THE BACKGROUND AND CAUSES
OF THE NEW YORK DRAFT RIOTS

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by

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INTRODUCTION

The background and causes of the New York Draft Riots of 1863 perplexed those who were interested in national affairs. The Conscription Law had been passed March 3, 1863, when more troops were needed for the army. Before this law was passed, Thaddeus Stevens said in Congress that this bill would be called a "rich man's bill" due to the provision which made it possible for one whose name was called to get a substitute or pay three hundred dollars to the national government.\(^1\) At first, the foreign population in the large cities gave little thought to the conscription -- it seemed far removed from them. However, the enrollment officers met resistance in some localities.

The newspapers announced in July 1863, that the drawing of names was to start in New York, July 11, 1863; hence, the masses knew it was going to be compulsory for them to leave their homes and occupations to participate in a war, which, even in victory, held no compensation for them.\(^2\) From the names drawn the first day of the draft, quite a number seemed to be of the

\(^{1}\) Congressional Globe, 37 Congress, 3 sess., pp. 1261-1262.

poorer working class of foreigners, especially the Irish, as there were more immigrants of this nationality than of any other in New York. The Irish already feared the negroes in the labor market; consequently, they were easily animated by reference to participation in a war for the abolition of slavery.

Immediately upon his return to the United States from Europe in 1863, Bishop John Hughes had advocated conscription in the United States as the only fair means of raising an army. When the mob was almost under control this priest asked the rioters who were Catholics to come to his home for an address; four or five thousand appeared and seemed sympathetic with his entreaties. As a result of their coming to his home it was rumored that the Catholics instigated this disaster.

The people of the United States had always opposed conscription; they believed it was not consistent with the idea of freedom prevalent in this country. Thus, when compulsory military service was enacted by the national government much opposition was raised against it. Hence, the second day of the draft the New York Riots began. Much concern was prevalent as to the cause of the outbreak.

4 New York Herald, July 15, 1863.
5 New York Daily Tribune, July 14, 1863.
6 American Annual Cyclopaedia, 1863, p. 813.
Some newspapers advocated a draft as the only fair method of raising an army. Yet a number of Democratic journals presented every imaginable opposition to conscription; some said that the purpose of the draft was to lower the number of Democratic votes at the next election.

Numerous influential politicians criticized the administration severely; in fact, it was intimated that an attempt was to be made to remove Lincoln from the White House. This opposition to the administration was so forceful that it was sometimes contemplated whether or not the political plans of 1863 might have had any part in instigating the New York Draft Riots.

Another factor which may have had some influence upon the action taken by the rioters was the work of Confederate agents in the North. As to the number of those Southern representatives, and as to their strength, the public was then unable to reach any conclusion.

8 The Daily News, July 13, 1863.
9 New York Times, August 18, 1879.
The Attitude of Governor Seymour toward the National Government

In the autumn of 1862, General James S. Wadsworth, the Republican candidate for governor, was defeated by Horatio Seymour, then, and until his death the most prominent Democratic politician of the state. Mr. Seymour came into power upon a platform which denounced practically every measure which the Government had adopted to suppress the Confederacy. The legislature, elected at the same time, contained twenty-three Republicans and nine Democrats in the Senate, and sixty-four Republicans and sixty-four Democrats in the Assembly.¹

On the first day of 1863, Horatio Seymour was inaugurated governor of New York. On this occasion in his brief inaugural address, he clearly intimated that his principal duty would be "to maintain and defend the sovereignty and jurisdiction of his State," he commented upon taking the allegiance to support the Constitution of the United States and also the Constitution of the State of New York. This oath was meditated upon by those

informed as to the governor's political views; he was well-known for his attitude toward state rights. In concluding his inaugural address Mr. Seymour said:

These Constitutions do not conflict; the line of separation between the responsibilities and obligations which each impose is well defined. They do not embarrass us in the performance of our duties as citizens or officials. 2

The new legislature met January 6, 1863, and in his message to that body the governor said:

While our soldiers are imperiling their lives to uphold the Constitution and restore the Union, we owe it to them, who have shown an endurance and patriotism unsurpassed in the history of the world, that we emulate their devotion in our field of duty. 3

The soldiers of New York always had the support of both their governor and the legislature. Among the important measures passed by this legislature were acts legalizing the ordinances of cities and counties in recruiting and assisting the families of volunteers; confirming the action of Governor Morgan in offering a bounty in July 1862, and making the necessary appropriation to carry out his contract, providing a bounty of

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3 Ibid, pp.32-33.
one hundred fifty dollars for each member of the two
years' regiments, who reenlisted for another two years or
more, and a bounty of seventy-five dollars for each
volunteer who had enlisted since November 1, 1862, or
would hereafter enlist for three years; incorporating the
"Soldiers Home"; and on April 27, appropriating one million
dollars to put the harbor of New York and the state's
frontiers in a better condition of defense.4

The president, who was anxious to secure the coop-
eration of all the governors, wrote a letter to Mr.
Seymour, soon after his inauguration. Mr. Lincoln knew
that the present governor of New York had been supported
by those who opposed the principles followed by the
Republican Administration; yet, the national government
still needed as much assistance from New York as they had
received under ex-Governor Morgan. In this letter, the
president asserted that since he was at the head of a
nation which was in great peril and since Mr. Seymour was
the governor of the greatest state of that nation a
difference of purpose could not exist between them. One
section in this correspondence shows the President's
estimation of the governor of New York:

As to maintaining the nation's life and integrity, I assume and believe there cannot be a difference of purpose between you and me. If we should differ as to the means, it is important such difference should be as small as possible; that it should not be enhanced by unjust suspicions on one side or the other.  

The president closed his correspondence by asking Governor Seymour to write him a letter and "say just what he believed to be proper." After waiting three weeks the governor made a reticent reply, which showed that he was still distrustful of the administration. He expressed the idea that he was confident he held the same opinion as one-half of the population of the Northern States, and after the adjournment of the legislature he would express his opinions without reserve. He stated that he was going to give to those in authority a just and generous support in all matters within their constitutional powers. He said he was willing to make any sacrifice for the preservation of the Union.

