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Suggested Citation:

Queener, Verton M. "East Tennessee Sentiment and the Secession Movement, November 1860-June, 1861." *The East Tennessee Historical Society's Publications* 20 (1948): 59-83.

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EAST TENNESSEE SENTIMENT AND THE SECESSION MOVEMENT, NOVEMBER, 1860 – JUNE, 1861

By VERTON M. QUEENER

Throughout the presidential campaign of 1860, Tennesseans like all other southerners hoped that a way would be found to avoid secession, or that Lincoln would not be elected, for according to contemporary political oratory, his election was the only eventuality that would force disunion. When the news arrived that Lincoln was elected all hopes and doubts were dispelled, and Tennesseans, again like all southerners, stood overawed and dumbfounded. Nonetheless, they were not yet ready to secede from the Union.¹ Many southern leaders throughout the campaign had foreseen the outcome and had warned the voters time and again that it was a "waste of labor to fight Republicanism, or its representative, Abraham Lincoln." Voters were told that there should be but one opinion in regard to the Republican party; namely, that it was "sectional, aggressive upon the South, founded upon an idea [the abolition of slavery] to resist the triumph of which every Southern man should be willing to sacrifice all other political issues and make common cause against a common enemy."²

Though warned many times, and knowing with an inexpressible fear that the warnings were true, Tennesseans and southerners generally could not sacrifice "all issues" and unite against a common political enemy because the Republican party was not to them the only enemy. The Democratic party was hopelessly divided, largely over the issue of slavery, which had brought the Republican party into being.³ There were in the Democratic party some secessionists, but a large majority of Democrats were not secessionists. Several days after the election in 1860, one writer claimed that the "Union party of the South embraces substantially the whole people." The writer meant to include in the Union party not only those who had voted for John Bell and Edward Everett, but all men who hoped that

¹James G. De Roulhac Hamilton, *Party Politics in North Carolina, 1835-1860* (University of North Carolina, *James Sprunt Historical Publications*, XV, Chapel Hill, 1915), 199. While Hamilton was discussing North Carolina politics, the same feelings seemed to be reflected by the Memphis and Nashville newspapers, 1860-61, whatever the shade of political opinion held by the paper.

²Nashville *Republican Banner* (hereafter referred to as *Banner*, which was its commonly accepted name), August 30, 1860.

³*Brownlow's Knoxville Whig* (hereafter referred to as *Whig*), September 22, 1860, a letter written by Wm. H. Sneed to the *Whig*, which was campaigning bitterly against William L. Yancey because he stood for secession.

southern rights could be preserved under the general government. To most people there was still a "possibility of readjusting" sectional differences; hence, the necessity of separation and the immediate threat of war was not clear to all. A minority realized that sectional differences could not be adjusted, and they were secessionists — secessionists not by choice but only because separation was the last recourse, the only alternative being "abject surrender," as they reasoned sadly.

In this study the writer proposes to examine briefly the change in sentiment which occurred in the three sections of Tennessee from the time of the November election until Tennessee voted to leave the union, and then, if possible, to find reasons why one section of the state voted in an overwhelmingly different manner from the other two sections. In the survey of the state, West Tennessee is considered first, for there the change in sentiment began and moved eastward.

Around election time in 1860 many West Tennesseans were trying to hold untenable grounds by opposing both separation and federal coercion. The position predominantly held among Democrats of West Tennessee was shown by editorial comment in two Memphis newspapers. The *Appeal*, a paper supporting Douglas, in answer to Douglas, himself, who had just committed himself to coercion in a speech at Norfolk, Virginia, a day or two before, said:

If any State should differ with us in the election of Lincoln . . . and should by the legitimate and sovereign voice of her people declare her independence and retire from the Union, we would not assist in coercing her. But so long as she remains . . . as one of the United States, we think its laws ought to be enforced.⁴

The *Memphis Morning Bulletin* said:

We maintain that the general government under the misrule of *loco foco* administrations, which have allowed the hypocrites and rascals of the Northern States to defy its power with impunity in the matter of the Fugitive Slave Law, has forfeited its right to "coerce" South Carolina or any other Southern State that shall show an equal act of insubordination.

The argument continued that

the Federal Government must first take with ball, cartridge, and grapeshot, the beam out of the eye of Massachusetts, Vermont, etc., before it can perform, with our consent, the operation of removing the mote from the eye of

⁴*Memphis Daily Enquirer*, November 24, 1860; *Memphis Avalanche*, October 8, 1860. The *Enquirer* was supporting Bell and the Union while the *Avalanche* was supporting Breckinridge and secession if necessary.

⁵*Memphis Appeal*, October 9, 1860. The *Appeal* supported Douglas and the Union.

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Southern States. If he [Andrew Johnson] had previously done this . . . then we should be with Andy in his notions of "coercing".⁶

The two papers stated more correctly than they knew the whole situation as to feeling both before and after the 1860 election.

The story of how sentiment changed in West Tennessee is told by the votes in three elections. In the November, 1860, presidential election, West Tennessee voted 18,384 for Bell, 7,548 for Douglas, and 11,697 for Breckinridge.⁷ This election was in no sense a clear test of secession sentiment. While the advocates of secession in the South urged the election of Breckinridge, they argue that his election would not promote secession, but rather prevent it. The slogan used by Breckinridge writers and campaign speakers was a statement quoted from Breckinridge saying, "Instead of breaking up the Union, we intend to strengthen and lengthen it." Hence, the presidential election, at least in Tennessee, was almost no measure of secession sentiment in the state. The large combined vote for Bell and Douglas simply indicated that many West Tennesseans were politically in 1860 as they had long been, namely Conservatives, and that the section was not as yet greatly interested in the extreme southern program. In the February election, when the issue was whether Tennessee should call a convention to consider her relationship to the federal union, West Tennessee in this first test on the secession issue voted for a convention by 22,623 to 7,864, while the rest of the state voted against a convention. This election, like the presidential election of the previous November, was not clear-cut on the issue of separation or union. Some claimed it meant very little in the state as a whole because the time had been too short for the campaign, and therefore the people were not informed on the real issues or aroused to their dangers. But some 23,000 West Tennesseans who voted for a convention were aroused and were at least willing to consider separation as early as February, 1861; while only about 8,000 were definitely opposed to separation and voted against a convention. Thus West Tennesseans at the first opportunity made clear their overwhelming sentiment for separation and against coercion of the southern states. When the June election was held four months later, the issue was single and clear-cut and West Tennesseans voted for separation 27,432 to 9,581.⁸

⁶Memphis Morning Bulletin, December 23, 1860. This paper supported Bell and the Union.

⁷Marquerite B. Hamer, "The Presidential Campaign of 1860 in Tennessee," East Tennessee Historical Society's Publications, No. 3 (Knoxville, 1931), 13-22; Nashville Banner, November 27, 1860.

⁸Memphis Morning Bulletin, February 1, 12, 1861; Memphis Daily Enquirer, February 12, 1861; John Hallam, *The Diary of an Old Lawyer* (Nashville, 1895), 156-58; Mary R. Campbell, "Unionist Victory in the Election of February 9, 1861," East Tennessee Historical Society's Publications, No. 14 (1942), 24; M. R. Gibbs to Andrew Johnson, February 1, 1861, Johnson MSS. (Library of Congress); *Whig*, July 13, 1864; Nashville Banner, February 22, 1861.

