. Trained as a lawyer at Dickinson College, Curtin was admitted to the bar in 1839. While practicing, he was also actively involved in Whig politics throughout the 1840s, speaking widely across the state for Harrison, Clay, Taylor, and Scott. When the Pennsylvania Whigs collapsed in the mid-1850s, Curtin needed a new political home. Despite his ancestry, he became briefly associated with the Know-Nothings. The Keystone state had large Irish and German populations and was fertile soil for nativists. Curtin was an ambitious man and political calculation was clearly a factor, but the movement may also have appealed to his Whig Unionism.[16] The fledgling Republican Party was wholly sectional and anti-slavery. For conservative Whigs, it was the Know-Nothings who seemed to offer the greater potential for a new national Unionist party. Curtin campaigned energetically for the Senate nomination in the Know-Nothing controlled Pennsylvania legislature of 1855.

[16] Eric Foner has looked at how Whigs "were attracted to the movement's Unionism" and argues that, at this time, "National Whiggery and Know-Nothingism were more or less interchangeable." Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men*, 196-7.

Competing against Curtin for the Senate nomination was Simon Cameron. Previously a Democratic senator, Cameron also willingly courted the Know-Nothings to advance his career. Cameron would subsequently join the People's Party, and go on to serve in Lincoln's cabinet as Secretary of War. Despite being of the same party, Cameron and Curtin were involved in a long and bitter feud, which began with the senate campaign in 1855.[17] Alexander McClure – a newspaperman, politician, and close Curtin ally, who ran his 1860 campaign – remembered that "from that time until the close of their political careers they never met or exchanged the ordinary courtesies of life." Tantalizingly vague, McClure tells us the vendetta started with "a personal reproach put upon Curtin by Cameron when he had several of his political friends about him in a convivial mood."[18] Cameron's biographer, Erwin S. Bradley, suggests Cameron's remark may have related to "the doubtful paternity of an illegitimate child."[19] If true, this is something of an explanation, but a drunken insult still seems a poor excuse for an intra-party division that would last decades, and have profound consequences. Oversized and oversensitive egos were likely a factor, but the cult of honor, normally associated with the South, may also have been relevant in helping to make a personal insult into an insurmountable obstacle.

In the years between 1855 and 1860 the Whig-Republicans united with the Know-Nothings to form the People's Party.[20] McClure described this coalition as a "loose aggregation of old line

[17] For more detail on Cameron, and on the feud from his perspective, see John D. Stewart II, "The Great Winnebago Chieftain: Simon Cameron's Rise to Power 1860 – 1867," *Pennsylvania History*, Vol 39, No 1 (Jan 1972), 20-39; also Erwin Stanley Bradley, *Simon Cameron, Lincoln's Secretary of War: A Political Biography* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1966).

[18] Alexander Kelly McClure, *Old Time Notes of Pennsylvania: A Connected and Chronological Record of the Commercial, Industrial and Educational Advancement of Pennsylvania, and the Inner History of all Political Movements Since the Adoption of the Constitution of 1838* (Philadelphia: The J.C. Winston Company, 1905), Volume 1, 387.

[19] This was apparently a story that circulated in Curtin's hometown of Bellefonte, and which was recounted to Bradley by an elderly local resident in 1950. Bradley, *Simon Cameron*, 102.

[20] The strength of each faction varied across the state. Philadelphia had close ties to the South and in 1856 the Republican John Fremont won only 11% of the vote in the city. Matthew Gallman has written that "defenders of racial equality were in a distinct minority in the City of Brotherly Love." By contrast, the Republicans were well established

Whigs, radical Republicans, Americans or Know Nothings and anti-slavery Democrats."[21] Although there were anti-slavery figures in the People's Party ranks, a key part of their appeal was that they were not running under the Republican banner. Francis Blackburn, a Philadelphian delegate to the Republican national convention in 1860, explained to Abraham Lincoln that the "Party in Pennsylvania are thoroughly AntiAbolitionist and it is with difficulty we can keep them solid with the Republican Party."[22] Pennsylvania was a more conservative state than many in the North, and, as Adam Smith has written, "conservatives were the swing voters of the Civil War."[23]

McClure and Curtin understood the temperament of their state. They knew that a strong anti-slavery, anti-southern message would put off wavering voters and risk fracturing the People's Party coalition. The tariff, by contrast, was a perfect wedge issue. An economic panic in 1857 had hit the state's iron and railroad industries particularly hard. Prominent economists, like Pennsylvanian Henry Carey, blamed the low national tariff. By 1860, the state had become, in Daniel Walker Howe's words, "a bastion of protectionist sentiment," so wedded to a high tariff that the Pennsylvania Democratic Party abandoned their national free trade colleagues and feigned protectionism. [24] The Democrats still attacked the People's Party on the slavery issue, branding them the national "Black Republican Party," and locally "Andy Curtin and Abolition Republican Sectionalism."[25] But they could not ignore the tariff. Curtin felt confident enough not to dwell on

in cities like Pittsburgh where anti-Southern free-soil appeals were popular. Gallman, *Mastering Wartime*, 2; Holt, *Forging a Majority*, 7.

[21] McClure, *Old Time Notes of Pennsylvania*, Vol 1, 403.

[22] Francis Blackburn to Abraham Lincoln, November 24, 1860, *Abraham Lincoln papers*, online at the Library of Congress, http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/alhtml/malhome.html (hereafter cited as *Abraham Lincoln Papers*.)

[23] Smith, *No Party Now*, 7.

[24] Daniel Walker Howe, *The Political Culture of the American Whigs* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 108.

[25] *Huntingdon Globe*, 26 September, 1860 & 19 September, 1860.

the slavery question. He and McClure helped make sure the tariff was the headline issue in 1860, and *the* central tenet of the People's Party message.

"The Keystone of the Republican Arch"

Pennsylvania's 1860 gubernatorial election, held in October, was seen as a crucial bellwether for the looming Presidential race. On October 6, 1860, the *New York Times* reported that "the whole country awaits with intense interest the result of next Tuesday's election in Pennsylvania" which "would be widely regarded as deciding the Presidential contest."[26] On the 9th, the *Times* added that "Pennsylvania is this year the Keystone of the Republican arch…If she drops out, the whole structure will tumble down."[27] Lincoln himself followed the election closely, requesting and receiving regular updates on its progress.[28]

The national picture put Curtin in a strong position relative to his Democratic opponent. Curtin and McClure had gone to the Republican National Convention and helped to secure the two things they needed in Pennsylvania: a presidential nominee moderate on the slavery issue, and a tariff plank in the national platform.[29] The Democrats had put their candidate, Henry Foster, in an unenviable position. The high Morrill tariff, so popular in the Keystone state, had been blocked in Congress by Southern Democrats. Although Foster supported the tariff locally, his national party left him an uphill battle on the issue.[30] The Democratic Party national split was also crippling. In

[26] *New York Times*, October 6, 1860.
[27] Ibid., October 9, 1860.
[28] A small sample would include: Alexander McClure to Abraham Lincoln, July 2, 1860; David Wilmot to Abraham Lincoln, July 11, 1860; Simon Cameron to Abraham Lincoln, August 1, 1860; David Davis to Abraham Lincoln, August 5, 1860; all from *Abraham Lincoln Papers*.
[29] Along with Indiana gubernatorial candidate Henry Lane, the Pennsylvanians made it clear at the convention that, if Seward was nominated, Pennsylvania and Indiana would be lost in October, as would be the presidential race in November. See McClure, *Old Time Notes of Pennsylvania*, 399-415; Goodwin, *Team of Rivals*, 241-2. On the tariff, many, including Lincoln, were reportedly keen to avoid a protectionist plank but Pennsylvania delegates successfully forced the issue. See Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men*, 176.
[30] Analysis of the tariff issue drew on Holt, *Forging a Majority*, 243, 275-280; Kenneth M. Stampp, *And the War Came: The North and the Secession Crisis* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1950), 162-163; Foner,