The patriotism of each man was revealed by this correspondence; however, these letters also showed that no cordial cooperation would ever exist between President Lincoln and Governor Seymour. This closed the personal


6 Ibid, pp.11-12.
correspondence between them; the governor never wrote the letter which he had promised. An article published with his consent many years later expressed his belief that at this time there was a conspiracy of strong Republicans who were expecting to force Lincoln from the presidency; and since the executive knew of this strategy he was desirous of being on friendly terms with Mr. Seymour. 7

The governor assumed the same attitude toward Mr. Stanton. When the next year the Secretary of War invited him to Washington for a consultation, he ignored the invitation. 3

The Government received the most efficient support from the state of New York during the administration of Governor E. D. Morgan. 8 However, Governor Seymour received a letter from Secretary Stanton expressing the President's gratefulness for the troops which were sent promptly from New York to Gettysburg. 10 When the officer who had charge of superintending the troops from New York to Harrisburg called upon the President, Mr. Lincoln said:

I wish you to understand that you cannot possibly use words too warm to convey to Governor Seymour my thankfulness for his prompt and efficient help given to the Government in this crisis. 11

7 New York Times, August 18, 1879.
8 Nicolsy and Hey op. cit. p. 12.
10 McCabe, James D., The Life and Public Services of Horatio Seymour, p. 66.
11 Ibid, pp. 69-70.
A number of letters written by Secretary Stanton, John T. Sprague, Adjutant-General, and others is definite proof that no Governor could have done more to strengthen the National Government than Mr. Seymour. Yet in spite of these facts, the Republican Press asserted that Horatio Seymour did all he could to paralyze the Union and aid the rebellion. But Governor Curtin, of Pennsylvania, in an address given July 1, 1863, said; "We asked for help from New York - and it has come." An article, which according to the paper was written by a gentleman who was employed by the Telegraph Company in New York, appeared in the Cincinnati Enquirer; this man praised Mr. Seymour for the use of calm words in addressing the rioters, he maintained that it was the governor's earnest assurances of his intention to investigate any items they had for complaint, which quieted the mob. The Radical papers, said this writer criticized the governor because he did not denounce the rioters as thieves and murderers, but the effect of such language would have antagonized these people to a more exotic stage. This man was grateful that a number of prominent citizens in New York, although they differed from Seymour

14. Ledger, July 8, 1863.
in politics expressed their appreciation to him for his efforts in quieting the mob. 15

To show the contrast of opinion The Albany Evening Journal gave the views of the radicals who opposed Mr. Seymour, since he said nothing to the rioters about the peril of the nation. 16 Nevertheless, the governor was only doing his duty to investigate the grievances of these people. Then they knew that their executive was interested in their welfare; the wisdom of this remark was verified by its effect upon this turbulent group. 17

Governor Seymour was agreeable in the interview with Colonel Nugent in spite of the fact that he was contending that the state of New York should have credit for its volunteers. Robert Nugent, Colonel, of the Sixty-ninth Regiment, New York Volunteers and Acting Assistant Provost-Marshal-General, May 16, 1863, sent a letter to Colonel James B. Fry, Provost-Marshal-General, Washington, D. C., informing Colonel Fry of his interview with the governor. Colonel Nugent was well satisfied that the governor would not oppose the provisions of the enrollment act being put into effect and the calling out of the national forces. However, Governor Seymour in the interview emphasized the loyalty of New York in providing a greater number of three-year's

15 Cincinnati Enquirer, July 21, 1863.
17 McCabe, op. cit. p. 102.
regiments in proportion to their population than any other state in the Union; Mr. Nugent was positive that the governor would demand credit for all names which appeared on the roll, in spite of the fact that many of these men deserted before the regiments left the State. Colonel Nugent advocated that any difference of opinion between the State and General Government should be adjusted soon, as the proportion of deficiency due each district was impossible to decide until the number to be credited each district was concluded. 18

In spite of the criticism Seymour constantly received with reference to his attitude toward the administration, he always cooperated well when there was a call for troops; in a letter to Hon. Edwin M. Stanton, Secretary of War, May 20, 1863, the governor stated:

I will visit Washington at an early day.......... I am now employed with the members of my staff in organizing a vigorous system for recruiting, which I hope will do away with the necessity for making any draft in New York. When this is accomplished I will see you in Washington. 19

The excitement caused by the discussion of the enrollment was increased by the utterances of a number of Democratic politicians. The criticism made by these men


was commercialized upon by the journalists; this procedure finally terminated in disaster, being influential in promoting the draft riots. The World criticizing "the weak and reckless men who temporarily administer the Federal Government," said that the enrollment bill was an illegal document.\textsuperscript{30} The Daily News, which had a larger circulation among the hoi polloi in New York than any other paper, quoted Governor Seymour as saying that neither the President nor Congress, without the consent of the State authorities, had a right to force a single individual against his will "to take part in the ungodly conflict which is distracting the land;" it added that the object of the draft was to "kill off Democrats and stuff the ballot-boxes with bogus soldier votes."\textsuperscript{31} This last quotation incensed the people against the draft more than any other statement.

There was very little agitation against conscription on Saturday, July 11, the first day of the draft. But on Sunday, people had an opportunity to congregate and to comment upon the procedure of conscription. The opposing forces, such as the newspapers and the Democrats, were busy alienating the people against military service; they emphasized the attitude of their governor, who had insisted

\textsuperscript{30} The World, July 13, 1863.
\textsuperscript{31} The Daily News, July 13, 1863.
upon the inequality of the enrollment and had sent the figures to Washington as proof of the unjust quota assigned to New York.

