

## Lesson Four

### *The Formation of Political Parties*

#### Objectives

Students will be able to:

- 1) Explain what a political party is.
- 2) State what the Federalist Party stood for.
- 3) State what the Republican Party stood for.
- 4) Describe the differences in what each party believed.

#### Materials

- 1) **4.1:** Short descriptions of the Federalist and Republican Parties.
- 2) **4.2:** Examples of Republican and Federalist Party rhetoric.
- 3) **4.3:** Letters of John and Abigail Adams and Thomas Jefferson that demonstrate their different political views.

#### Lesson Outline

- Explain to students what political parties are.
- Explain to students the differences between the Federalist and Republican Parties.
- Have students read **4.1** and chart the differences in opinion of each party on the following subjects: Government, Constitution, France, and Britain.
- Read with class the essays and letters in **4.2**. Have the class match passages to their chart on the Federalist and Republican Parties.

## 4.1

### *The Republican Party*

The Republican Party was started by Thomas Jefferson and James Madison in response to the Federalist Party, run by Alexander Hamilton, whose views dominated the Washington Administration. Both Jefferson and Madison strongly disagreed with Hamilton and fashioned the Republicans as a counterweight to Federalist policies.

Republicans believed that American democracy should be inclusive. They believed that government would work best when the masses were involved, albeit white male masses. Women and blacks were to have no political power. They thought that the powers laid out to the central government in the Constitution should be strictly adhered to. This would limit the power of the central government, give more power to the states and thus to the people.

The Republican Party supported the French Revolution. They believed that a free, fair-minded republican form of government would be born out of the chaos and bloodshed of the Reign of Terror.

Economically, the Republicans felt that the business of Americans should be agriculture. They did not want a manufacturing based economy like Great Britain.

Republicans distrusted Great Britain. They feared that if the United States formed too close a bond to the mother country Britain would again dominate her former colonies.

### *The Federalist Party*

Alexander Hamilton was the leader of the Federalist Party. Though George Washington had no party affiliation, he was strongly influenced by Hamilton's views. Though Adams was himself a Federalist, and was elected president under this party's banner, he and Hamilton would come to distrust and loath each other.

Federalists believed that democracy should be limited. They had a distrust of the common man, and felt that too much power put into the hands of the people would lead to mob rule. Federalists thought that the Constitution should be interpreted loosely. This would give the central government more flexibility to do what was in the nation's economic interest. An example of this would be the foundation of the Bank of the United States.

The French Revolution worried Federalists. They believed that it was a prime example of mob rule and were very concerned that elements of the Republican Party wanted to import the chaos and killing of the Jacobin movement to the United States.

Economically, the Federalists believed that the business of America should be manufacturing. This was the path to wealth and power for a nation. Factories had made Britain rich and the Federalists believed that their example should be emulated.

Unlike Republicans, the Federalists thought that good relations with Great Britain were of paramount importance to the economic well-being of America.

## 4.2

### *Federalist and Republican Partisan Attacks*

***The Prospect Before Us***  
by  
**James Thomson Callender**

#### **Introduction**

Callender was a pro-Republican journalist whom Jefferson supported and encouraged to write attacks against Federalist leaders. The excerpts below are an attack on President John Adams. Excerpt 1 refers to the President's supposed support of former Tories in New Jersey. Excerpt 2 refers to Adams's ill temper and support of Britain over France. Excerpt 1 is taken from *The Prospect Before Us*, volume I, page 28. Excerpt 2 is taken from James Morton Smith, "Sedition in the Old Dominion: James T. Callender and The Prospect Before Us," *The Journal of Southern History*, Vol. 20, No.2, (May, 1954) p. 161.

**Excerpt 1.** "By their *worst enemies*, the militia referred to the tories of the late revolution. Of these a few have become serious republicans; but the great body persist in their old principles. They love English supremacy, they hate American independence, as heartily as ever. They are to a man, attached to Mr. Adams, because they know that his principles are monarchical, and that he is the inflexible friend of England."