Pennsylvania, factions managed to unite behind Henry Foster, but it was a decidedly fragile fusion. Foster made few public appearances to avoid any statement that would seem to endorse the candidacy of either Stephen Douglas or John Breckenridge. Curtin, by contrast, was reported to have spoken at 93 meetings during the canvass, a commanding orator "with the power to magnetize a crowd and draw it after him."[31] People's Party newspapers stuck to the message, with the *Pennsylvania Daily Telegraph* hailing a coming triumph "of those principles of protection to labor," certain that Curtin would be supported "in every part of the State where mechanical and agricultural labor struggle for position and prosperity."[32] Curtin had the personal advantage that he had long campaigned on the tariff. With his Whig heritage well known and oft emphasized, he could state boldly and truthfully that he had "always been in favour of protection."[33]

Alongside the tariff, the other unavoidable issue in 1860 was the specter of disunion. In Pennsylvania this attack was made against both the Democrats and the Republicans. Curtin fiercely rebuked these charges, asserting that "the People's Party of Pennsylvania," has been "ever loyal to the Union." Speaking in Philadelphia, Curtin employed a tactic he would use repeatedly in 1863: "That Constitution we so much admire and cherish was made in this City; the Declaration of Independence was first written…in this City…and from that time to the present the people of Philadelphia and of the state at large, have ever been loyal to both."[34] Invoking the founders in this way Curtin sought as broad an appeal as possible by chaining his party to the unimpeachable cause

Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men, 173-176. Democrats were often lambasted in the press as "Locofocos." A moniker referencing ardent free traders, this was often seen as a more damaging characterization than 'doughfaces.' For example, see *Pennsylvania Daily Telegraph*, September 29, 1860; *The Agitator*, September 26, 1860.

[31] *New York Times*, October 5, 1860.

[32] *Pennsylvania Daily Telegraph*, October 6, 1860.

[33] *Philadelphia Press*, September 20, 1860.

[34] Lehigh Register, August 1, 1860.

of Union. But the emergence of a new party did pose challenges to holding together his own coalition.

The Constitutional Union Party provided a rival home for Pennsylvania's conservative swing voters in 1860. Running the former Whig John Bell on the national ticket, they did not nominate a candidate for governor. But they still held considerable strength in parts of the state, particularly Philadelphia, where Mayor Alexander Henry, initially elected on the People's Party ticket, won reelection in 1860 as a Constitutional Unionist.[35] Henry exemplified the fluidity of party allegiance in the Keystone state. The *Democratic Banner* wrote of how, in the race for governor, "Mayor Henry of Philadelphia, the most influential Bell and Everett man in the state, sustained Col Curtin with all his power, influence and patronage, whilst now his whole energy is devoted to the Bell ticket."[36] But despite Henry's support, in the final weeks before the October contest, the bulk of Constitutional Unionist backing swung to the Democrats. The *Tyrone Star*, a Bell paper, explained the switch. They attacked Curtin for having attended the Republican national convention "as an active participant," for having broken his promise to "take no position in favor of either of the Presidential nominees," and, by supporting Lincoln, to have adopted positions "antagonistic to the platform of the People's Party."[37] The final Constitutional Union rallies of the campaign endorsed Foster, helping him gain 51% of the vote in Philadelphia. Outside of the city, they did little to dent the People's Party coalition.

Curtin won relatively comfortably on election day, gaining a majority of 32,114 of the close to 500,000 votes cast. Preceding Lincoln's campaign by a month, it was no coattails' triumph, but a vital precursor to national success. Curtin's victory also challenges the common

[35] Gallman, *Mastering Wartime*, 2.
[36] *Democratic Banner* (Clearfield), October 24, 1860.
[37] *Tyrone Star*, reprinted in *Lancaster Intelligencer*, September 18, 1860.

historical view that anti-Southernism and anti-slavery were the basic elements for defeating Democrats in 1860. As the *New York Times* explained to their readers in October, "the slavery question has much less to do with this canvass and its probable result, than is generally supposed. Indeed…we have serious doubts whether it is not an element of weakness rather than strength."[38] Curtin's People's Party was distinct from the Republicans in policy priorities, and in the diversity of its membership. It was a vital foundation for the wartime Union Party.

The First Term: "To Maintain the Union at all Hazards"

As Southern states began to leave the Union, opinions in Pennsylvania were divided. In Philadelphia, many were willing to consider further moves to placate the South, and some could even sanction peaceful secession.[39] Philadelphia diarist Sidney George Fisher was among this group, and published a pamphlet outlining his plan of "legalizing secession, of making it easy & safe."[40] Elsewhere in the state there was much more hostility to secession, but also hesitancy to entertain coercion. McClure persuaded the Pennsylvania senate to pass a resolution reaffirming that none of the state's laws should be any obstacle to the "utmost comity between the States." McClure did this in response to letters from former Whig colleagues in Virginia, among them Jubal Early, at that stage urging his state to stay in the Union at their 1861 secession conventions.[41]

Amidst this uncertainty, Curtin took office. Forty-five years old, he had long experience in state politics, but nothing to prepare him for a wartime administration. He knew that his inaugural address would be watched closely by North and South. Perhaps nervous, he wrote to the President-

[38] *New York Times*, October 12, 1860.
[39] For analysis of public opinion between Lincoln's election and Fort Sumter, see Dusinberre, *Civil War Issues in Philadelphia*, 95-127.
[40] Jonathan W. White, ed., *A Philadelphia Perspective: The Civil War Diary of Sidney George Fisher* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2007), 68.
[41] McClure, *Old Time Notes of Pennsylvania*, Vol 1, 450.

elect in December, asking if there were anything he wished to have conveyed. Lincoln responded that he could "think of nothing proper for me to suggest except a word about this secession and disunion movement. On that subject, I think you would do well to express, without passion, threat, or appearance of boasting, but nevertheless, with firmness, the purpose of yourself, and your state to maintain the Union at all hazzards."[42] Governor Curtin took note. His address on January 15, 1861, began in a conservative, conciliatory, and fraternal tone. For Pennsylvania, "carrying on an extensive commerce with her neighbours…and bound to them by the ties of kindred and social intercourse, the question of disunion involves momentous consequences… No one who knows the history of Pennsylvania…can justly charge us with hostility to our brethren of other States. We regard them as friends… and we recognize, in their broadest extent, all our constitutional obligations to them." Only when it came close to ending his speech did Curtin add a steely backbone to his otherwise soothing address, borrowing Lincoln's phrase almost verbatim: "Ours is a National Government…to permit a State to withdraw at pleasure …is to confess that our Government is a failure. Pennsylvania can never acquiesce in such a conspiracy, nor assent to a doctrine which involves the destruction of the government…the people mean to preserve the integrity of the National Union at every hazard." [43]

The outbreak of hostilities crushed hopes for sectional harmony. The time when "ties of kindred and social intercourse" could preserve the Union was gone. Unionism now meant fealty to the war effort. But not to Republicanism. Curtin immediately sought to stand at the center of as big and inclusive a Union tent as possible. He would quickly come to identify soldiers as the perfect manifestation of Union, and of his message. Although many of them became highly politicized, as

[42] Abraham Lincoln to Andrew Curtin, December 21, 1860, *Abraham Lincoln Papers*.
[43] George Edward Reed, ed., *Papers of the Governors*, 1681-1902, Volume 8 (Harrisburg: The State of Pennsylvania, 1902), 331, 336.

a body they were seen as above party, and many were Democrats. Positioning them as his core constituency, Curtin aimed to remain above partisan squabbles, appealing to all who were loyal to the cause.