Mr. Seymour, having done all he could against the draft, had gone to Long Branch, New Jersey; upon his return he made the address which caused discredit for the remainder of his life. It is maintained that the serious part of his speech was the intimation that the draft justified the riot, and that if the rioters would go to their homes peaceably the draft would be stopped. Concurrently with the riot, Governor Seymour interviewed Colonel Nugent, the acting Provost Marshal General, New York City, and insisted on the Colonel's announcing a suspension of the draft. The draft had already been stopped by violence. The Governor urged that the announcement be made of the suspension of the draft as he assumed this would help to quiet the riot; nevertheless, this suggestion was not advisable as it would be "making a concession to the mob, and endangering the successful enforcement of the law of the land." Some of the governor's contemporaries criticized him severely. Gideon Welles, Secretary of the Navy, feared

22 American Annual Cyclopaedia, 1863, p. 685.
that if decisive measures were not taken immediately the
country would be imperiled. Although the mobs were about
subdued, he asserted that the prevalent question in the
minds of most people related to the question of duration
these mobs were allowed to continue. July 15, 1863, he
wrote in his diary:

This is anarchy - the fruit of the seed sown by the
Seymours and others. In New York, Governor Seymour is
striving - probably earnestly now - to extinguish the
flames he has contributed to kindle. This Sir Percible
Feeble is himself chiefly responsible for the outrage.25

In a report from New York, July 18, 1863, Colonel
Robert Mugent said that in case of any resistance Seward
would go with the State and in enforcing the draft there
must be military protection as no dependence could be put
in the governor. This officer was perplexed as to the
nonchalant attitude of the authorities in Washington; they
seemed unable to comprehend the magnitude of the opposition
to the government in New York. He felt sure there was no
doubt but that most if not all of the Democratic politicians,
were at the bottom of this riot. Enforcement of the
draft would take much power since these men were already
hostile to Mr. Lincoln; moreover, their animosities were
stimulated by the newspapers and by conversations in various

meeting places, to which a copious supply of liquor was added.

Mr. Nugent advocated that at least fifteen hundred men, under a capable officer, would be needed, when the draft was resumed since the masses would oppose the execution of the conscription. Advice was therefore extended to the general government warning them that if they expected to subdue the mob and to continue the draft it had to be done under the guidance of the General Government.\textsuperscript{26} Thus, Governor Seymour maintained his original attitude of opposition to conscription and in favor of state rights.

Mr. Seymour introduced his inaugural address by pledging his support both to the state and to the national constitutions, which as he said did not conflict. When the new legislature met, this governing body continued loyal support to the National Government. President Lincoln wrote Seymour a letter seeking his cooperation and after three weeks the governor sent a reserved reply promising another answer later which he failed to send. When the riots started in New York, it was not unusual that at a time of so much terror people were inclined to believe that the mobs were the result of a treasonable conspiracy devised by the opposing party of the North. Notices of this type were sent to the President, but he wisely ignored them. The

\textsuperscript{26} \textit{Official Records, Series I, Vol. XXVII, Part II, pp 90-94.}
governor of New York opposed the administration; nevertheless, he was consistently loyal to the Union, answering the call for troops and money whenever they were needed.

"Mr. Seymour had not the material of an insurrectionist in his composition, and when the riot came his excitement and horror were the best proof that he had not expected it."27

Influence of Politicians upon the Draft Riots

Politics were directly affected by the reverses sustained by the Union army during the summer and autumn of 1863. Every reverse met by the Northern forces increased the power of those in opposition to the National Government. The president's Emancipation Proclamation was influential in consolidating the opposition against him; this act did much to defeat his party in some of the more important states of the Union. The Democrat in New York elected Horatio Seymour, governor; New Jersey was also carried by the opposition. In Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Indiana the opposition gained in Congress.

Moreover, in the autumn of 1863, the President suffered the greatest assaults from every faction in the country. One group was clamoring for peace, another demanding a more vigorous prosecution of the war. Fernando Wood of New York was one of the most persistent politicians who demanded peace; while he sympathized with the secessionists, he attempted to keep on confidential relations with Mr. Lincoln. He visited the White House; in 1863, he wrote a letter to the President congratulating him on the change of the War Department; later in the year, he wrote that the abolitionists in New York represented him as hostile to the Administration.
He denied these charges. After making a speech denouncing the government for its arbitrary arrests, Mr. Wood wrote the president a confidential note stating that he had been incorrectly reported again. In November after making a similar speech, he sent a letter to Mr. Seward with the same story. In this way he believed that he had established himself in the confidence of the President.\(^1\) Since the party in power was losing strength, this condition was held before the masses by the politicians; this loss of prestige of the administration caused the working men to feel free to take some power into their own hands, and the draft riots were the result.

The injudicious acts of politicians who were ready to resort to any means to discredit the administration caused discontent to reign over the country. Certain of the large daily newspapers, as well as the most influential Democratic politicians such as Horatio Seymour and Fernando Wood, were accused of attempting to bring about a riot.\(^2\) The accusations against Wood, in relation to causing a riot, were as groundless as those concerning Seymour. As a mayor of New York, Wood had made a record as a reformer, and in 1863 he represented a New York District in the United States House of Representatives. But he had made the error, in January 1861, of supposing that the country was falling to pieces and therefore, as mayor, recommended that New York become a free city.\(^3\)

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\(^3\) Appleton's Cyclopædia of National Biography, Vol. VI, p. 583.
Hon. Fernando Wood, mayor of New York City, addressed a message to the Common Council, January 1861, in which he recommended that New York should secede and constitute a free state. He said if new combinations were formed by some states, others had the same privilege. Mr. Wood believed, not only would California become a republic, but also some Western States would do likewise; he added that if New York were free there would be some hope for the reconstruction of the Confederacy.  