**Excerpt 2.** The reign of Mr. Adams has been one continued tempest of malignant passions. As President, he has never opened his lips, or lifted his pen without threatening and scolding; the grand object of his administration has been to exasperate the rage of contending parties to calumniate and destroy every man who differs from his opinions.... Adams and Washington have since been shaping a series of these paper jobbers into judges and ambassadors, as their whole courage lies in want of shame; these poltroons, without risking a manly and intelligent defence of their own measures, raise an affected yelp against the corruption of the French Directory, as if any corruption would be more venal, more notorious, more execrated than their own. The object of Mr. Adams was to recommend a French war, professedly for the sake of supporting American commerce, but in reality for the sake of yoking us into an alliance with the British tyrant.

*The following is an excerpt from a book titled Porcupine's Works... by the pro-Federalist author William Cobbett attacking Thomas Jefferson. The incident Cobbett refers to happened when Jefferson was Governor of Virginia. It is, of course, an exaggerated account of what really occurred.*

Among the other merits of Mr. Jefferson, as stated by Hampden, we find "his attachment to the CIVIL and RELIGIOUS rights of his fellow citizens, ..."

"It appears, however, that Mr. Jefferson has generally sacrificed the civil rights of his countrymen to his own personal safety. We are told, in a public address, by Mr. Charles Simms, of Virginia, who must have been well acquainted with the circumstance, "that Mr. Jefferson, when *governor* of Virginia, *abandoned the trust* with which he was charged, at the moment of an invasion by the enemy, by which great confusion, *loss, and distress, accrued to the state*, in the destruction of public records and vouchers for public expenditures.

"Now here was a period of public danger, when Mr. Jefferson's attachment to the civil rights of his countrymen might have shone very conspicuously, by facing and averting the danger; here would have been a fine opportunity for him to have displayed his public spirit in bravely *rallying* round the standard of liberty and civil rights [...] yet when real danger appeared, the *governor of the ancient dominion* dwindled into the *poor, timid philosopher*, and instead of rallying his brave countrymen, he fled for safety from a few light horsemen, and shamefully abandoned his trust!!"

### 4.3

*The Adamses and Thomas Jefferson show their different political colors.*

Abigail Adams to Thomas Jefferson, January 29, 1787  
Excerpted from *The Adams-Jefferson Letters*, pages 168–169

London Janry. 29th. 1787

MY DEAR SIR

[...]

With regard to the Tumults in my Native state<sup>1</sup> which you inquire about, I wish I could say that report had exaggerated them. It is too true Sir that they have been carried to so allarming a Height as to stop the Courts of justice in several Counties. Ignorant, wrestless desperadoes, without conscience or principles, have led a deluded multitude to follow their standard, under the pretence of grievences which have no existence but in their imaginations. Some of them were crying out for a paper currency, some for equal distribution of property, some were for annihilating all debts, others complaining that the Senate was a useless Branch of Government, that the Court of common pleas was unnecessary, and that the sitting of the General Court in Boston was a grievence. By this list you will see the materials which compose this rebellion, and the necessity there is of the wisest and most vigorus measure to quell and suppress it. Instead of that laudible spirit which you approve, which makes a people watchful over their Liberties and alert in the defence of them, these mobish insurgents are for sapping the foundation, and distroying the whole fabrick at once. [...]

Thomas Jefferson to Abigail Adams, February 22, 1787  
Excerpted from *The Adams-Jefferson Letters*, pages 172–173

Paris Feb. 22. 1787

DEAR MADAM

I am to acknolege the honor of your letter of Jan. 29. and the papers you were so good as to send me. They were the latest I had seen or have yet seen. They left off too in a critical moment; just at the point where the Malcontents make their submission on condition of pardon, and before the answer of government was known. I hope they pardoned them. The spirit of resistance to government is so valuable on certain occasions, that I wish it to be always kept alive. It will often be excercised when wrong, but better so than not to be exercised at all. I like a little rebellion now and then. [...] I am with sincere esteem Dear Madam your affectionate humble servt.,

TH: JEFFERSON

---

<sup>1</sup> Shays's Rebellion.