"The Soldier's Friend"

Curtin's identification with the soldiers operated throughout his tenure as both an electoral appeal and a governing strategy. Supporting the soldiers, like supporting the Union, was an almost universally acceptable course of action. Placing this as the centerpiece of his tenure could not be objected to by the more radical members of his own coalition, and it offered no ideological barrier to pro-war Democrats who might be tempted to cross the aisle. As a pitch to voters, it embodied a unifying centrism designed to bridge and heal rifts. As a modus operandi for administering his state it proved divisive, bringing him into regular and increasing conflict with the War Department. Initially, the governor accommodated the rush of patriotism better than his great rival in the War Department, Simon Cameron.[44] But, as the war developed, Curtin would incur the wrath of Secretaries Cameron and Stanton, who came to see him as an obstacle to recruitment. Curtin argued repeatedly he was only serving the needs of the men of his state.

The first scuffle came in the summer of 1862, when Curtin was directly countermanding Stanton's orders that all new troops should be three year enlistments. Aware that most of his constituents preferred shorter service, Curtin continued to accept men for nine and twelve month terms. President Lincoln sided with the governor, ultimately conceding to Stanton that the soldiers must be accepted on these terms since otherwise "we shall fail perhaps to get any on other terms

[44] Camp Curtin to train, equip, and house the multitude of volunteers. Flooded with offers of troops, Washington quickly informed the governor that they could accept no more soldiers. Suspecting more would soon be needed, Curtin asked the legislature to allocate funds to maintain fifteen additional regiments as the Pennsylvania Reserve Corps. After First Bull Run, it was these rejected Pennsylvania troops who first marched into Washington and were gratefully welcomed to defend the city.

from Pennsylvania."[45] In October, Curtin wrote to the President directly protesting general order 154 which gave federal recruiting officers powers to coerce volunteers into the regular army for a three-year term.[46] This order, he believed, was "unjust to the people of the States & calculated to demoralize and destroy volunteer organizations…it must break the efficiency of the Volunteer army now in the field." Lincoln passed the letter to Stanton who considered Curtin's protest to be "ill advised, revolutionary and tends to excite discontent and mutiny in the army and in my judgment should be severely rebuked by the President."[47] No reprimand followed, as Lincoln again, and not for the last time, sided with the governor.

Curtin knew how hard recruitment was, and did not want to overly strain the morale of his people. But when Philadelphia and Harrisburg seemed gravely threatened by Confederate forces in the summer of 1863, he had no choice but to issue a series of proclamations calling for emergency troops. He shamed and implored his people, but also offered a significant inducement: men would be needed for ninety days, or less should the emergency pass.[48] Curtin did not wish to force any volunteer soldiers into duty for longer than required, especially with an election looming. He stuck to his word and angered Stanton again with his determination to see the militia mustered out immediately, so as not to "add much to any feeling of hostility that may exist in the minds of the people against the Draft."[49] Fully aware of the unpopularity of conscription, Curtin took every opportunity to transfer the ire of his people away from himself and onto Washington. Provost Marshall General James Fry was in charge of national recruitment, and so responsible for the

[45] William Blair, "We are Coming, Father Abraham – Eventually: The Problem of Northern Nationalism in the Pennsylvania Recruiting Drives of 1862," in *The War was You and Me: Civilians in the American Civil War*, ed. Joan E. Cashin (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 193.
[46] U.S. War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: The Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1880 – 1901), Series III, Volume 2, 654.
[47] Andrew Curtin to Abraham Lincoln, Oct 27, 1862; Edwin Stanton to Abraham Lincoln, Oct 30, 1862, *Abraham Lincoln Papers*.
[48] *New York Herald*, June 27, 1863, *Accessible Archives*.
[49] Andrew Curtin to Edwin Stanton, July 13, 1863, *Executive Correspondence*, PSA.

calculations of how many men were required from each county to fulfill the quotas. In August of 1863, Curtin wrote to Fry complaining about the War Department numbers, which make "the people think injustice has been done," and stated that they did not match the estimations done within the state, copies of which were "on file in the War Department." Writing in a more than usually legible script, the governor informed Fry that he deemed it "proper to publish your letter and this reply."[50]

A letter that the governor received in 1864 explains clearly the value and purpose of Curtin's obdurate approach towards the War Department. The occasion was a fierce dispute that Pennsylvania troops were having with Washington over their mustering out dates. During this quarrel, an officer in the Reserves wrote to Curtin, imploring him to help, explaining that "we appeal to you because you first conceived us, brought us into existence, our military father, and have at all times protected and defended us against assault."[51] This was exactly the perception Curtin hoped to cultivate; conflict with Stanton was a small price to pay to achieve it. The phrase "military father," is a remarkable echo of Lincoln's moniker, "Father Abraham," used to great effect in the 1864 presidential election. Lincoln may have consistently supported Curtin partly because he understood the political importance of the "soldiers' protector" image.

Years after Lincoln's death, Provost Marshall James Fry contributed a chapter to a book of reminiscences on President Lincoln. He told a story of a Northern governor who was "earnest, able and untiring," but who "always wanted his own way" when it came to matters of raising and equipping troops. The governor's dispatches to the War Department so irritated Secretary Stanton

[50] Andrew Curtin to James B. Fry, August 11, 1863, *Executive Correspondence*, PSA.
[51] Timothy J. Orr, "'We Are No Grumblers': Negotiating State and Federal Military Service in the Pennsylvania Reserve Division," *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, Volume 135, Number 4 (October 2011), 472. Orr explores the contractual nature of how soldiers viewed their service. When they felt the federal government was not meeting their obligation to muster them out on time it resulted in a near mutiny among the Pennsylvania Reserves. These troops appealed to Curtin and their state to act on their behalf against Washington.

that he laid them before Lincoln, who found them amusing. The President replied with one of his famous stories:

Never mind, never mind; those dispatches don't mean anything. Just go right ahead. The Governor is like a boy I saw once at a launching. When everything was ready they picked out a boy and sent him under the ship to knock away the trigger and let her go. At the critical moment everything depended on the boy. He had to do the job well by a direct vigorous blow, and then lie flat and keep still while the ship slid over him. The boy did everything right, but he yelled as if he was being murdered from the time he got under the keel until he got out. I thought the hide was all scraped off his back; but he wasn't hurt at all. The master of the yard told me that this boy was always chosen for that job, that he did his work well, that he never had been hurt, but that he always squealed in that way. That's just the way with Governor _. Make up your minds that he is not hurt, and that he is doing the work right, and pay no attention to his squealing. He only wants to make you understand how hard his task is, and that he is on hand performing it.[52]

It may not have been to Curtin that the President referred, but it seems very likely.[53] The message certainly applied. Lincoln understood, much better than his War Department colleagues, that Curtin served a constituency at home, as well as in the White House. The President grasped that the governor's grumblings served the political needs of that other constituency, and did not

[52] James B. Fry, "James B. Fry," in Allen Thorndike Rice, ed., *Reminiscences of Abraham Lincoln by distinguished men of his time* (New York: North American Publishing Company, 1886), 401-402.
[53] The governor in this story was named as Curtin by James Matlock Scovel, a lawyer who served in the New Jersey legislature during the Civil War. He identified the governor in a retelling of the story in an article entitled "Recollections of Lincoln and Seward," in *Overland Monthly and the Out West Magazine*, Vol. XXXVIII, No 1 (July, 1901), 270; the story also appeared in a collection of Lincoln anecdotes put together by McClure: Alexander K. McClure, *"Abe" Lincoln's yarns and stories: a complete collection of the funny and witty anecdotes that made Lincoln famous as America's greatest storyteller* (Philadelphia: The J.C. Winston Company, 1900).

impinge on his loyalty or ability. Soldiers had become the heartbeat of Curtin's administration: serving them, and being seen to serve them, was central to his Unionist ideology.