This was sufficient to condemn him in the estimation of such a citizen as Horace Greeley. Seymour and Wood were for extreme state rights, varying only in degree from the position toward recruiting taken by Henry Wilson, Robert Schenck, and other authors of the enrollment act. In a letter written by John A. Dix, Major-General, to Horatio Seymour August 18, 1863, the principle of state rights was involved. In this correspondence Mr. Dix spoke of an interview which he had with Mr. Seymour. At that time Mr. Dix expressed the wish that the draft in the State might be executed without employment of Federal Troops, but that it might be carried on by the State which had often interposed between the General Government and its enemies. Later, he said, he wrote a letter to the governor repeating this request, but upon receiving no response applied to Secretary Stanton for

troops, and the petition had been granted immediately. However, his troops would be unnecessary to execute the draft, since Mr. Seymour's letter advised that Mr. Dix

Call into requisition the military power, if need be, to put down violations of good order, riotous proceedings, and disturbances of the public peace, as infractions of the laws of the State. 6

The opposition of Seymour and Wood to the draft as being unconstitutional helped to encourage the mob to resistance, and hence they must share though unintentionally in the blame. 6 In a letter written to President Lincoln, August 3, 1863, Mr. Seymour was still questioning the constitutionality of the Conscription Act in which he said its constitutionality must be decided upon before it might be successfully executed. Then only would it be respected by the public, but if it was not submitted this refusal would mean that its legality was wanting and disaster would result from a violent putting it into effect. The governor asserted that he had consulted men of all parties and professions; thus, he knew their sentiments on this question. 7

Another letter was written by Mr. Seymour to President Lincoln, August 7, 1863, in which the Governor spoke of the injustice of the enrollment and his horror for his country which made it necessary for him to exert every effort to stop

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6 Ibid., pp. 617-618, 636.

7 Ibid., p. 117.
the draft, which he felt would injure both the administration and the American name. In this communication Mr. Seymour spoke of enclosing figures which revealed the injustice of the enrollment. Moreover, he believed that he had information showing how some of the enrolling officers had perverted the law. 8

Clement L. Vallandigham, of Ohio, was the most conspicuous opponent of the Government in the West. In May, 1861, he wrote:

The audacious usurpation of President Lincoln, for which he deserves impeachment, in daring, against the very letter of the Constitution, and without the shadow of law, to raise and support armies, and to provide and maintain a navy, for three years, by mere executive proclamation, I will not vote to sustain or ratify --never. 9

Speaking in his place in the House of Representatives, January, 1863, Vallandigham said that he had denounced from the beginning the infractions of the Constitution by the President and his assistants; that by their violation of the freedom of the mails, the press and other wrongs upon public liberty and private rights, they had made this country for the past twenty months one of the worst despoticms on earth. 10

8 Ibid, p. 636.
9 Johnson, Rossiter, A Short History of the War of Secession, p. 298.
Vallandigham was arrested in May, 1863, for violating the order announcing that "the habit of declaring sympathies with the enemy (would) be no longer tolerated." He was tried by court martial and sentenced to imprisonment. President Lincoln commuted Vallandigham's sentence to banishment within the Confederate lines. This made a martyr of him, and in a few months it led to his nomination for the governorship of Ohio on the Democratic ticket.

In July 1863, General Lee had invaded Pennsylvania; John Morgan was in Ohio; President Lincoln had called for another half million men to assist in overcoming the Confederacy, and Congress had passed an injudicious law exempting from the draft all who paid three hundred dollars. Discontent reigned almost universally, and it seemed to be systematically organized, especially in New York City, by a class of politicians, who, haranguing in barrooms and street corners, declared that the draft was unconstitutional, that no allowance had been made for seven thousand men who had recently been sent from New York City to repel Lee's advance in Pennsylvania and that the Conscription Law was especially oppressive.

to the poor. The Government, not being aware of the true situation, removed all but about three hundred troops from New York; then it continued with the enrollment. Everything indicated that a crisis was almost reached.

During the afternoon of July 3, 1863, an inflammatory placard was posted about the city and hung up in conspicuous positions in some of the hotels. The firm friends of the Administration and Government, according to this hand-bill, were disappointed as they had seen no indication of energy and capacity in their rulers which would be equal to the perils threatening their institutions; they formerly believed in the patriotism of Secretary Stanton and President Lincoln; now they held General Halleck responsible as he was Commander-in-chief.

The evident intent of this hand-bill was to incite an insurrectionary movement on the Fourth of July; but the tidings received of Meade's success at Gettysburg, which assembled all the supporters of the war into the streets caused the opponents to withdraw and thus postponed for a time an open opposition to the course of events. Nevertheless, much opposition seemed to be centered against the Administration at the Fourth of July celebrations. Ex-President Franklin Pierce in his Fourth-of-July oration at

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13 Moore, Frank (ed), *The Rebellion Record*, pp. 85-86.
Concord remonstrated that before the war no American citizen had ever been exiled because of his opinion. In the efforts of the last two years citizens had seen how futile it was to attempt to maintain the Union by force, and how impracticable their efforts would have been, even if the war had been successful. They recognized that to defend their rights as a free people would be remembered in the years to come by those who loved liberty.\footnote{Johnson, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 294-295}

Another Fourth of July speaker was Horatio Seymour who gave an address in New York. Like the other opponents of the Administration, Pierce and Vallandigham, he criticized the Lincoln government for curtailing the liberty of those who opposed the Government of the North, but had nothing to say against the secessionists. He introduced his speech by saying that when he accepted the invitation to this meeting they had been promised the downfall of Vicksburg; however, the news was received of this victory while he was giving this address. In his entreaty for peace he maintained that they had been told every revolution could have been prevented by a compromise graciously made, and there could be no beneficent peace until a harmonious North existed. He added:

"Remember this, that the bloody and treasonable and revolutionary doctrine of public necessity can be pro-
claimed by a mob as well as by a government. 

In a short time the mob was a reality. The draft began on Saturday, July 11, in the Ninth District. Twelve hundred and thirty-six names were drawn, but no difficulties arose. Early Sunday morning excited men assembled in the hotels and barrooms in the districts where the draft was to continue on Monday. Groups denounced the conscription, and openly talked of attacking the draft offices. Mingling among them were men in common, and in some instances shabby clothing, but whose speech indicated cultivation, and whose hands showed them unused to labor. They advocated group action, and the gathering together of every variety of offensive weapon, to be secreted in convenient places, for an outbreak the next day.