Middle Tennessee went through the same sort of a transformation as did West Tennessee and to an even greater degree. In the summer of 1860 the people in and round Nashville, citizens typical of all Middle Tennessee, agreed on opposition to secession but their agreement went no further. A large faction of voters was in the Bell and Everett group, as was the strongest newspaper, the *Nashville Republican Banner*. In the November election Bell received 29,006 votes; Breckinridge, 34,452; and Douglas, 2,187. The majority for Breckinridge did not mean that a majority favored secession, for on February 9 Middle Tennessee voted against a convention and the consideration of secession by 28,290 to 27,330. The *Banner* sensed the situation when it said the results of the election were due to the people's distrust of any convention because of what had happened in other states.⁹ The people could not trust any delegates they might elect; in fact, they could not trust themselves. The *Union and American*, now thoroughly unpopular because it had urged that separation was the only solution, cried out at the results of the February election, "May God in his mercy protect a deceived and betrayed people."¹⁰

By May 17 the growing sentiment for secession in Middle Tennessee had progressed to such a point that the editors of the five Nashville newspapers, heretofore often bitter rivals and always advocating diverse policies, joined forces to "recommend most earnestly that the people of Tennessee on the 8th of June, at the ballot-box, unite as one man and give their unanimous endorsement to the action of our Legislature declaring our noble state independent forever of the United States Government." They added a note of triumph, "Unionism is dead in Tennessee."¹¹ On June 8, 1861, Middle Tennessee voted 58,265 for separation to 8,198 against¹²—not unanimous, as the editors had hoped, but by a large enough margin to show that the section had changed from pro-Union to a strong resistance group. The choice had been clear, but not easy. Middle Tennesseans were for the Union and did not want secession, but they were opposed to coercion by force and would resist coercion with property and life. As the *Union and American* had put it in November, 1860, "Ten-

⁹Nashville *Banner*, November 27, 1860, February 13, 22, 1861; Mary R. Campbell, "Unionist Victory," *loc. cit.*, 26. Southerners who realized that there was no solution to the sectional rivalry short of secession unless the southern program could be carried out voted for Breckinridge on the basis that his election would "strengthen and lengthen" the Union. People were afraid of a convention because in some southern states a convention had taken the state out of the Union without the people's having a chance to ratify or reject the work of the convention.

¹⁰Nashville *Union and American*, February 12, 1861.

¹¹Nashville *Banner*, April 28, May 10, 17, 1861. The *Banner* carried a letter signed by Neill S. Brown, Cave Johnson, Return J. Meigs, E. H. Ewing, John Bell, and Bailie Peyton, all prominent Unionists, saying that coercion of southern states must be resisted at all costs.

¹²*Whig*, July 13, 1861.

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nessee does not propose to secede, but she will not permit force to be used against any Southern state that may see proper to withdraw from the Union."¹³ Could the war have been avoided and the Union saved if coercion had not been resorted to so hastily?

As the flood tide of secession sentiment moved eastward and into East Tennessee, some individuals in this area changed position; but the change to secession sentiment, or separation as it was called, never reached overwhelming proportions as in other parts of the state. In the summer of 1860 "Parson" William G. Brownlow, the chief spokesman for East Tennessee, urged with all his power the election of Bell and Everett and charged over and over that men from South Carolina and Mississippi broke up the Charleston Democratic convention because they wanted to break up the Union. The feelings of East Tennesseans generally were expressed by S. R. Rodgers, who in a long and able speech said, "We are for staying where we are, in the Union," for "holding plum still."¹⁴

Most East Tennesseans during the campaign of 1860 and later were for "holding plum still" on any question about separation from the Union. In the presidential election Bell carried this section of the state by a 3,416 majority.¹⁵ It must always be remembered that all three candidates in 1860 were running on what to them was a "save the Union" platform. After the election in November, 1860, East Tennessee leaders seemed to intensify their pro-Union campaign, but their chief spokesman, Brownlow, who had worked with all his might throughout the campaign for Bell and Everett, confused the issues because he was still strongly opposed to Abraham Lincoln. Brownlow began a reasoned campaign to prevent East Tennessee from joining the rest of the South in the slavery struggle. In several long, well-reasoned and well-written editorials, the *Whig* urged "conservative and reasonable men of the South to consider" before they decided "that the election of Lincoln was sufficient grounds for leaving the Union."¹⁶ Over and over, Brownlow pledged that "if the President and the Congress and the Supreme Court . . . sanction any such iniquitous measures [meaning coercion or subjugation] and unite in attempts to carry them out, I advocate resistance at all hazards, and to the last extremity, and I would then join the South in a

¹³Nashville *Banner*, November 17, 1860, quoting *Union and American*. The *Banner* at this time did not subscribe to this idea, quoting Jackson's nullification proclamation of 1832 in reply. By April the *Banner*, too, was of the same opinion as its opponent, the *Union and American*. Nashville *Banner*, April 18, 1861.

¹⁴*Whig*, September 1, 1860; E. Merton Coulter, *William G. Brownlow* (Chapel Hill, 1937), 130; O. P. Temple, *East Tennessee and the Civil War* (Cincinnati, 1899) 156; C. W. Chastleton to Andrew Johnson, January 2, 1861, expressed the conviction that disunion feeling was gaining ground very rapidly in the state. Johnson MSS. See also Chastleton to Johnson, December 19, 1860, *ibid*.

¹⁵Nashville *Banner*, November 27, 1860.

¹⁶*Whig*, November 24, 1860, and ff.

war of extermination!" In the main, however, his paper was filled with political denunciations, personal trivia, Jew-baiting, and anti-Negro stories.¹⁷

On the 19th day of January, 1861, the *Whig* carried an editorial notification of the election to be held on February 9, "three weeks off." The editor predicted that "not a disunionist would be elected from East Tennessee." He appealed for nominees of known Union sentiments and for all to vote so that "none but Union men" would be elected and so that no convention would be held. "We have no parties, but Union men and disunionists." He would let no candidate "dodge the issue. All must speak out. We must turn out and fight for our firesides and homes against an army of rebels," he said.¹⁸

The following week there appeared in small print a long article by Judge W. H. Sneed announcing his candidacy to the proposed convention from Knox County. In his announcement he claimed that the Union was already broken and that the only question before the people was whether they should decide to go with the North or the South. He was firmly for the South and would do all in his power to take the state out of the Union.¹⁹ After this one announcement, his campaign meetings and his speeches were never publicized by the *Whig*.

The general feeling of the people and the intensified Union campaign resulted in the overwhelming election of Union delegates and a large majority vote cast in East Tennessee against a convention. The February vote against the convention was 33,666 to 7,551.²⁰ When the June election was held four months later, East Tennessee voted to stay with the Union by 32,923 to 14,780 votes. The number of votes for separation in this election was roughly double the number cast in February for a convention, and the number of votes for the Union in June was 743 short of the no-convention votes in February.²¹ East Tennessee, unlike the other two sections of the state, still had an overwhelming majority for the Union.

The outcome of this state election of June 8, 1861, has caused widespread comment; much explanation and many reasons have

¹⁷*Ibid.*, January 5, 12, 19, 1861.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, January 19, 26, 1860.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, February 2, 1861.