Curtin's efforts do seem to have won some political conversions among the troops. Major General Alexander Hays, son of Pennsylvania Democratic Congressman Samuel Hays, wrote to his wife in 1861 that "The camp has been christened 'Camp Curtin,' in honor (I wish I could say 'in memory') of our governor." By October 1863, Hays was looking "with intense anxiety for the result of the Pennsylvania election. If Curtin is beaten, which God avert, it is possible our march may be homewards."[54] Curtin's moderation and rejection of partisanship may have helped secure such allegiances. M.L. Gordon, 85th Pennsylvania Volunteers, wrote to his uncle of his desire for the reelection of Curtin who "has not advocated any radical measures" and "has been unswerving in his loyalty."[55] These men did not believe they were becoming dyed in the wool Republicans, but were tethering themselves to a war for Union.

Timothy J. Orr has examined soldiers' political allegiances and found evidence that "the rise of the Copperheads in 1863 drove many Democratic soldiers into the Republican Party's ranks."[56] One of the soldiers he cites, Captain Francis Donaldson, defended General McClellan against Republican attacks in a letter to his brother in 1862, before writing of his wish to be able to vote for Curtin the following year. Donaldson may have been a committed Democrat who

[54] Hays was not active in politics before the war and so it is difficult to tell whether he was a confirmed Democrat. The allegiance of his father, his discussion of his "nigger cook," as well as a reference he made to "ancient Democratic meetings," suggest he may have been. At the least, he went from political agnostic to firm believer in the administration during the course of the conflict. Alexander Hays to Annie McFadden Hays, January 8,1862 and April 1, 1864, accessed online through *The American Civil War: Letters and Diaries*, produced in collaboration with University of Chicago, at http://solomon.cwld.alexanderstreet.com.proxy.its.virginia.edu/ (hereafter cited as *The American Civil War: Letters and Diaries*); Alexander Hays to Annie Adams McFadden Hays, May 7, 1861, and October 9, 1863, *The American Civil War: Letters and Diaries*.

[55] Donald Gordon, ed., *M.L. Gordon's experiences in the Civil War: From his Narrative, Letters and Diary* (Boston: Privately Printed, 1922), 41.

[56] Timothy J. Orr, "A Viler Enemy in Our Rear," in *The View from the Ground: Experiences of Civil War Soldiers*, ed. Aaron Sheehan-Dean (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2007), 181.

wholeheartedly converted to Republicanism, but his sentiments may have better reflected a form of Unionism. In his 1862 letter, Donaldson stated himself to be "a Democrat, first, last and all the time," but he also averred that "as long as the rebels are in arms I will sustain the government's efforts to put down the rebellion – with my life if necessary. I think there should be but one party, one issue in the North as long as the war lasts."[57] As Jonathan W. White has written in a very recent study, these sentiments best "conveyed the disgust that many Republican and Democratic soldiers felt for a party that routinely appeared unpatriotic and anti-soldier."[58] For men like Donaldson who were putting Union first, supporting McClellan and supporting Curtin were not mutually exclusive, and doing so did not necessarily represent political conversion to the Republican Party.

Curtin himself seems to have been a consistent defender of McClellan's military record. In March of 1862, he wrote to Lincoln bemoaning "disingenuous and selfish clamor at the Capitol" and that he and the masses had "entire confidence in the fidelity and ability of General McClellan."[59] At the Altoona Conference of loyal war governors, he successfully defended "Little Mac," against radicals like Governor John Andrew of Massachusetts who wanted resolutions calling for his removal.[60] It was little surprise when, a few days after the conference, Curtin received a letter from the General, praising the governor and the people of Pennsylvania for the support they offered in the "defence of their frontier."[61] It may have disappointed Curtin when

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[57] J. Gregory Acken, ed., *Inside the Army of the Potomac: The Civil War Experience of Captain Francis Adams Donaldson* (Mechanicsburg: Stackpole Books, 1998), 146.
[58] Jonathan W. White, *Emancipation, the Union Army, and the Reelection of Abraham Lincoln* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2014), 4.
[59] Andrew Curtin to Abraham Lincoln, March 3, 1862, *Abraham Lincoln papers*.
[60] Held in September 1862, this conference was organized by Curtin and offered vital support to the administration. The governors issued a document offering support for Emancipation and for calls for more troops, but not for removing McClellan. William B. Hesseltine, "The Altoona Conference and the 'Emancipation Proclamation,'" *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, Vol 71, No.3 (July, 1947), 203.
[61] *The Christian Recorder*, October 11, 1862, accessed online through *Accessible Archives* at http://www.accessible-archives.com/about-accessible-archives/ (hereafter cited as *Accessible Archives*).

McClellan made known his support for Democrat George Woodward in the 1863 election. But coming only on the day of the vote, the endorsement's effect was likely minimal. It also did not stop the *Philadelphia Press* from misleadingly reprinting, on election day, McClellan's letter from 1862, under the headline "Gen. McClellan Endorses Governor Curtin."[62] Despised as he may have been by the radical wing of the Republicans, McClellan remained a popular figure with soldiers for much of the war. Until he became strongly and publicly allied to the Democratic Party as their presidential candidate, he was exactly the kind of figure with whom Curtin wished to, and did, align.

Emancipation Politics

On January 1, 1863, President Lincoln issued the final Emancipation Proclamation. Race relations was now not an issue that Curtin could avoid, and if we are to understand where Curtin stood on the ideological spectrum of this era, his racial perspective is an important signifier. Pennsylvania had one of the largest free black populations in the United States. After the Emancipation Proclamation, the black community responded vigorously to calls for troops. Spurred on by a recruiting committee including Frederick Douglas and Octavius Catto, more than 8,000 black soldiers from Pennsylvania served in the Union army.[63] Curtin came to endorse this process, but race remained a thorny issue for a political moderate. The governor was likely aware that many white soldiers feared the implications of emancipation.[64] Tom Crowl, of the 87th Pennsylvanian volunteers, was not alone amongst the state's soldiers in his view that "This Nigrow freedom is what is playing hell…We never enlisted to fight for Nigrows."[65] Equally,

[62] *Philadelphia Press*, October 13, 1863.
[63] Biddle and Durbin, *Tasting Freedom*, 290.
[64] For a detailed discussion of Union troops' views on Emancipation, see Gallagher, *The Union War*, 75-118.
[65] Quoted in Dennis W. Brandt, *From Home Guards to Heroes: The 87th Pennsylvania and its Civil War Community* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2006), 163.

ending slavery and improving the lot of African-Americans came to be of vital importance to many in the Union army, even if that didn't extend to black equality.

Difficult as it was, Curtin seems to have sought a middle ground on race. The perspective on the governor from African-American newspapers like the *Christian Recorder* – the Philadelphia based organ of the AME Church – presents a mixed picture. Curtin was criticized in 1864 for having taken no steps to remove any of the odious black laws of the state, but black regiments were reported leaving for the front with "three cheers" for the Governor, and returned in 1865 to a "welcome home" event where Curtin was the honored guest.[66] The governor generally avoided the issue of black troops when on the stump. But on at least one occasion, he did, after a fashion, praise and embrace black military service. He admitted that much did "revolve around the massive wooly head of the nigger," and stated that "when the rebels were on our soil, I would have armed black and white, and yellow men; I would have equipped the clovenhoofed gentleman himself." Acknowledging that he did arm 300 African-Americans, he reported that "they went apart, by themselves; they worked in the trenches, and so conducted themselves that when they passed through the city gentleman cheered and ladies waved their handkerchiefs." The language was unpalatable, and Curtin was careful to hedge himself by recognizing the limited nature of their service, but it was still a public statement of support for black troops. [67]

The *Christian Recorder* also hailed Curtin's involvement in a meeting of the Philadelphia Union League in March 1863.[68] Here Curtin covered not just black military service, but