On the morning of the second day of the draft the various New York Democratic Journals, instruments of the politicians, seemed to vie with one another in their attempts to arouse the passions of those who detested the idea of an abolition war. It was emphatically asserted that the enrollment here was excessive, and the quota required of the city was too high; it was insinuated that there would be unfairness in the drawing of names from the wheel; furthermore, it was insisted that the draft itself

16 Ibid, p. 296.
17 Gilmore, op. cit, p. 168.
was unconstitutional and an outrage on individual liberty and state rights. An article appeared in the *Journal of Commerce* the second day of the draft asserting that war was often the tool of some men to accomplish their ends; and those who said that since the war had started it should not end until slaveholding had been abolished were murderers.18

The politicians, preceding the draft riots, had been lecturing in such a manner as to arouse the emotions of the masses against the administration and to cultivate sympathy for the Confederacy. The Democratic paper, dominated by politicians, were taking every opportunity to criticize the North as well as to emphasize vehemently the excessive enrollment. They said that not only was the quota for New York City too high, but any draft was unconstitutional. All this strategy of the politicians contributed to put the people in a receptive frame of mind for the Draft Riots.

18 The *Journal of Commerce*, July 13, 1863.
The Conscription Act

The patriotic were the ones who did the volunteering, but as the war continued this group became inadequate; the existing condition meant that some form of conscription would have to be devised. An article in the *New York Daily Times* stated that the first man they had ever heard advocate a general conscription for the Union was Archbishop Hughes, in 1862; this priest condemned volunteering as placing too large a share of the burden on the generous and public spirited.¹

The question of a draft presented itself to the President and the War Department in the autumn of 1862. Military life was discouraged as it became better understood; soldiers who returned were not enthusiastic about camp life, and believed that their places should be filled by those who had not shared in the public burden.² Bounties were offered but all these failed to provide a sufficient stimulus. A great many did volunteer but not in sufficient numbers. As a result, Congress passed the "Draft Act" which was approved March 3, 1863; this act made it possible for the War Department to make a draft for the army in little more than four months.

¹ *New York Daily Tribune*, July 14, 1863.
As early as August 27, 1863, substitute brokers were interfering with volunteering because persons otherwise exempt from liability to draft were waiting to receive substitute fees before enlisting. According to the New York Tribune, the best way to correct this condition was to fix a definite sum in lieu of substitution; most people, it was averred, would prefer to pay double the sum directly to the government rather than give it to private speculators.

Adjutant-general Lorenzo Thomas had reported during his tour of inspection in November 1863, that substitution was growing and had become a menace. Substitute brokers were taking the people's money and giving the army a number of worthless men. At the same time desertions were on the increase. Secretary Stanton wired, "Why have you not stopped the substitutes at once if you deem it proper? Do so now." The adjutant-general replied, "I this day stopped the substitutes until I would receive your instructions."

The substitution and commutation clauses in the enrollment act were the accomplishment of a few men accepted by the majority on political principles. These clauses would not have been added to the bill except that men representing

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the financial districts of the country insisted upon it. Without the influence of these men the bill would probably have been free from class privilege. Immediately this bill was assailed for its discrimination in favor of the man of means.

Another phase of the privilege of the wealthy was to assure them that substitutes could be secured. Senator Cowan said, "Almost the last thing that Governor Curtin told me when he was here a few days ago, was, if possible, to prevent the enrollment from including those between eighteen and twenty-one, because they were the source from which people derived their substitutes, and they would furnish enough in order to supply the roll." Following this statement Senator Wilson secured an amendment raising the minimum age for enrollment from eighteen to twenty.

The opposition that was most frequently raised against the conscription act, the criticism that was echoed by the New York mobs, was first issued by one loyal to the administration as well as to the Union - Thaddeus Stevens made the following statement:

The rich man who has no conscientious scruples, in my judgment, has no more right when he is drafted to refuse to go and fight the enemies of his country than the poor man who cannot raise three hundred dollars to pay for exemption. As the bill now stands it amounts to that.

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6 Congressional Globe, 37 Congress, 3 sess, p. 983.
7 Ibid, p. 991.
8 Ibid, pp. 1261-1262.
Mr. Stevens maintained that the Democrats raised no opposition now, as they wanted to see the provisions dealing with substitution and commutation incorporated in the bill. Then later they would attack the entire bill because of those sections.

Commutation was denounced by the masses, but substitution was seldom mentioned; this was due probably to the fact that it would be impossible for the poor man to raise this amount; while if this sum were not stated he might be able to get a substitute. The answer to the skepticism on commutation was "that the three hundred dollar clause was not to discriminate against the poor and in favor of the rich, but to check speculation, keep down the price of substitutes, and to enable a much greater number to procure substitutes than without this provision could be able to. The rich could in any event get substitutes."9

Those who could not raise the three hundred dollars opposed the commutation clause, because if they had to serve they wanted the rich man to have to pay an excessive amount for his exemption. As these people believed, with the repeal of the commutation clause, the price of substitutes rapidly went beyond a thousand dollars.10 A letter conveyed

9 New York Tribune, August 8, 1863.

the information to Mr. Seward that the minds of the poor, even of Republicans, were incensed by the three hundred dollar clause in the enrolling act; the rich man without this clause would have had to pay from one to three thousand dollars for a substitute, and the poor said that with no provision in the law they could have procured a substitute for less than three hundred dollars. Thus, this clause was used by demagogues to inflame the poor and ignorant classes.\(^{11}\)

The belief that without commutation the rich would be forced to pay more while the poor could get a substitute for less seemed to be the sentiment expressed by the mob in the draft riots. Since three hundred dollars was a year's wages for a laboring man, most of them could better afford to go to war than pay this amount. Yet Wilson said that the bill was made "to bear as lightly as possible upon the toiling masses, and to put the burdens, as far as we could do so, equally upon the favored sons of men."\(^{12}\) Mr. Sargent said that the exemptions of the bill favored the poor and dependent, not the powerful and wealthy.\(^{13}\) Of course, some provision had to be made to provide for aged or infirm dependents and for dependent children.