²⁰Nashville *Banner*, February 22, 1861; Mary R. Campbell, "Unionist Victory," *loc. cit.*, 26, gives the vote for the convention as 33,294 to 7,772; V. M. Queener, "Origin of the Republican Party in East Tennessee," *East Tennessee Historical Society's Publications*, No. 13 (1941), 66-90. When the February returns were known in New York, the *Tribune* of that city commented under the heading, "Pro-Slavery Rebellion—Election in Tennessee," that the election in Tennessee put the secessionists to rout and that other sections would do likewise in the rest of the South if "Republicans would stand firm and give them some time." *Nashville Union and American*, February 20, 1861.

²¹Queener, "Origin of the Republican Party," *loc. cit.*, 73-75; *Whig*, July 13, 1861.

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been given as to why East Tennessee voted differently from the rest of the state. Some writers have looked for one reason; others for many. Some of the reasons given include: the influence of the Tennessee River and the need for its improvement into a highway of commerce; the influence of leaders, though no explanation is given as to why the leaders decided to stay with the Union; the influence of the soil and crops produced on that soil. By some the persistent pro-Union sentiment has been attributed to the absence of slavery on any considerable scale, to the source of immigration, or the patriotism of the people and their great love for the Union. No one reason, nor in fact can a combination of any two or three reasons be found which will satisfy the curious as to why East Tennessee voted differently on this issue of separation. There are many reasons. Some are general and complicated, others are particular, definite and simple, but probably no one of the reasons applied to all East Tennessee Unionists at any given time. One more attempt to answer the question may not be amiss.

In the first place, East Tennessee had frequently voted differently from the dominating middle section of the state after 1836. There was a political cleavage which existed long before 1861 and which persists to this day. This political cleavage began back in the 1820's for "By 1827 the Tennessee attitude had taken on a distinctly sectional aspect." At the beginning, the middle and western sections seemingly pulled away from East Tennessee, for "there was a rapidly growing realization" in the middle and western sections that "a strict construction viewpoint was necessary as a defense against the threatening abolitionist designs of certain elements in the North."²² While this feeling was developing west of the Cumberland Mountains, East Tennesseans were boasting the first abolition newspaper and organizing manumission societies. Tennessee's "three divisions, . . . characterized by essentially different economic interests, have developed as separate entities . . ." For example, only six of the twenty-nine counties in East Tennessee produced as many as 100 bales of cotton in 1860, while in Middle Tennessee eighteen of the thirty-five counties produced more than 100 bales.²³ The facilities for earning a livelihood and accumulating wealth were different, which gave the people of the eastern end of the state a different attitude toward slavery and other political issues.

Secondly, the movement for separation was a tide of sentiment which swept over the state from west to east and reached East Ten-

²²Stanley J. Folmsbee, *Sectionalism and Internal Improvements in Tennessee* (Knoxville, 1939), 54-55.

²³*Ibid.*, 5; United States Census Office, *Eighth Census, Agriculture of the United States in 1860* (Washington, 1864), 132-43, 136-37, 238-39.

nessee only after the section had already decided to stay with the Union. This tide of feeling, which had been accumulating for years, swept over the South between the time when the two major parties held their conventions in 1860 and the call for volunteers by President Lincoln after the fall of Fort Sumter. The tidal wave of secession sentiment had its beginning in South Carolina and Mississippi, but it reached East Tennessee, not from the east or south, but from the west. It moved from Mississippi into West Tennessee, then to Middle Tennessee, where with minor exceptions all were convinced that separation was the only recourse. It rolled on toward the eastern end of the state, over the hundred miles of poverty-stricken sandstone soil and rocks of the Cumberland Plateau and reached the valley as the June vote was being taken. This was too late for East Tennessee to be engulfed. The die had been cast by the comparatively poor, isolated, relatively uninformed, and extremely conservative mountain men of East Tennessee, men who had been harangued, cajoled, and persuaded that war would not come to them if they stood "plum still." The tide of secession sentiment was felt in East Tennessee and the people were changing as the weeks and months passed but not as rapidly as they had changed in the other sections. People of the section continued to change from the Union side to the Confederate side all during the war and to the Democratic party during the reconstruction. Especially was the change noticeable at the time of Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation and again after Johnson, East Tennessee's most prominent leader, had become president and had broken with the Radicals in Congress, who were at the time calling the tune by which the dominating group in East Tennessee was dancing.²⁴ But the tide of feeling for secession, which later changed to an alignment with Conservative Unionism and finally with the Democratic party, never changed a majority of East Tennesseans, who were pro-Union during the war, "Radicals" during reconstruction and Republicans thereafter.

The East Tennessee attitude toward the institution of slavery was a third reason why they voted differently from their neighbors. The attitude was one of disapproval of slavery plus a fear of economic competition and possibly physical harm from the Negroes. Some writers have indicated that the Civil War was not over slavery but rather a struggle to save the Union. People in Tennessee of that day did not have the advantage of historical hindsight to assign reasons; they thought the issue was slavery—the designation of property in man. When the *Nashville Banner* said that the question of

²⁴O. P. Temple, *Notable Men of Tennessee* (New York, 1912), 44-46.

abolition was not immediately upon the South, the *Union and American* of the same city retaliated by saying:

If the question of abolition of slavery is not now upon us, what is it that agitates the country . . . ? What . . . has already driven seven states out of the Union? What . . . induced meetings . . . to request the Governor to convene the Legislature . . . ? What . . . gave Abraham Lincoln the overwhelming vote of Northern States . . . ? What . . . has brought the free and slave states to the verge of civil war? What but the statement of the President-elect that people will not be content until slavery is on the way out?²⁵

This newspaper thought the trouble was slavery.

East Tennesseans saw the whole conflict as being over slavery. O. P. Temple wrote, "The overpowering influence of slavery, the fear of falling under the condemnation of the mighty oligarchy of slaveholders, to some extent had paralyzed the minds of men" in East Tennessee. There was, however, "constantly presented . . . the dark picture of the horrible desolation to be wrought in the South by Abolition rule."²⁶

The whole period of threatening war was a time of bewilderment for East Tennesseans and brought out their fundamental attitude toward slavery. Brownlow approached the feelings held by a majority in an article urging East Tennessee to secede from the rest of the state, saying, "We have no interests in common with the cotton states. We are a grain-growing and stock-raising people, and we can conduct a cheap government and live independently inhabiting the Switzerland of America."²⁷ He might have gone ahead to point out that East Tennessee was the original home of the first abolitionist newspaper in America, that the people had been foremost in forming and promoting manumission societies long before 1860. He could have pointed to Ezekial Birdseye, who wrote from Newport, Tennessee, in 1841, to Gerrit Smith, saying, "Mr. Patterson the President of the Manumission Society of that part of Jefferson County . . . stated that the Society had over 600 members," but that meetings were not open "owing to the oppressive laws of the State." A few months later he again wrote to Smith: "Few own slaves [in East Tennessee] and as a general Rule they are not slaveholders from principle; but either hold them by decent [sic] or have purchased to save them from a worse fate. Many have done so who believed they were doing an act of humanity."²⁸

²⁵Nashville *Union and American*, March 2, 1861.

²⁶Temple, *Notable Men of Tennessee*, 34-35.

²⁷*Whig*, January 26, 1861.

²⁸Ezekial Birdseye to Gerrit Smith, January 25, November 27, 1841, W. F. Galpin (ed.), "Letters of an East Tennessee Abolitionist," *East Tennessee Historical Society's Publications*, No. 3 (1931), 137, 148.