[66] *Christian Recorder*, July 30, 1863, October 17, 1863 & October 28, 1865, *Accessible Archives*.
[67] *Philadelphia Press*, October 7, 1863.
[68] Union Leagues were societies separate from but linked to Union Parties. These societies, also known as Loyal Leagues, formed across the North during the course of the war to try and quell political dissent. Always using anti-party rhetoric they equated opposition to Union parties with disloyalty to the United States. In some areas, they came to be seen as Trojan horses for promoting the radical Republican agenda, but in Philadelphia the League had a less partisan profile. For a fuller discussion, see Smith, *No Party Now*, 67-84. For a detailed analysis of the Philadelphia Union League, see Andrew T. Tremel, "The Union League, Black Leaders, and the Recruitment of Philadelphia's

emancipation itself. Alongside Curtin were speakers such as Tennessee Governor and Union Democrat Andrew Johnson, and Indiana's former Democratic Governor Joseph Wright. In this speech Curtin defended emancipation, but only as an attack on the property of the enemy. Slaveholders had forfeited their property rights when they seceded, and legally that "property" was now fair game to the Union army. The governor assured his audience this would not lead to an influx of black labor because "it is well settled…that the free negro does not seek a Northern climate…he is constrained by a law of nature…the negro will not only remain in, but go to the South…as its climate is adapted to his physical conformation, his tastes, and his habits."[69] Curtin did not sound like an abolitionist. But the *Christian Recorder* emphasized the anti-slaveholder tone of Curtin's rhetoric in hailing the meeting as one which "announced the downfall of slavery, the implacable and eternal foe of our union and liberties."[70]

The sources are not available to know exactly Curtin's true feelings on race. His tone bore echoes of the Whig political culture of his past, characterized by Howe as typically embodying "unreflective racial prejudice and unquestionable devotion to property rights."[71] But he clearly moved beyond this, adopting a position that allowed him to support the emancipation policy of the man he described as "a President who always strikes when the people are ready for the blow."[72] Supporting emancipation as a necessary measure to defeat the rebellion does not appear to have dislodged him from his centrist political footing. Democratic newspaper the *Lebanon Advertiser* said in 1863 that "Curtin is not ultra abolition enough for Cameron and his crew," and in 1865 that "Simon represents the Radical or negro-voting element, while Curtin is representative of the

African American Civil War Regiments," *Pennsylvania History: A Journal of Mid-Atlantic Studies*, Volume 80, Number 1 (Winter 2013): 13-36.
[69] *Philadelphia Press*, March 12, 1863.
[70] *Christian Recorder*, March 21, 1863.
[71] Howe, *Political Culture of the American Whigs*, 25.
[72] *Philadelphia Press*, October 7, 1863.

conservative portion of that party."[73] On race, as on much else, he was still viewed as set apart from the more radical Pennsylvanians within Simon Cameron's faction.

The Home Front

William Blair, writing on recruitment in Pennsylvania, noted that Curtin objected to having to implement the draft, and was happy to let obstacles be obstacles. The reason Blair cites is that, at times, recruitment "ran contrary to civilian concerns" and that Curtin "paid more attention to the needs of home."[74] There are grounds for this perspective. In a letter to Major General Couch, Curtin pressed for emergency troops to be mustered out immediately, since "the interests in which they were engaged are suffering from their absence. For some instances, the men called into service are receiving wages from their employers, while the furnaces, workshops, and mines in which they were employed are standing idle."[75] The civilian realm mattered to Curtin, but Blair may overstate his case. Rather than prioritizing one over the other, Curtin recognized the symbiotic relationship that existed between the homefront and the battlefield.

The report of Curtin's State Agent at Washington explained the many ways in which civilian and soldier concerns were often one and the same. Col. R Biddle Roberts wrote to the governor that "being fully advised of your wishes, I devoted my time always first to the soldier, but in many instances the desires of the civilian were so blended with the welfare of the soldier…the widow in quest of her late husband's back pay and her pension – the anxious wife, parents, or other relative, in quest of some lost one who has given up his life in the field."[76] Reports like these may also have helped Curtin to recognize the importance of women as part of

[73] *Lebanon Advertiser*, August 5, 1863 & July 26, 1865.
[74] Blair, "We are Coming Father Abraham," 192, 206.
[75] Andrew Curtin to Darius Couch, July 23, 1863, *Executive Correspondence*, PSA.
[76] Report of Col. R. Biddle Roberts, Pennsylvania State Agent at Washington, D.C. (1863), accessed online through Hathi trust digital library, at http://www.hathitrust.org/.

his civilian electoral coalition. His reelection stump speech in 1863 ended by thanking the women of the state who had "poured out Christian consolation. God Bless the women of Pennsylvania! And let us unite with them in the cry: Our Government now, our Government forever!"[77] Curtin was employing a traditional Whig tactic of "recruiting women and then relying on them to influence their men."[78] Letters between Annie Cabeen and her soldier sweetheart Joseph Lea confirmed the wisdom of Curtin's approach. In the weeks before the election, Annie wrote repeatedly to Joseph of her anxiety for the contest, and how terrible a Democratic victory would be. Joseph was caught up in real battles and was less focused on politics. But he did congratulate Annie on the election result, saying "I almost think I would have voted for Curtin if you had asked me, you seemed so deeply interested in his election."[79] Neither Annie Cabeen nor Joseph Lea could physically vote for Curtin in 1863. No women had the franchise, and Pennsylvania soldiers could cast a ballot only if they received a furlough home, not being permitted to do so in the field. Nevertheless, both fully appreciated the significance of the gubernatorial election for the broad war effort.[80]

Judith Giesburg has explored the roles of working-class women in Pennsylvania during the war. Deprived of their husbands, these women struggled to manage farms and families on their own. Hundreds of them wrote to Curtin asking for "money, furloughs, and discharges."[81] Curtin may have had these women in mind when he stressed to General Couch the need to get men back home because "in many of the agricultural counties of the state the presence of their men is

[77] *Philadelphia Press*, October 7, 1863.
[78] Daniel Walker Howe, *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815-1848* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 606.
[79] Letters between Joseph Lea and Annie Cabeen, The Papers of the Buxton, Lea & Marshall Families ca. 1855-1965, Accession# 11412, Box 2, Special Collections Dept., University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Va.
[80] For example, in her letters Annie reveals herself to be one of the millions of women on the homefront who volunteered in aid and relief agencies.
[81] Giesburg, *Army at Home*, 43. It is unclear how many of these requests were granted, but the fact that many letters quoted neighbors who were receiving support is suggestive that at least some were.

important to both private and public interests."[82] Thousands of women also struggled with the harrowing task of recovering and burying their brothers, fathers, and husbands. Curtin's agents helped many, and, as Giesburg has discovered, in 1865 a program was set up to reimburse soldiers' families for expenses incurred in retrieving and burying bodies themselves.[83] When these women appealed to the governor, whether for furloughs or funerals, they were always "careful to characterize their work as patriotic."[84] They recognized that it was the war effort, and primarily the role of their absent men, that entitled them to assistance. Measures of support for the homefront were closely linked to soldiers, to loyalty, and to the Union. Like Curtin's negotiations around the draft, all these actions must be seen as both civilian and military, both non-partisan and political.