Senator Wilson maintained that the enrollment bill was intended to raise men, not money;\(^{14}\) yet he sponsored the commutation clause, which furnished money not men.

\(^{12}\) *Congressional Globe*, 37 Congress, 3 sess., p 977.
\(^{13}\) Ibid, p. 978.
\(^{14}\) Ibid, p. 981.
of 292,441 names drawn in the draft only 9,281 were held to personal service; 28,002 furnished substitutes, while 52,888 paid commutation. From these figures one could conclude that the draft did not bear as heavily upon the poor man as was surmised; nevertheless, other weaknesses arose. Nearly 40,000 men did not report after being drafted while over 164,000 were exempted because of physical defects.¹⁵ Undoubtedly the proper prejudice against the commutation clause affected the desertion and exemption extensively.

When the states were asked for bounty New York led the other states, giving a total of over eighty-six million dollars. After paying these enormous bounties, the states were constantly exerting influence over the federal government for more immunity and freedom from federal supervision than they already possessed. A number of governors requested a stay of execution of the draft, greater federal bounties, a reconsideration of quotas, that drafted men be allowed to volunteer so as to get the larger bounty, that substitutes be given bounties, and even that the federal offices should not interfere in the business of the bounty breakers.¹⁶

Governor Seymour received more criticism than his share for this practice of asking for various privileges. He believed in state recruiting and saw that it was done in New York, but opposed federal interference; he was for state rights, but in this respect he scarcely outdistanced the governors of other states as Morton, Yates, Curtin, Andrew, and others whose loyalty was unquestioned.

The redeeming feature of the Enrollment Act of 1863 was that it took the direct control of the draft out of the hands of the governors and gave it to an officer and a Bureau of the War Department. An officer of the bureau, writing shortly after the war, prophesied:

The historian who would trace accomplished results to the true and genuine causes must assign to the law constituting this Bureau a most important place among the agencies by which the great work of restoring the national authority has been so happily accomplished. 17

Since the law did not turn the raising of the army over to the Provost-marshall-general's bureau this prophecy was hardly fulfilled. However, it became a means of procuring those of the "reluctant availables," who could not buy their freedom after they could no longer be tempted to serve by patriotic appeal or momentary gain. The fullest

advantage was not taken by the bureau; however, after studying the amount of pressure exerted upon them by the governors and others it seemed almost impossible that they could have done more.

The regulations for the government of the bureau were issued April 31, 1863. A Congressional District was too large a unit for the efficient control of the enrollment. Therefore each district was divided according to each city ward, township, or county, according to population and accessibility. One enrolling officer was assigned for each subdistrict with orders to begin operations at once.

Some of the papers were enthusiastic about the conscription and believed that the sooner it was put into effect the better it would be for the entire country. One editorial which favored an Early and Large Conscription made the statement that it was hoped the Administration would complete their preparations for the conscription soon; that the great mistake of the war had been the attempt to wage it with insufficient force; now the Executive had the power to put from one to three million men into the field, and the people would cheerfully cooperate for the rapid completion of the war.18

After May 25, the enrollment began; it was a house to house canvass, somewhat after the order of the taking of the census. In order that this procedure would receive as little opposition as possible, the officers were to register all males of the stipulated ages. There were some gross errors, the chief of which were in the New York districts, later involved in the draft riots. In one New York district approximately 80,000 names were enrolled in eight wards, and the Provost-marshal and their assistants were responsible for all details. Since people were reluctant to furnish information, many mistakes were found on the first sheets; the testimony of others had to be relied upon when no facts could be procured from the principals.

For this single district about forty engrossers were employed in addition to some half dozen investigators who were kept busy making outside inquiries as to persons about whom there might be doubt. A map and street directory was used to classify everyone. Engrossers were threatened with discharge without pay for a single error and several were removed. It appears that this amount of care was not taken everywhere. Seymour later complained that it was in one of these districts that an unduly large number of men was enrolled. Possibly the error was not in enrolling too many men in New York City but in not enrolling enough

elsewhere, even in which case there might have been some truth in the accusation that the metropolis was being discriminated against. Since errors were detected from the beginning in this law which was so strenuously opposed by the masses, a riot was the logical outcome.

The pressing demand for more soldiers in the summer of 1863, made it necessary to draft as soon as the enrollment was finished. Due to the retarded enrollment in some states, it was impossible to wait until the entire North was ready for the conscription. The plan adopted for the draft was for one-fifth of the quota plus fifty per cent in each state, as soon as the enrollment was completed. The best basis for apportionments of quotas was provided by the enrollment law which designated the enrollment lists as the basis for assignment; formerly, the total population had been the only basis of assignment.

The preliminary work necessary for the draft gave its enemies time for organized opposition. Naturally there were lawyers who maintained that the Conscription Act was unconstitutional. During the Civil War the power of Congress over conscription was disputed. Since the question did not come before the Supreme Court it was discussed on the basis of legal opinion. Lincoln's opinion, as expressed in a

paper not published until after his death, was that the Constitution provided that the Congress should have power to raise and support armies; and by this act the Congress had exercised the power to raise and support armies. The President commented:

The Constitution gives Congress the power, but it does not prescribe the mode or expressly declare who shall prescribe it. In such case Congress must prescribe the mode or relinquish the power. . . . . . . . It is not a power to raise armies if State authorities consent, nor if the men to compose the armies are entirely willing; but it is a power to raise and support armies. . . . . . . without an 'if'. #34

The Administration favored conscription and believed in its constitutionality, and since it was passed by majorities in both houses of the government, these acts proved that legislative opinion was in its favor. The debates show that its constitutionality was carefully considered. Statesmen reasoned that conscription could only lie with the National Government, which had the power of war and peace, as well as the power of raising armies. This