East Tennesseans did not like the state laws which provided that county courts could make no more manumissions without security that the freed Negroes would be removed from the state. Nor did they approve the laws prohibiting free Negroes from moving into the state. People in this end of the state would have provided "far more emancipations if the process had been easier and if the masters had not feared that the freed Negroes would be victimized." These people in the main disliked the institution of slavery and felt that if new expenses or physical risks were to be borne because of slavery, they ought to be borne by slave holders and not by East Tennesseans who claimed to have no interest in that type of property.²⁹

Mountain whites, while disliking slavery in an abstract sort of way and thoroughly disliking the Negro, still were not out and out abolitionists. They did not despise slavery *per se*, but they did despise the idea of bringing slave labor into competition with their own.³⁰ East Tennesseans were working people and to free the Negroes and not dispose of them would be worse in their way of thinking than the continuation of slavery. They had the typical northern attitude toward Negroes, that is, the individual Negro is to be shunned and avoided, but the race is greatly mistreated. While most southern people do not like the Negro race, they do like the individual Negro. East Tennesseans, because of soil and climate, realized they were not destined to become planters or large slaveholders. They found comparatively "small markets in the slavery sections because of transportation difficulties"; therefore "Slavery played no basic part in the economic life of the Southern Highlanders," nor were slaves present in sufficient numbers to offer labor competition, but these mountain people feared free Negroes. "If you liberated the Negro, what will be the next step? What will we do with two million Negroes in our midst? Blood, rape and rapine will be our portion. You can't get rid of the Negro except by holding him in slavery." So spoke Andrew Johnson, the great advocate of Negro freedom and coercion of the southern states. Brownlow revealed much the same spirit when he wrote an editorial entitled "Clinging to the Negro" in which he claimed that southern states, "even the Old Dominion," were "enlisting and drilling free Negroes." Brownlow said, "We abhor Negroes and Whites mingling

²⁹J. Merton England, *The Free Negro in Ante-Bellum Tennessee* (Nashville, 1937), 44-45; *Memphis Morning Bulletin*, February 12, 1861.

³⁰Oliver Taylor, *Historic Sullivan* (Bristol, 1909), 277.

in a White man's war. We doubt . . . the policy of learning [sic] Negroes military tactics."³¹

East Tennesseans not only had a long-standing attitude against slavery, they owned very few slaves and seemingly few owners had much enthusiasm for the institution. In the year 1860 East Tennessee had a total of 27,574 slaves, compared with Middle Tennessee's 147,177 and West Tennessee's 100,983. Only two counties in East Tennessee had more than 2,000 slaves and ten others had more than 1,000 each. In Middle Tennessee five counties had more than 10,000 and twenty-two others had more than 1,000, while only eight, Cumberland Plateau counties, had fewer than 1,000.³² Many of the comparatively few individual slaveowners in East Tennessee were convinced that slave-owning was neither right morally nor profitable as a business. In eleven of the twenty-nine counties composing East Tennessee fewer than two percent of the free whites owned slaves; in four of the eleven, less than one percent; and in sixteen of the remaining eighteen counties, less than three percent. In only two counties did as many as four percent of the free white population own slaves. The votes cast for separation in June, 1861, seem to show a lack of enthusiasm for slavery on the part of the owners. In five counties only one vote or less per slaveholder was cast for separation, and in eleven counties only two votes per slaveholder; five counties cast four, and two counties, Sullivan and Polk, where very few slaves were owned, cast five or more per slaveholder.³³

It should be remembered that East Tennessee spokesmen, especially Brownlow, had urged repeatedly and on every occasion that the northern states and the federal government meant to make no attack on slavery nor to interfere with it in any way. "Be not deceived," he had shouted, "No peaceable citizen will be molested. Neither will slavery be disturbed." It may be that some few slaveholders in East Tennessee believed this, although there is no evidence to indicate such naiveté. Also, the two counties voting heaviest for separation were remote from Knoxville, the home of the *Whig*. When the time came to fight, men such as C. W. Hall, who had always held to the Democratic party, a slaveholder, and the son of a slaveholder, stayed

³¹Coulter, *Brownlow*, 84-109; *Whig*, May 25, 1861. Brownlow said, "It is creditable to the Governors of Pennsylvania and Ohio, that they have refused to countenance the enlistment of free Negroes . . . as Southern men are doing." Johnson favored the use of Negroes in northern forces throughout the war. In 1863 he sent Lincoln a clipping from the *Nashville Union* advocating the payment of 300 dollars in addition to the existing bounty to loyal masters consenting to their slaves' entering the service of the United States. These slaves were to be substitutes for white men. Andrew Johnson to Abraham Lincoln, September 23, 1863, Lincoln Papers (Library of Congress).

³²Eighth Census, *Population of the United States in 1860* (Washington, 1864), 132-33, 238-39. Four counties have been organized since the Civil War.

³³*Ibid.*; Queener, "Origin of the Republican Party," *loc cit.*, 73.

with the Union after having previously campaigned for Douglas. He maintained that he "could not believe the whole people of any State would be induced to fight for the preservation and perpetuation of an institution [slavery] so repugnant to American ideas of liberty,"³⁴ His lack of enthusiasm for slavery as an institution was felt by many other East Tennesseans.

Another reason why East Tennessee voted differently lay in the wealth of the section, or rather the lack of it. David Deaderick, back in 1826, had lamented, "Our soil is poor in comparison with what is now called Middle Tennessee or in comparison with the Western District, and we have it not within our reach, as a people, to become rich."³⁵ The average wealth per family in 1860 in East Tennessee was only \$2,830 while in the state as a whole it was \$5,530. In Middle Tennessee the average wealth per family was \$6,640 and in West Tennessee it was \$7,130. The wealth of East Tennessee families averaged less than half as much as families west of the valley. The five West Tennessee counties which voted against separation—Carroll, Decatur, Hardin, Henderson and Weakly—all were below the average level of wealth per family as compared with other counties of the western section. The families of these five counties averaged \$3,500 in wealth, which placed them in an economic class comparable with their Unionist friends in East Tennessee.

The same holds true for the three Middle Tennessee counties which voted against separation—Fentress (admitted to membership in the Greeneville Convention as an East Tennessee county), Wayne, and Macon. In wealth per family, these counties claimed an average of \$1,360, \$2,950, and \$2,600, respectively. They too compared favorably with the families of East Tennessee in the matter of worldly goods. Furthermore, of the six East Tennessee counties which voted for separation all but Sequatchie averaged more wealth per family than all families in the section averaged.³⁶ The apparent reason for this close correlation between the lack of wealth and the attitude toward separation is that in the poorer counties there were few slaveholders. These people had little property at stake if invasion should come and were without hope of becoming a part of the slave-owning aristocracy even on the lower levels; hence, they may have reasoned, why vote or fight to perpetuate a system

³⁴*Whig*, May 25, 1861. Brownlow exploited any rumor favorable to the North, telling, for example, how the Union army had restored slaves to their owners in Maryland a few days before. [C. W. Hall], *Three Score Years and Ten* (Cincinnati, 1884), 113.

³⁵Samuel C. Williams (ed.), "Journal of Events of David Anderson Deaderick," *East Tennessee Historical Society's Publications*, No. 8 (1936), 130.