Reelection

Curtin's health suffered badly during the war and, in his third annual address to the legislature, he made public his intention not to seek re-election.[85] Privately, the governor sought a War Democrat to replace him on a non-partisan basis. As part of this plan, Curtin asked McClure to visit the President to secure him a foreign posting and, on April 13, 1863, Lincoln wrote to Curtin telling him that if "you shall desire to go abroad, you can do so with one of the first class missions." The governor responded the next day that "the condition of my health and considerations of public policy admonish me to accept your generous offer."[86] The intention was

[82] Andrew Curtin to Darius Couch, July 23, 1863, *Executive Correspondence*, PSA.
[83] Giesburg, *Army at Home*, 150-51. To help the children left parentless by these deaths, Curtin was also the instigator behind the setting up of schools for soldiers' orphans. Reed, ed., *Papers of the Governors*, 465.
[84] Giesburg, *Army at Home*, 34.
[85] It is not clear exactly what his condition was, but it required surgery in New York and regularly kept him away from his duties. Kate Curtin to Eli Slifer, (New York) 1862, *Executive Correspondence*, PSA. The recollections of McClure and Wayne Mac Veagh, campaign manager in 1863, both agreed that "in the spring of 1863 there was every indication of a general and final breakdown of his physical system" and that he "felt utterly unequal to the task of entering on another campaign." Egle, *Life and Times of Andrew Gregg Curtin*, 161; McClure, *Old Time Notes of Pennsylvania*, Volume 2, 41.
[86] Abraham Lincoln to Andrew Curtin, April 13, 1863; Andrew Curtin to Abraham Lincoln, April 14, 1863, *Abraham Lincoln Papers*.

for the Democrats to nominate General William Franklin, a Democratic soldier, and then for the Union Party to acquiesce in his support.[87] When the Democratic Party convention came around, Franklin was nominated, but he received only four votes. Instead, George Woodward was chosen, a Democrat of much more dubious loyalty.

This episode is significant in understanding Curtin's temperament, his ideology, and his party. Curtin's desired successor, General William Franklin, has been described by his biographer as a "conservative in politics, social values, and military strategy."[88] It takes a vivid imagination to fit this episode into the traditional historical narrative of Union Parties as merely rebranded Republicans, and Unionism as an almost chimerical ideology. It can more easily be grasped as one of many attempts to reach across party lines, an action consistent with Curtin's past and principles. Whigs had never embraced party to the degree the Democracy had, and Union had always to come first. From the start of his administration Curtin had been keen to appoint Democrats to key roles.[89] Sean Nalty has noted this tendency, pointing out the extent to which "Curtin consciously tried to build support for the Pennsylvania Union Party among non-Republicans," and how this helped exacerbate the feud with Simon Cameron's wing of the party.[90] Whether Curtin's eventual decision to run was due to fears over Woodward, a wish to prevent Cameron from controlling his

[87] Franklin achieved the rank of Major General and played major roles in the Army of the Potomac and the Department of the Gulf, though he is most infamous for taking much of the blame for Fredericksburg. His biography mentions his candidacy for governor as a Democrat but makes no mention of McClure & Curtin's support. See Mark A. Snell, *From First to Last: The Life of Major General William B. Franklin* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2002), 271-273.
[88] Snell, *From First to Last*, xiii.
[89] One of his earliest appointments was to make Reuben C Hale, "an active and respectable member of the Democratic Party," the Quartermaster General, placing him in charge of providing clothing, military equipment and arms to all of Pennsylvania's volunteers. *Weekly Mariettian (*Marietta*)*, June 15, 1861, & McClure, *Old Time Notes of Pennsylvania*, Vol 1, 472.
[90] Sean Nalty, "Come Weal, Come Woe, I am with the Anti-Slavery Party," in *A Political Nation*, eds. Gary W. Gallagher and Rachel A. Shelden (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2012), 144.

successor, or just an improvement in his health and ambition, it seems that his intention to stand down and secure a non-partisan successor was genuine, although fleeting.[91]

The Campaign

As the campaign season approached Curtin faced internal and external opposition. Most serious was the threat from the Democrats, and their candidate George Woodward. The Democratic attack on Curtin was consistent with Democratic campaign tactics elsewhere in the North. The *Daily Patriot and Union* urged votes for "Woodward and the Constitutional Rights of White Men…Woodward and the Union…Woodward and Civil Liberty" against "Curtin and Negro Equality…Curtin and Abolition Disunion…Curtin and Despotism." The Democratic press also seemed worried enough about the strength of Curtin's moniker as the 'soldier's friend' to repeatedly attack it, and to proclaim Woodward the 'poor man's friend,' appealing to the immigrant working class and highlighting Curtin's Know-Nothing background.[92] Refuting the 'soldier's friend' reputation of Governor Curtin may have been especially important to the Democrats because of their own candidate's weaknesses. Woodward was a Supreme Court Justice of Pennsylvania. This gave him a significant reputation for upholding the constitution, but it also meant he had made controversial decisions. Woodward had ruled that soldiers could not vote in the field, a hugely unpopular move that was used mercilessly against him in the Union press.

[91] McClure wrote to Eli Slifer, Secretary of the Commonwealth, stating that "If Franklin is nominated on the 17th every consideration of prudence will dictate his peremptory withdrawal." Alexander McClure to Eli Slifer, June 9, 1863, Eli Slifer Papers, Archives and Special Collections, Dickinson College, Carlisle, PA, online at http://archives.dickinson.edu/digitized-resources/alexander-kelly-mcclure-correspondence.
[92] *Daily Patriot and Union*, October 12, 1863; *Columbia Democrat and Bloomsburg General Advertiser*, August 22, 1863, accessed through *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*, Library of Congress, online at http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/ (hereafter, *Chronicling America*).

The other charge commonly made against Woodward was that he was a peace Democrat. Generally Unionists could make this charge only by relying on hearsay and rumor.[93] Woodward had two sons who fought for the Union, and in the weeks before the vote he made known his support for the war's vigorous prosecution.[94] Elements of the Democratic press certainly advocated for peace, but rarely, if ever, at the cost of the Union. The official Democratic platform walked a careful line. Resolutions viciously lambasted arbitrary arrests and attacks on freedom of speech, but they also denounced the intimation that the "party entertains now, or ever has entertained, or ever can entertain, the slightest sympathy with the present gigantic rebellion…or would ever consent to peace upon any terms involving a dismemberment of the Union." The convention went on to quote the Congressional resolution of 1861, declaring a limited war to "defend and maintain the supremacy of the Constitution and to preserve the Union."[95] This was the Democratic basis for continued war, and in their eyes it permitted loyal opposition to emancipation, the draft, and the suspension of habeas corpus. Woodward came close to defeating Curtin, and it suggests that many in Pennsylvania were sympathetic to this articulation of the war's purpose. Holding to his centrist position by focusing on a war for Union helped Curtin against the Democrats, but it made the governor vulnerable within his own coalition.

Curtin faced astonishing opposition from the continued machinations of Simon Cameron. Curtin was justifiably worried about the election and wrote to Lincoln urging him to grant all "reasonable and proper requests" of the state central committee and that "wherever it is possible, furloughs be granted to influential citizens of the State now in the public service."[96] At the same time, Cameron wrote the President urging him not to offer any assistance. Cameron assured

[93] Shankman, *The Pennsylvania Anti-War Movement*, 129.
[94] *Evening Telegraph*, October 5, 1863.
[95] *Daily Patriot & Union*, June 18, 1863.
[96] Andrew Curtin to Abraham Lincoln, September 4, 1863, *Abraham Lincoln Papers*.

Lincoln that he and others were providing all the support necessary to secure the governor's reelection. But he also let the President know that "if the result was to operate only on his own private fortunes, there are many good Republicans and pious Christians who would see him [Curtin] in Hell first."[97] A Cameron organ, The *Pittsburgh Gazette*, was barely less scathing. The *Gazette* claimed Curtin and McClure were allied with individuals who "don't exactly believe in the success of the war, and would be glad to see it arrested by foreign intervention." [98]

As well as being attacks in a personal vendetta, these were also evidence of a clear coalition rift. *The Gazette* distinguished within its own broad anti-Democratic political movement, praising two "Republicans" who were hostile to Curtin, and berating the "Union Party" were it to re-nominate the governor.[99] Cameron used his press organs to criticize Curtin, and at the Union Party convention tried to replace the governor with the more radical John Covode. By election eve *The Gazette* had grudgingly endorsed Curtin, but its vitriolic assaults show not only the depths of the Cameron-Curtin feud, but also the problematic and shifting nature of party allegiance and identity. The more radical Cameron faction no doubt resented Curtin's constant appeals to the center. The benefits of this centrism were shown by the support Curtin received from a formerly hostile Democratic newspaper.