Conscription Law did not violate the clauses guaranteeing jury trial and prohibiting unreasonable seizures and searches. Randall declares:

The conscription law was not contemporaneously challenged as to constitutionality before the Federal Supreme Court, but had this been done there is little doubt that they would have upheld the act as it upheld confiscation and other war measures. 25

All politicians opposed to the Lincoln Administration defied the Conscription and were willing to pay any price to antagonize the foreign vote, that enemies of the Administration might carry the next election. Naturally the journals differed in their attitude toward Conscription. An editorial appeared in a New York paper, July 10, 1863, which stated that the Administration was wisely ordering a draft, although it might seem that after Lee's defeat and Vicksburg's fall the rebellion would come to a speedy end without much further effort on the part of the North; however, after the Confederacy was defeated at Gettysburg and Vicksburg the energy of the South might be redoubled against the North. A new army of three hundred thousand men had to be prepared to move against the Confederacy, then the South would know that if they were to stop short of annihilation, it would be necessary for them to yield. 26


Since the Confederacy was suffering great losses, it was necessary for its leaders to do something to reinstate themselves with their people. The leaders of the South were made to believe by their sympathizers in the North that the "oppressed masses" of the Union were ready for insurrection. This illusion accounted for General Lee and his army being sent into the North.\textsuperscript{27}

President Lincoln's call for 120,000 men was responded to especially by the State of New York whose National Guards were in excellent condition and well commanded. New York City and Brooklyn sent at least seventeen regiments into Pennsylvania, but none of these returned until the mob was almost overpowered. As the time approached for the beginning of the draft, the attention of the President and the War Department was concentrated upon the armies in Pennsylvania, Maryland, Virginia, and the Mississippi Valley. On July 13, 1863, E. D. Morgan sent a letter from New York City to Hon. Edwin M. Stanton, requesting that precautions be taken in New York. He suggested:

\begin{quote}
It would, I think, be well to give such public information regarding the draft as to show that it was perfectly fair. This would have a good influence on matters in New York. I would also suggest the propriety of having it understood that \ldots\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{27} The Volcano Under the City, p. 309-310.
of instruction certainly in each of the large and perhaps in all the States, were to be established, and the men now drafted are to form for the present reserve corps. It is well to adopt all reasonable precautions. 28

Following his defeat at Gettysburg, Lee retreated into Virginia; after the fall of Vicksburg, another Union victory, Grant was soon to recover the Mississippi River. In consequence of this success, the North had begun to feel certain of victory; the enthusiasm of the Confederacy was depleted. Possibility of trouble in relation to the Conscription Act seemed to be far from the minds of those in authority. The thirteenth of July was indeed perilous since the danger of enforcing the draft was believed to exist no longer.

Drafting was started in New York, July 11, 1863, but was discontinued on Monday, July 13, because of riots which resulted from opposition to forced military duty. The Conscription was resumed August 19, 1863. A dispatch was sent by John H. Wool, Major-General, New York City, July 13, 1863, to Hon. E. M. Stanton that New York was quiet and would probably stay quiet unless the drafts were resumed; then the adjoining counties of the State would follow their example. 29 This letter proved that the draft had an important part in causing the riots of 1863.

Another report was sent to Secretary Stanton by John E. Wool, Major-General, United States Army, July 20, 1863, in which he said:

The cause ascribed for this riot has been the attempt on the part of the assistant Provost-marshal to make the draft on that day at the various offices in the city. 30

The draft in New York, the immediate cause of the Draft Riots in 1863, seemed to have been started at the most inopportune time -- the city was devoid of troops, the soldiers having been sent into Pennsylvania; the attention of the War Department at Washington was centered upon the movement of the armies of the enemy; the drawing of names was started on Saturday, then on Sunday the enemies of the Administration, assisted by the journalists, had time to arouse the antipathy of the masses; Governor Seymour had gone to New Jersey; moreover, no thought was given to opposition of the draft, since victory for the North seemed inevitable.

First, there had been the enrollment, then the definite announcement of the draft, which meant that the workingmen would be forced to leave their homes and their work, by, as many of them believed an unconstitutional law. A number believed this draft to be unnecessary since

the Union was now being victorious in almost all en-
counters. Another report, stressed by some journals, 
which embittered the workingmen was that the Admin-
istration was enforcing this draft to reduce the 
Democratic votes in New York at the next election; in 
addition, the Governor of New York maintained that the 
apportionment of New York City was too high. When all 
these arguments were constantly put before the people— 
many foreign-born, and unable to read English, and ever 
accosted by those who opposed the Administration — it 
seems a miracle that more force was not needed to quell 
the New York Draft Riots of 1863.
The Irish and Catholics in the Draft Riots

The principal nationality in the New York Draft Riots was the Irish. This fact would be expected since there were more Irish immigrants than any other. The census of 1860, the last official count before the riots, fixed the population of New York City which then comprised only Manhattan Island, at 813,669, of which a little more than half were foreign-born. Among the aliens the Irish were overwhelmingly in the majority with a total of 203,740, while the next highest were the Germans, with 119,484. The Irish had settled principally in the Five Points and Milberry Bend Districts, which contained 310 persons to the acre, while the Germans were massed along the middle East Side. The Germans caused little or no trouble during the riots.¹

The Irish in New York before 1860 were interested only in a fair chance to make a living, and mix in ward politics. The Special Correspondent of The London Spectator stated:

These people are to a person the devoted followers of Fernando Wood and Benjamin Wood, his brother, who owe their political elevation to the Irish.²

² National Anti-Slavery Standard, Sept. 5, 1863.
The Irish had little interest in the quarrel between the North and the South as long as it did not interfere with their everyday life. These immigrants, unaccustomed to American ways, easily excitable, the most patriotic already in the army as volunteers, were concerned with the financial side of the war chiefly; they feared competition with the negroes in the labor market if this race was emancipated. Opposition to the draft was a mere matter of course.