³⁶Eighth Census, *Statistics of the United States in 1860* (Washington, 1866), *passim*.

of which they were not a part, a system in which they were unwelcome and unwanted? As the biographer of Brownlow expressed it, they feared that "a Southern Republic would be dominated by leaders and interests foreign to the upper South."³⁷

The East Tennessee Unionists, as was true of people everywhere with little wealth, feared heavy taxes and felt the virtue of being poor. It is necessary in evaluating the influence of wealth in the 1861 struggle to remember that the banks and the entire money economy were badly disrupted by the panic of 1857 and that the political crisis carried this disruption to its climax.³⁸ Brownlow in nearly every article and editorial campaigned against an imagined tax rate which would be imposed by the Confederate government saying, "Let Union men throughout the state, who are opposed to Secession and Ruinous Taxation, bear in mind that the election is Saturday, Eighth day of June and that they should vote." He would appeal to "every union man in Tennessee to be at the polls and cast his vote against a rate of taxation that will break up the people and bankrupt the state." He felt sure that "If Tennessee should on . . . June 8, vote herself out of the Union and into the Southern Confederacy," the people would be "hopelessly insolvent." Then, in the hope of scaring his readers, he threatened that "Tax commissioners from Montgomery will come around and collect from us the last dollar we can raise." When a letter from the state comptroller's office to the county court clerks arrived saying that "eight cents on the hundred dollars" had been added to the state property tax for the year 1861, Brownlow cried out, "This is but the beginning!—Egyptian bondage was slight in comparison with what we will. . . feel."³⁹ Concern was often expressed over the probable high rate of taxation, and many harbored a real fear that the Confederate government would be a government of "rich men."

East Tennesseans consoled themselves with the thought that even though poor, they were hard workers and morally better than people of other sections of the state who had more wealth. Because they could not own slaves, they felt that owning slaves was morally wrong. They could not have wealth; hence, wealth was a corrupting and degrading influence. "East Tennessee is a better place to live," they often asserted, better than "where there are temptations and opportunity to get wealth." In places where wealth may be accumulated "men are less apt to be virtuous and happy . . . Most impartial persons will observe that we are more moral and religious and less absorbed in the business and cares of the world than the people of West

³⁷Coulter, *Brownlow*, 136.

³⁸P. M. Hamer, *Tennessee: A History, 1673-1931* (New York, 1933), I, 530-31.

³⁹*Whig*, February 23, June 1, May 11, 25, 1861.

Tennessee, or of any cotton country." Their spokesman argued that "where cotton is grown extensively, slaves are found in great numbers and where all the work, or nearly all, is performed by slaves — a consequent inaction and idleness are characteristic of the whites, — and . . . there is no surer way of vitiating a man, than to leave him with nothing to do."⁴⁰

Some have explained East Tennessee's vote in 1861 as being attributable to the source of immigration from which the counties drew many early settlers. "We are a distinct and peculiar people, not to be confounded with other divisions of the state,"⁴¹ boasted one proud mountaineer. The source of immigration into East Tennessee counties had no influence in determining the vote in 1861 as the brief tables below, made from a study of the 1860 census and the election returns of 1861, will reveal.⁴²

Votes on Separation Compared with Origin of Population

East Tenn. counties voting for separation	county	Election returns, June 8, 1861	Union	Separation	Citizens born in another state	Free state	Slave state
Meigs		267	481	21	442		
Monroe		774	1,096	93	1,300		
Polk		317	738	407	2,924		
Rhea		202	360	27	542		
Sequatchie		voted with Marion		31	224		
Sullivan		627	1,586	146	2,305		

Typical East Tenn. counties voting to stay in the Union	county	Election returns, June 8, 1861	Union	Separation	Citizens born in another state	Free state	Slave state
Blount		2,111	1,766	418	147	1,299	
Bradley		1,801	1,382	507	56	1,241	
Greene		2,111	2,691	744	333	2,622	
Knox		4,417	3,196	1,226	1,304	1,750	
McMinn		2,015	1,144	904	75	1,492	
Scott		540	521	19	24	554	
Sevier		1,544	1,539	60	72	1,094	

Typical West Tenn. counties voting to stay in the Union	county	Election Returns, June 8, 1861	Union	Separation	Citizens born in another state	Free state	Slave state
Hardin		1,500	1,051	458	94	2,003	
Weakley		2,400	1,201	1,189	336	2,625	

Some influence was exerted by the immigrants in some counties. Knox County had 1,750 immigrants from slave states other than

⁴⁰Williams, "David Anderson Deaderick," *loc. cit.*, 130.

⁴¹*Facts and Figures Concerning the Climate, Manufacturing Advantages and the Agricultural and Mineral Resources of East Tennessee* (Knoxville, 1869), 12. This is a pamphlet appealing for immigrants.

⁴²Unpublished Schedules of the Eighth Census of the United States, 1860 (National Archives, Washington); *Whig*, June 29, 1861.

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Tennessee and 1,304 who had been born in free states. Several of the latter, such as Horace Maynard, Conally F. Trigg, Hermann Bokum and others, were leaders in the vanguard of opposition to separation. The immigrants, however, did not have influence simply on the basis of numbers or in a direct ratio of the immigrants from slave or free states. In the West Tennessee counties which voted against separation an overwhelming number of the citizens who were born outside of Tennessee were born in other slave states. East Tennesseans early claimed to be from grain-growing states and were inclined toward industry rather than slave holding, but as Professor William O. Lynch has shown, most new sections of the United States were really formed by people who moved from the nearest states,⁴³ and the source of immigration for East Tennessee, whether early or immediately prior to the war, was from nearby states and had practically no influence on the stand taken by East Tennesseans in 1861.

An additional reason for East Tennessee's Unionist vote is to be found in the hatred which most Unionist leaders and a majority of East Tennessee old-line Whigs felt toward the Democratic party. This feeling was so strong that to work or vote with the Democratic party on any issue was practically impossible. The tendency in and around Knoxville, the "capital of East Tennessee," was to consider all Democrats disunionists. Before the Civil War, most of the counties in East Tennessee were predominantly Whig while that party was in existence. When the Whig party disappeared its East Tennessee leaders fought bitterly as Know Nothings and as the "opposition" party. This tightly knit and isolated section around Knoxville, the locale of East Tennessee Whiggery, was often outvoted and largely ignored by state Democratic administrations. Their political bitterness was not closely confined to the Democratic party; often the feelings seemed to carry over against the principle of democracy. It is doubtful if all writers and speakers distinguished between the two. Deaderick, a respected East Tennessee Unionist who gradually drifted toward the Confederacy, wrote in 1861:

Our great nation is in a state of Civil War; brought on us by the legitimate workings of Democracy. . . . Almost all elections [are] given direct to the people, even those of judges The reverence for law and order thus, diminished: offices once intended to serve the people's interest, [are] now made bribes and gifts to political partizans; and "State Rights," an original

⁴³William O. Lynch, "The South and its History," *Journal of Southern History*, VIII (November, 1942), 432. See also his "Population Movements in Relation to the Struggle for Kansas," in *Studies in American History Inscribed to James Albert Woodburn* (Indiana University, *Studies in American History*, Nos. 66-68, Bloomington, 1926), 383-404.

democratic doctrine, has culminated into "secession", resulting consequently in Civil War.⁴⁴