The *Huntingdon Globe* also differentiated between the Union party and the Republicans, but this time to Curtin's benefit. The *Globe* described itself as a "Democratic Family Journal," which had endorsed Stephen Douglas and Curtin's opponent Henry Foster in 1860. By 1862, the paper was pledged to the governor and the "independent straight-out Union men of the country" but opposed to the "Simon-pure, double dyed Republican party" who had recently offered up a

[97] Simon Cameron to Abraham Lincoln, September 18, 1863, *Abraham Lincoln Papers*.
[98] *Pittsburgh Gazette*, July 27, 1863.
[99] Ibid.

candidate whose "heart was in the Union movement only so far as to make his own election sure." In the 1863 election the *Globe* supported Curtin and the Union party, claiming to speak for all loyal Democrats, and against the peace wing of the party. [100] This attempt to siphon off loyal Democrats, while vilifying Copperheads, was a key component of Curtin's electoral strategy.

"The Mute Eloquence of Disfranchised Soldiers"

By the 1863 election, Isaac Wayne MacVeagh, a lawyer who had served in the army, had replaced McClure as Chairman of the Union Party Committee. When MacVeagh looked back on the election in 1902, his judgment was that "the cause of Curtin was gained by the mute eloquence of disfranchised soldiers whose appeals came from camp, hospital and field to fathers, brothers and friends at home."[101] He had reason to make such an assessment. In the campaign MacVeagh ran, the governor's record as the "soldier's friend" was central to the overall goal of maintaining the Union war effort at whatever cost.

Though they did not have the vote, the mass of the soldiery still found ways to make their voices heard. Timothy Orr has written of how Pennsylvania soldiers "used unanimously approved unit resolutions…to urge all loyal Northerners to save the Union from what they considered a 'viler enemy in their rear.'" The men of the 100th Pennsylvania stated that Copperheads were an "integral part of the Rebellion" and threatened that if these peace Democrats achieved electoral success, soldiers would come home to ensure they "suffer the traitor's doom." Orr analyzed resolutions mostly from the early months of 1863, and noted that "the governor received the highest encomiums from Pennsylvania soldiers."[102] Orr went as far as to suggest these resolutions

[100] *Huntingdon Globe*, October 2, 1860, June 25, 1862, & October 7, 1863.
[101] Egle, *Life and Times of Andrew Gregg Curtin*, 163.
[102] Orr, "A Viler Enemy in Our Rear," 176, 188, 190.

were from soldiers who knew Curtin was in poor health, and speculated that they drafted them to persuade him to run again. Looking through the state's Union newspapers, it is clear that these resolutions continued right up to polling day, and that they did more than threaten the Copperheads.

Soldiers used the press to praise the governor's record caring for the troops, to proclaim his embodiment of Union, and to publish the results of their own replica gubernatorial votes. On August 28, 1863, the third division, first army corps, passed resolutions praising Curtin "the Hon. Governor, who has a never-failing eye and a heart overflowing with gratitude toward the widows and orphans whose husbands and fathers have died tru and patriotic soldiers."[103] In the week before the election the papers were saturated with soldier appeals. *The Agitator* led the way, publishing supposedly private correspondence, such as that of Charles Yahn, 6th Pennsylvania Reserves, who wrote to his brother imploring him to vote for the candidate who is a "true man to the Union," and who could be truer than "the right hand man of the United States – Governor Andrew G. Curtin." The replica ballots are a particularly fascinating example of how these soldiers, seen to be apolitical, and deprived of the franchise, could still make their views powerfully known. Chas Faulkner of the 5th Pennsylvania Reserves, recounted in his letter the results of votes taken in the 5th and 10th Reserves: in the 5th, Curtin received 310 votes to Woodward's 12, and in the 10th, Curtin received 383 to Woodward's 9. On October 7th, *the Huntingdon Globe* published another very one sided Curtin vote of 156 to 29, this time from the 110th Penn.[104] The rank and file soldiery clearly did everything that they could for Curtin, short of actually casting a ballot.

[103] *Philadelphia Inquirer*, August 28, 1863.
[104] *Huntingdon Globe*, October 13, 1863.

"Our Country, Right or Wrong!"

Out on the stump the most desired speakers and endorsements were from senior soldiers and Democrats, or even better, Democratic senior soldiers. General George Meade, hero of Gettysburg, revealed in a letter to his wife the extent to which this was a deliberate tactic. Meade was asked before a speech to say a few words in favor of Curtin's reelection. Meade replied that he would speak only of Curtin's services "in behalf of the volunteers." He was angered when his speech appeared in print with an allusion to Curtin's reelection, and was then reused in an editorial "puffing Curtin."[105] The Meade quotation was used liberally by McClure in his newspaper, the *Franklin Repository*. A General who spoke more willingly for Curtin was Lowell Rousseau of Kentucky. General Rousseau stated that "he knew no politics…and he didn't care" because any man who fought the enemy was "his friend and brother." Rousseau stated that he was no abolitionist and had "never sympathized in the remotest degree with the radical anti-slavery men of the free States," but if slavery helped the enemy, then it had to be rooted out.[106] Winning the war was the only issue, and supporting Curtin the only option.

Speakers had their performances carefully managed with regards to location and message. In more radical Western parts of the state, the now fervently anti-slavery Gen. Benjamin Butler spoke willingly for Curtin. Butler stressed his life long career as a Democrat, a Breckenridge Democrat who in 1860 "would have gone farther to keep them inside the Union," but who now belonged to the Union, "the only party I know." In conservative Philadelphia, Judge Shannon, a "Democrat of the straitest sect, standing up on all occasions for the rights of the Southern people" insisted that there was only one option: to "stand by our country, whether it be right or whether it

[105] George Meade to Margaretta Meade, August 31, 1863, *The American Civil War: Letters and Diaries*.
[106] The *Alleghenian (*Ebensburg), September 3, 1863, *Chronicling America*.

be wrong."[107] This decidedly loaded statement was no slip of the tongue: it was the official campaign slogan.

The *Alleghenian* published the full address of MacVeagh's Union State Committee, entitled "Our Country, Right or Wrong!" This mantra was both transcendent and temporally limited. It was an inspiring call to patriotism, asking people to think of a duty bigger than party, and to recognize that preserving the National Union was the "first, biggest, most solemn and most overshadowing of all political duties." [108] But it also called upon Pennsylvanians to postpone a political grappling with some of the Lincoln administration's more controversial measures. Hence the address ended by acknowledging persistent divisions over the means to end the war, and sublimated those divisions by emphasizing unity over the ends of the war effort: "If…anything is left undone, which some think ought to have been done, or anything has been done which some think should have been left undone, we reserve these matters for more opportune discussion in the calmer days of peace."[109] At one level this was a traditional invoking of 'military necessity,' but in explicitly suggesting that measures could be revisited once the 'military necessity' had passed, it placed an additional layer of doubt on the steps taken. It was a firm invitation for those uncomfortable with administration measures to find a welcome home in Curtin's Union Party.