Oliver P. Temple, a man better known and more influential in the Unionist camp, wrote to a friend in 1860, asking: "How could you suppose I had any thought of becoming a Democrat. . . . I am opposed to Democracy. I am not certain whether I hate or despise or fear it most. I am sometimes tempted to think it Antichrist I believe the time has come when we . . . must grapple with Democracy as our greatest foe" Temple then revealed his attitude toward the new Republican party by saying, "I should apprehend no danger from the temporary triumph of the Republican party. After the ranks of Democracy were broken, it would then be easy to organize a great conservative Whig Party."⁴⁵

The hatred of the Democratic party, felt especially by East Tennessee leaders from the old-line Whigs, was further shown when Lincoln, trying to secure some cooperation and followers in Tennessee, permitted Andrew Johnson, a Democrat and as strong an advocate of the Union as could be found in North or South, to handle some of the patronage in Tennessee, the rest being handled by Emerson Etheridge, also a strong Unionist and an old-line Whig party man. Brownlow cried out against them, saying that they were "party hacks, working only to reestablish the Democratic party." He thought a scheme was afoot to use Union Democrats and old-line Whigs to revive the Democratic party and said, "All others may join them, but I, never! If the country can only be saved, or kept together by reconstructing that abomination, known as the great Democratic party, then let the whole sink to infamy and eternal perdition."⁴⁶

Anything, even war, but not a reconstitution of the Democratic party, for Brownlow believed "it was the loss of offices, power and patronage of the government by the Democratic party" in the election of 1860 "that brought on the crisis." He was not exaggerating when long before the crisis he had said,

They may call me a Black Republican, an ally of the North, or what not; I am against the thieving party in power. And if the Opposition shall nominate THE DEVIL HIMSELF WITH HORNS AND TAIL ON, I will take

⁴⁴Williams, "David Anderson Deaderick," *loc. cit.*, No. 9 (1937), 96. It seems only fair to point out that while Deaderick was writing about the principle of democracy, he at least part of the time was referring to the Democratic party. In a letter to Johnson (signature illegible) February 16, 1861, Johnson MSS., the writer alleges that "if any Democrat gets the appointment [postmastership in Knoxville] the office will still be under the control of the little group of infernal disunionists."

⁴⁵Marguerite B. Hamer, "Presidential Campaign of 1860," *loc. cit.*, 18, quoting Temple to A. A. Doak, January 9, 1860.

⁴⁶*Whig*, April 6, 13, 1861.

him as a choice of evils, against any one of the corrupt, insincere, and plundering leaders of this self-styled Democratic party.

On another occasion he said that if he had a "choice between joining the Southern camp and going to Hell," he'd think it over one week then "go to Hell."⁴⁷ Neither this man nor his followers could work or join hands with a party so avidly hated.

Another factor which influenced some voters in East Tennessee was a propaganda line which sometimes approached intimidation and coercion. East Tennessee Unionists reduced the size of the vote for separation by practicing methods and threats calculated to keep some who would have voted for separation from exercising their voting privilege. East Tennessee spokesmen claimed that force and violence were used to carry the state for secession. They did not explain why such alleged tactics were used in Middle and West Tennessee where they were not needed, but not used in East Tennessee where they were needed.⁴⁸ This charge should be examined.

As the days of decision approached, in February and again in June, meetings were held in various parts of the state for the purpose of creating and organizing sentiment for and against separation. As the June election drew near, stronger propaganda methods began to be used in East Tennessee. Brownlow permitted the three candidates who favored separation to announce their candidacy, but no other mention was made of them or their meetings, although many Union meetings were announced and seemingly minutes of all pro-Union meetings as well as their resolutions were published. Scare stories were carried in the *Whig* to arouse both fear and hatred of people in other sections of the state. "We hear it said," wrote the *Whig*,

that Governor Harris has taken charge of the magazine &c. at Nashville and that powder can only be had in that city by his authority. *Think of this free men of Tennessee.* The governor saying what you shall buy and what you shall not buy! Have Tennesseans become slaves? Tennessee, through God is still a member of the Federal Union, but alas! the people by degrees are having the worst despotism on earth rapidly fastened upon them.

A second story exclaimed, "Mob law reigns in Tennessee," and went on to say that the editor had been told to "come out for the South or our office will be mobbed." Brownlow wrote in detail in another column of a Union man from Sevier County who while on his way

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, May 18, 1861, August 13, 1859, April 20, 1861.

⁴⁸James W. Patton, *Unionism and Reconstruction in Tennessee* (Chapel Hill, 1934), 20-21; James W. Fertig, *The Secession and Reconstruction of Tennessee* (Chicago, 1898), 17, 20. Humes and others follow East Tennessee sources hostile to Middle and West Tennessee and help to perpetuate charges made by East Tennesseans seemingly without question. East Tennessee papers have throughout history charged that almost any election not won by the East Tennessee party was fraudulently conducted.

to Illinois to get his widowed daughter and her several small children was arrested in Memphis for being a Union man. A rope was placed around his neck and he was "dragged through the street, threatened with being hanged every minute."⁴⁹ No reason was given to explain why a man from Sevier County would go by way of Memphis to get to Illinois. All such rumors and stories helped to fan the flames of hatred which burn too readily in East Tennessee.

When Middle and West Tennessee speakers came into the eastern end of the state, they were decidedly not welcomed by the Knoxville *Whig*, which announced that "comparatively few people will turn out to hear Foote, House, and Henry on their speaking tours." They are "gentlemen of manners and bearing, [but] East Tennesseans do not want to hear them." Derogatory stories were written against them, questioning their honesty and integrity, and hinting that violence might be used. In another issue, the *Whig* announced that "Gustavus A. Henry, Governor Henry S. Foote, and John F. House, all of Middle Tennessee are now canvassing East Tennessee . . . to convince the people that we should secede." Then the paper explained why heed should not be given to these misguided men, saying:

As for Major Henry, he owns a cotton farm and a gang of Negroes down South. His interests are all in the Cotton Kingdom and it is a matter of personal interest with him to secede. Governor Foote has always opposed the wicked men of the South until secession, so we can have no confidence in him.

House's name was included with "White, Sole, Avery, and last but not least, . . . the Hon. John Bell," who were all in East Tennessee and proposed "to speak to the people favoring the military league The people of East Tennessee don't intend to hear any of these men. . . ." This was followed with some veiled suggestions of how "Middle Tennessee would not let Union men speak and East Tennessee people can take care of themselves."⁵⁰

The Unionists seemingly kept close tab on how various people felt and how they would vote, and after the elections they published the names of voters who voted for separation. One Henry W. Humphreys wrote that "his name had been published as one who

⁴⁹*Whig*, May 4, 1861.

⁵⁰*Ibid.*, May 25, June 22, 29, 1861. Military league refers to an agreement which Tennessee had made with other southern states in case they were attacked by Union forces. A letter from M.D.L. Boren to Andrew Johnson, January 7, 1861, reveals that the use of arms among the Unionists was not absent in East Tennessee even before the February election. In describing an attempt to burn Johnson in effigy in Knoxville, Boren says the disunionists were "deterred from it by Union men of every party who was armed. . . ." M. D. L. Boren to Andrew Johnson, and also Joseph McDannel to Johnson, December 29, 1860, Johnson MSS.

voted for separation and he wanted it corrected for he was a Union man and so voted."⁵¹ Someone said a majority of lawyers in Knoxville were for separation. "This is true," wrote Brownlow, "but out of seventeen licensed preachers living within the limits of the city and vicinity, there are but two secessionists." Supposedly the Lord had kept the preachers in line. At a meeting near Strawberry Plains, according to Brownlow's report, three to five thousand men, women, and children were gathered. A troop train at the station had been waiting for three hours with steam up. It pulled out slowly as the meeting got under way. Somebody on the train threw a rock "with great force and accuracy" at A. K. Meek, Sr. (Meek was not hit.) Another threw an open knife at Wm. M. Lewis. Then shooting started. No one in the crowd was hurt, but leaves were cut off the trees over their heads. The crowd, "a peaceable assembly [Brownlow reminded his readers], returned the fire, with what damage they did not know! Over 1,000 men, women and children threatened to tear up the railroad and burn the bridge over the Holston."⁵²

As the June election day came nearer, some Unionist leaders admitted difficulty in restraining their followers from committing open and violent acts against those who favored separation. "It was hard," declared Temple, "to restrain the infuriated Union men from acts of violence against the disunionists. More than once the leaders had to restrain them from marching into Knoxville in a body, and as they called it, 'clearing out the secessionists in the town.'" John Caldwell and F. S. Heiskell urged in the columns of the *Whig* that East Tennessee "Union men be moderate, do unto others as they would have others do unto them." The letter pointed out that the writers had been Union men all along and "now if a contest must come, let ours be a defensive position."⁵³

Other Unionists were willing to threaten revenge and violence. In June, 1861, Brownlow's paper carried an editorial saying that threats had been made against Maynard because of a speech in which Maynard called southern troops blackguards and cutthroats. Brownlow said Maynard had so spoken and that if Maynard was harmed, he knew of "several prominent Secessionists in Knox County that would be killed instantly, as sure as there is a God in Heaven."⁵⁴

⁵¹*Whig*, February 9, 16, 1861.

⁵²*Ibid.*, June 8, 15, 1861. The pro-separation paper in Knoxville referred sarcastically to this incident as the battle of Strawberry Plains and said it was a "terrible affair" in which "several hundred East Tennessee Union men, armed with rifles and shotguns *a la* Mr. Nelson's advice waylaid and fired upon a railroad train with two companies of unarmed recruits aboard." *Ibid.*, June 15, 1861, quoting *Knoxville Register* of June 7, 1861.

⁵³Temple, *East Tennessee and the Civil War*, 186; *Whig*, June 22, 1861.

⁵⁴*Ibid.*, June 29, 1861.

People in East Tennessee who wanted to demonstrate against Andrew Johnson for his speech in the Senate were "met by a group of citizens of all parties" and told that such attempts would "cause bloodshed." The remonstrating citizens were "armed with clubs, pistols and other implements of husbandry." According to Brownlow, East Tennesseans were organizing militia companies, holding musters, drilling, and passing resolutions against the state government, against tax levies, and against separation. Citizens were attending political meetings well armed and almost trigger-happy. These group meetings, angered at seeing troops being transported toward Virginia, threatened several times to destroy the railroad running through East Tennessee before an actual attempt was made in November, 1861.⁵⁵

The East Tennesseans voted differently partly because they were isolated and uninformed. This isolation, when added to the natural conservatism of these rural inhabitants, in a large measure accounts for the large vote against separation. The people of this section were not aware of being isolated. When the *Nashville Banner* explained that East Tennessee was more remote from the sources of information and would need more time than other sections of the state to adjust to the new situation, Brownlow flew into a rage, saying: "Your statement that the people of East Tennessee are more remote from the sources of information is an insult. We are nearer to Washington, and nearer to Virginia, and Carolina than the people of Nashville are and our sources of information are just as reliable as well as abundant." Then he accused the Middle Tennessee publishers of backing down from their "convictions of right," and prayed "God deliver the people of East Tennessee . . . from such time serving leaders and journals."⁵⁶ Regardless of what the editor could answer, the explanation of the *Banner* was true, for as the election returns began to trickle in after the June election, Brownlow admitted the isolation charge so recently resented, though he did so unknowingly. Having forgotten what the *Banner* had said, he wrote, "We have only partial returns from the election and these are along the railroad and wires, where there has been a stream of secession fire, for months. When the mountain counties come in, the returns will be more fav-

⁵⁵*Ibid.*, January 5, May 25, June 1, 1861. At a meeting in Rogersville in which William B. Carter and N. G. Taylor (Union speakers) opposed Joseph B. Heiskell and Wm. Coker (for separation) in May, 1861, it was agreed there would be no applause or demonstration for either side. A Mrs. Murray Stover, not cognizant of this agreement, arrived late and threw a bouquet at one of the speakers. The whole audience arose in confusion; pistols were drawn and cocked. It looked for a moment as if there would be bloodshed. Samuel W. Scott and Samuel P. Angel, *History of the 13th Regiment of Tennessee Volunteer Cavalry* (Knoxville, 1903), 39.

⁵⁶*Whig*, May 4, 1861. This statement was a comment on the fact that the editors of Nashville were formerly pro-Union but had all changed and were later for separation.

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The Union leaders in East Tennessee were active all the time prior to the June election. One of the most influential of them was Andrew Johnson of Greeneville. He canvassed all East Tennessee in earnest opposition to separation. Johnson had supported Breckinridge in the November presidential election and like all others campaigning for the Breckinridge ticket he had urged its election as the only way to save the Union. After the election Johnson, a United States senator, did not go along with Middle and West Tennessee leaders of importance but began to work against separation or secession. "He is the consistent one," wrote Brownlow.⁵⁹ Johnson necessarily had to break with his party so far as the South was concerned, but he did not break with his following in East Tennessee, for these

⁵⁷*Ibid.*, June 15, 1861. T. W. Humes, *The Loyal Mountaineers of Tennessee* (Knoxville, 1888), 107. The proof of East Tennessee's isolation was manifest throughout the Civil War when Lincoln and his generals were trying to bring an army into East Tennessee but were checked by transportation difficulties in that area, which in the words of Johnson himself seemed "an obstacle that could not be overcome." Andrew Johnson to Abraham Lincoln, August 9, 1863, May 29, 1863, and Abraham Lincoln to John M. Fleming and others, August 9, 1863, Lincoln Papers.

⁵⁸*Whig*, April 13, 20, 1861. Brownlow concluded his war editorial in the April 20 issue by saying, "We should all, in this contest stand by our government, and pray for the success of her arms, and when the conflict is over, turn out the sectional party in power, and call men to rule over us who will restore peace to the country."

⁵⁹*Ibid.*, March 9, May 4, 11, 1861.

people were generally opposed to separation. Nor did he break with the northern wing of his party, particularly the Douglas faction, because they like Johnson supported coercion in order to maintain the Union. To single out East Tennessee leaders and give them credit for influencing the section to stay with the Union is in the main fallacious. East Tennessee probably would have voted, in June, 1861, approximately as it did vote even if Johnson, Brownlow, Maynard, Baxter, Temple, and a host of others had not spoken a word or written a single editorial. There was, however, no county in the section which showed as wide a margin between Democratic party votes and voters against separation as did Greene, Johnson's home county. Other counties which compared most favorably with Greene were all in Johnson's congressional district with the exception of Bradley County. This comparison of votes seems to show rather conclusively that Johnson exerted a great influence for the Union. And at the same time this comparison raises the question of why he took such a definite stand. Surely he could not foresee what awaited him as vice-president and president—treatment afforded him, in the main, by people for whom he had done so much. Nor can the explanation be, as later writers like Temple would have us believe, pure patriotism. Brownlow was several times on the verge of giving up—and at times urged secession from the Union and the establishment of a "middle confederation" or secession from the state and the setting up of an independent state of East Tennessee.⁶⁰ It seems to have been a matter of interest in each case. In the years 1860-61 Johnson had the highest political office he had held up to that time. In the federal union he was somebody. With the prospect of successful passage of the homestead bill, of which he was a proponent, and with the prestige which would accrue to him both in the North and in the South as the result of engineering a reconciliation between the two sections, he had ample personal reason to embrace the Union cause. In addition, a feeling of sincere patriotism contributed to produce a tie too strong for Johnson to break. If he broke with the Union it would mean starting over in the South, assuming that the South might be successful in establishing a separate government, and he would for a time at least count for almost nothing. Why give up a sure thing with bright prospects for the future for something very uncertain and in which he could see no future for himself.