Few embodied this position better than Col. Thomas C MacDowell. MacDowell was, until 1862, one of the editors of the fiercely Democratic Harrisburg *Patriot and Union.*[110] By 1863, he was speaking for Curtin, telling voters, "I have been a Democrat all my life…I am a Democrat still…I take back nothing that I have ever cherished in the way of principles; I sacrifice nothing

[107] *The Agitator*, October 7, 1863.
[108] *Evening Telegraph*, August 7, 1863.
[109] *The Alleghenian*, September 17, 1863, *Chronicling America*.
[110] Macdowell was actually arrested and briefly imprisoned in 1862 for publishing material suspected of inciting civil unrest. John A. Marshall, *American Bastille: A History of the Illegal Arrests and Imprisonment of American Citizens during the Late Civil War* (Philadelphia: T. W. Hartley, 1876), 501 & *Pennsylvania Daily Telegraph*, October 7, 1862.

that I have ever loved." But, in this contest, he told voters to "Stick to the government; stand by those who are administering it for the time being; and if there are any abuses, I will, after a while, in more peaceful times, join hands with you to reform all those abuses in whatever method may be most effectual; but at present, for God's sake, stand by the Government." MacDowell drew particularly on the dystopian vision of disunion. He had settled on Curtin because "if this Government falls, with it fall the hopes of the world for freedom. Freedom and this Government will be buried in one common tomb for all time." [111] With enthusiasm, or reluctance, all were encouraged to recognize that, for now, the only option was to support the Union, "Right or Wrong."

The inclusiveness of this message targeted all loyal members of the opposition, seeking to drive a wedge between them and their Peace Democrat colleagues. McClure made this explicit in an election editorial in the *Franklin Repository*, where he laboriously listed the vast number of honorable Democrats from 1860 who now filled the Union Party ranks: "Democratic Attorney General…Democratic member of the Legislature…Democratic State Treasurer…leading and earnest opponents of Governor Curtin, and who now support him solely because they feel that his election will cheer the loyal hearts of this continent."[112] The campaign had worked hard to make supporting Curtin an uncomplicated choice for Democrats. The governor himself would reiterate these themes on the stump, powerfully articulating his Unionist message.

Curtin often opened by paying tribute to the local troops, reminding the audience that "for the Government, your neighbours have bled and eat the dust." He scorned "personal defamation" of his opponents, but reserved criticism for those who supported Peace Democrat

[111] *Evening Telegraph*, September 28, 1863, October 13, 1863.
[112] *Franklin Repository*, September 30, 1863.

Vallandigham, for "I do object to their expressing approbation for a man who boasted that in three years of public service he never voted for a bill giving supplies to the army." In contrast to such men, Curtin could state that, "I have declared my devotion to the National Government and my purpose steadfastly to sustain the President." Curtin also demonstrated his message discipline, stating starkly that "I accept all that is bad as well as all that is good in the Government, for I am for the Government, right or wrong." [113]

Despite steadfast support for his Commander in Chief, in the month before the election Curtin told the President of his discomfort with some administration measures. He described the suspension of habeas corpus as a "heavy blow," and the draft as "very odious in the State."[114] These were not issues he would focus on. Instead, Curtin repeatedly told voters the one thing he thought they needed to know about him: "I thank my God that I have one virtue of which I can boast – loyalty to my country."[115] On election eve in Philadelphia, he dramatically tied the founding to the present in making his case for reelection: "I possess none of the shining qualities of manhood which should elevate me above the body of my fellow-citizens. But here, this night, on the sacred ground where the Government was formed, and where the old bell rang out the first clear and distinct notes of liberty to all the world, I praise my God that he directed and controlled me that I have been and am faithful to my country." Come election day, Curtin had no doubt that "Pennsylvania will declare her fidelity with the ballot-box, as she has done with the cartridge-box." [116]

[113] *Philadelphia Press*, October 7, 1863 & October 12, 1863.
[114] Andrew Curtin to Abraham Lincoln, September 18, 1863 & September 4, 1863, *Abraham Lincoln Papers*.
[115] *Philadelphia Press*, October 7, 1863.
[116] *Philadelphia Press*, October 12, 1863.

Andrew Curtin's reelection in 1863 saw his majority halve from 1860. He won by 15,335 votes, less than 3% of the more than 500,000 cast. Given the thousands of soldiers who could not vote, it was an impressive and far from certain victory. It cannot be known exactly why men voted for Curtin. This essay has outlined the basis on which he asked for their support. The biggest factor may well have been the military successes at Gettysburg and Vicksburg, which were out of the governor's hands. Nonetheless, his close bond with the soldiers of his state must surely have helped to strengthen the boost offered by these victories. Like his President, Curtin benefited from affiliation with the troops and the affection and affirmation they offered. It should also be acknowledged that many Pennsylvanians did not vote for Curtin, and their voices are not represented here. For all those who pledged to support their country "right or wrong," there were clearly others for whom the toll of death, and the upheaval of drafts, arrests, and emancipation made them contemplate a change of course. Almost certainly some were Democrats who had always been Democrats, and would vote that way regardless.

Conclusion

William Blair, examining Curtin's recruitment record during the war, argued that the governor failed to employ "any political ideology."[117] This essay has maintained that Andrew Curtin articulated a moderate form of Unionism that was a genuine ideological position, with its own political content and emotional appeal, linked to, but distinctive from Republicanism. Curtin's Unionist ideology came to be virtually inseparable from support for winning the war, but highly separable from party. For the likes of Charles Sumner, or Thaddeus Stevens, the war was an opportunity to reshape what America meant; it was not about restoration, but about revolution. For

[117] Blair, "We are Coming, Father Abraham," 205.

Curtin, it was about maintaining "the Union at all hazards;" everything else was peripheral by comparison.

The nonpartisan Union Party label did undoubtedly help serve Curtin's political purposes. But this is as far as analysis of the Union movement in the Civil War has often gone. One scholar who has looked at this topic in greater detail, Michael Holt, has argued that historians have not correctly understood Lincoln's actions in forming a national Union Party. He has argued that Lincoln "almost from the moment he was elected set out to destroy the Republican Party as it existed in 1860, that is, as an exclusively northern party whose sole basis of cohesion was hostility toward the South and the Democratic party." What Lincoln was trying to do was to "replace the Republican party with a new bisectional organization to be called the Union party."[118] Without passing judgment on whether or not this was what Lincoln was attempting nationally, it seems similar to what Curtin was trying to do within the confines of Pennsylvania. For a state bordering the South, future peace and prosperity would hinge on regional and partisan reconciliation. Relying on a party that was seen as sectional and radical seemed to offer little hope for success.

The political parties that Curtin led were both thoroughly 'Big Tent' organizations. He led a People's Party coalition that sought to soften sectional tensions, and conduct an administration focused on centrist issues like education, and protection for labor and industry. When war came Curtin immediately and consistently reached out and appointed Democrats to key positions. He focused his energies on ensuring his states' soldiers were clothed and fed, that their families were looked after, and that they were buried in a manner fitting to their service. The inclusiveness of his Union Party was emphasized by his plan to step down from the governor's chair and be replaced

[118] Holt, "Abraham Lincoln and the Politics of Union," 330.

by a loyal Democrat. Curtin achieved victories in 1860 and 1863 vital to the national Republican Party, but not dictated by it, not even fought under the same banner.

When Alexander McClure gave a eulogy to Curtin in the Pennsylvania House of Representatives in 1895, he spoke of how at the end of the war the governor had "sought to bind the bruised hearts of war and restore the North and South to union and fellowship," and how his "efforts for reconciliation" were "the brightest of all the bright stars in his crown."[119] Curtin was clearly no sectional or partisan zealot. After the war he would join the Liberal Republicans before serving two terms in Congress as a Democrat in the 1880s. What Union had meant to Curtin was captured best by McClure's final words about his friend, spoken at his funeral: "wherever there shall be the altar and worshiper of free government, there will be lovers and worshipers of the memory of Andrew Gregg Curtin."[120] Voices of moderation were often drowned out in the divisiveness of Civil War politics. Curtin made his heard, finding success in a political movement that embraced the center in personnel and policy.

[119] Alexander K. McClure, *The Life and Services of Andrew G. Curtin* (Harrisburg: C. M. Busch, 1895), 29.
[120] Egle, *Life and Times of Andrew Gregg Curtin*, 79.