Whatever his reasons, he acted wholeheartedly with other leaders, mainly old-line Whigs, to keep East Tennessee from voting for separation in June, 1861. One announcement carried in the *Whig* indicates what the leaders were doing: "Saturday last was a

⁶⁰*Ibid.*, April 20, June 25, 29, 1861.

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Nor did he break the Douglas faction, in order to maintain the Union is in the hands of the Union. Johnson, Brownlow, had not spoken a word, however, no county between Democratic and Greene, Johnson's most favorably with the exception seems to show rather in favor of the Union. The question of why he did not see what awaited him, in the end. Nor can the excuse be, we believe, pure and simple, the urge of giving up the establishment of the state and the settlement. It seems to have been so in 1860-61 Johnson's case at that time. In the aspect of successful secession, and with the support of the North and in the absence of the Union, secessionism contributed to the break with the Union. Assuming that the separate government, nothing. Why give up the Union for something for himself.

He parted with other East Tennessee from voting in the election carried in the Saturday last was a

great day in portions of East Tennessee." The article went on to say that Baxter and Johnson had spoken to a mass meeting in Greeneville where 5,000 gathered. It commented further, "Secession is losing ground in Greene. Col. Temple addressed 1500 at Thorn Grove in the corner of Knox, Sevier and Jefferson Counties for two hours." Horace Maynard had spoken for two and a half hours to from five to seven hundred at Ellijoy in Blount County. At Whortleberry Camp Ground Col. Trigg had addressed a crowd for three hours, while John M. Fleming had spoken to a crowd at Ball Camp in Knox County. This activity accounts in part for Brownlow's glowing description of a convention held in Knoxville to consider the coming June election. "Greater oneness of purpose and more determined spirit we have never witnessed among any body of men . . . they [the people attending] were far in advance of the Union Leaders in Knoxville," he wrote.⁶¹

Finally, one indistinct reason had some influence on East Tennessee's vote. These people, especially the leaders, were almost mortally afraid of war and thought that it would not come to them or their neighborhood if they could remain "plum still." Brownlow kept up this fiction because he was either deluded by his own desires or because it served an objective which would be highly satisfactory to him; that is, it would bring defeat to that section of the country so closely associated with the Democratic party. Again and again he told East Tennessee, "Nothing will occur, unless the South shall invite it, by attacks on their part. We believe that the attack will be made by the Southern army." Or he would raise the question, "Will there be fighting?" and then say, "This question . . . is by no means difficult to answer. If the Southern army does not advance on Washington . . . we have no hesitancy in saying there will be no fighting." He often assured the people that he had "no idea that the Northern army intends to invade Virginia or any other Southern State or to attempt its subjugation. We never have believed so or else our course would have been different."⁶²

As the conflict drew near, the people were nervous and excited mainly because they had made no decision one way or the other. Finally, when nothing else offered hope of escape from war, many East Tennesseans, like their vociferous spokesman, Brownlow, took to the woods, cellars, or a nearby cave to hide for the duration. Many,

⁶¹*Ibid.*, May 25, June 8, 1861.

⁶²*Ibid.*, May 11, 18, April 20, 1861. Brownlow argued that the "corrupt, thieving, defeated political party [was] plunging the whole country into a civil war. . . . We say let them now have it to their hearts content! Let fleets land all round the coast — let flying Artillery and Regulars be landed in their piney woods, and let them have battle upon battle, here a fire and there a fire, and upon them . . . rest the responsibilities of the consequences."

it seems, preferred this hiding and praying for relief by a Union army rather than an easy escape through the service offered by Daniel Ellis, a fellow sufferer also in hiding, who supposedly was offering a streamline guide service into nearby Kentucky. He was also running a regular mail service between East Tennessee and East Tennesseans who had fled to eastern Kentucky and the protection of the Union army there and, in some cases, to join it. Tennessee mountain youth, unlike the leaders in East Tennessee, joined the Union forces in numbers possibly reaching ten to fifteen thousand.⁶³

Scott and Angel in their history of the 13th Tennessee Regiment suggest that some 30,000 men joined the Union army from East Tennessee and that the Unionists of East Tennessee made a difference in the northern and southern armies of some 70,000 men, which number probably turned the tide of the war against the South; therefore it was East Tennessee Unionists who saved the Union. The impression is highly inaccurate as to conclusion and facts. Records show that some thirty-one regiments consisting of from seven to thirteen companies each or about 31,000 men joined the Union forces from all of Tennessee. Of the thirty-one regiments only thirteen were recruited in whole or in part from East Tennessee. This would indicate that about 13,000 youths from East Tennessee joined the Union forces while some 18,000 joined from the other two sections of the state.⁶⁴ As history turned East Tennesseans deserve much credit for having been on the "right side"⁶⁵ but their efforts and influence in shaping events have been greatly exaggerated.

What kept the people of East Tennessee loyal to the Union? They remained loyal in part because they had long been conscious of a sectional difference from the other parts of the state; because the tide of secession sentiment in the course of rapidly moving events reached them too late to work its full effects; because their whole attitude and interest in slavery was unlike the rest of the state and the South; and because their lack of wealth made them feel they would have no place among a slaveholding aristocracy. They were also influenced by the fact that a majority of them harbored a real political hatred for the Democratic party, which was

⁶³Scott and Angel, *History of the 13th Regiment*, 90-99. Humes relates, "It was not long before many men sought refuge in Kentucky from the conscription." A group of 600 or 700 men fled from Grainger County. Half escaped the Confederate cavalry pursuing them, but over 300 surrendered. "Cowardice was imputed to them . . . for surrendering at once to a force numerically inferior," but Humes excused them because of their immaturity. Humes, *Loyal Mountaineers*, 165-66; Daniel Ellis, *Thrilling Adventures of Daniel Ellis* (New York, 1867), 28-38.

⁶⁴General Marcus J. Wright, *Tennessee in the War* (New York, 1908), 131-200. These figures do not include Tennesseans who joined regiments of other states.

⁶⁵General Burnside, writing to Lincoln in 1863, said, "I look upon East Tennessee as one of the most Loyal sections of the United States." Burnside to Lincoln, September 10, 1863, Lincoln Papers.

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so closely associated with the secession movement that East Tennesseeans considered secession a party affair; and they were subjected to powerful propaganda and in some cases to intimidation on the part of the Union leaders of the section. They were isolated and comparatively uninformed on current happenings heralding the approach of a great civil war; and finally the leaders and followers alike dreaded war and felt that it would not come to them or their section if they remained "plum still."