Wages were high and every effort was exerted to maintain this standard. Ethiopian rivalry might change the situation. This fear was largely responsible for the anti-negro demonstrations at the time of the riots. July 18, 1863, Archbishop John Hughes of New York in a letter to Hon. William H. Seward, Secretary of State, considered this fear as one of the prime causes of the riots. He believed that the draft might be resumed in two weeks. An excerpt from the letter follows:

The plea of the discontents is, on the surface, the draft. At the bottom, however, in my opinion, the discontent will be found in what the misguided people imagine to be a disposition on the part of a few here and elsewhere to make black labor equal to white labor, and put both on the same equality, with the difference that black labor shall have local patronage over the toil of the white man. ............... Let the draft not be given up, but let it be baffled for a couple of weeks, and I have no apprehensions as to the result. 3
At least twelve victims of the riot were murdered because of this prejudice caused by fear; ten were negroes, one was the white wife of a negro, and another was a Mohawk Indian who was mistaken for a negro. The ninth district, in which the trouble started was largely inhabited by foreign laborers, and the "rich man's war and poor man's fight" slogan of the South was re-echoed in the North since it was permissible to escape service by the payment of three hundred dollars. Antagonism in the cities between the immigrant Irish laborers and the negroes was increasing since they were competitors for work.

The prejudice of the Irish against the negroes, the feeling of the populace that they were drafted for an abolition war, climaxed in cruel assaults upon negroes found in the streets. An editorial appeared in the New York Herald, Thursday, July 16, 1863, which stated, "The Tribune complains that the rioters are constantly attacking the negroes." The Herald replied that The Tribune with its pamphlets and the radical orators of the country was responsible for the present


treatment of the negro. They had endeavored to degrade the white race to the level of the negro.\textsuperscript{5}

In some quarters it was declared that the riots were a Roman Catholic insurrection. This statement was based upon certain circumstances, one of which was the burning and looting of the Methodist Episcopal Mission at the Five Points by a mob which shouted the glories of the Pope and carried banners inscribed "Down with the Protestants!" Comment had also been made upon Archbishop Hughes' balcony speech when he said "the blame is justly laid upon Irish Catholics."\textsuperscript{6}

There was little truth in the charge against the Catholics, for the riots, while criminal, were in no sense religious. Yet much significance was seen in the fact that no Roman Catholic property was destroyed or even threatened;\textsuperscript{7} that on several occasions a lone Catholic priest turned back mobs plainly bent on murder and loot; and that Archbishop Hughes, although repeatedly requested by Mayor George L. Opiyke, and Governor Horatio L. Seymour, refused to counsel the rioters to disband until the morning of Friday, the last day of the fighting. Then when he did issue a proclamation, it was introduced with such a bitter attack upon Horace Greeley it defeated its purpose. The proclamation began

\textsuperscript{5} \textit{New York Herald}, July 18, 1863
\textsuperscript{6} \textit{American Annual Cyclopaedia}, Vol. III, 1863, p. 816
\textsuperscript{7} Ibid, p. 816.
with these words:

"In spite of Mr. Greeley's assault upon the Irish..."8

This statement appeared in one of the newspapers:

"It is a curious fact that of all the arrests made, every one is Irish."9

The following comment appeared in another New York paper:

However this may be, it is a fact, patent to every one who has seen anything of the mob, that it is composed almost exclusively of Irishmen and boys.10

Many similar disturbances occurred in various parts of the country, which were put down by the authorities, but, as Mr. Greeley said, "In no single instance was there a riot incited by drafting wherein Americans by birth bore any considerable part, nor in which the great body of the actors were not born Europeans, and generally of recent importation."11 Innumerable comments were made upon the part taken by Archbishop Hughes. An invitation was extended, as he stated, "to the men of New York, who are called in many of the papers rioters," inviting them to come to his house and let him talk to them, assuring them of immunity from the police in going and coming. "You who are Catholics," the address concluded, "or as many of you as are, have a right to visit your Bishop without molestation."12

On the seventeenth of July at two o'clock four or five

8 The New York Herald, July 16, 1863.
12 American Annual Cyclopaedia, 1863, p.816.
thousand persons assembled at the Archbishop's residence and from the balcony he addressed the mob, alternately pleading, cajoling, and warning them. He told them that he "did not see a riotous face among them." He did not accuse them of having done anything wrong. He said that every man had a right to defend his house or his shanty at the risk of his life; that they had no cause to complain, "as Irishmen and Catholics," against the Government, and affectionately suggested whether it might not be better for them to retire to their homes and keep out of danger. He begged them to be quiet in the name of Ireland, "Ireland, that never committed a single act of cruelty until she was oppressed; Ireland, that has been the mother of heroes and poets, but never the mother of cowards." The crowd greeted his speech with uproarious applause and quietly dispersed.13

This was not the first time Archbishop Hughes had come to the aid of his country. In the autumn of 1861, he rendered a worthy service to the Union cause when he, together with Bishop McIlvaine and Thurlow Weed, was sent by the Lincoln Government to Europe to prevent England and France from extending recognition to the Confederacy.14 This service ably accomplished deserves more attention than it usually receives.

To show still further the attitude of the Catholic Church in the draft riots, reference will be made to the letter written by John Timon, Bishop of Buffalo. This letter was required to be read in every church on the Sunday after it was received. In this correspondence Bishop Timon requested that the Catholics abstain from all resistance to the law, and from all riots; he added that if there would be a draft, fewer men would be drafted than would probably be killed in a struggle against the law. 15

Another letter written July 19, 1863, by Attorney James T. Brady of New York, told the people that nothing in history of permanent value had been won by mob rule; the writer added that he was not in sympathy with all provisions of the Conscription Law; nevertheless, he would obey the law. Another fact that both Mr. Brady and Archbishop Hughes wanted to make the people realize was that the agitators of the riots remained in secure secrecy; and the demagogues urged the people into dangers which they themselves would not encounter; 16 moreover, the secret directors would never consent to be the public leaders of the riots. 17


17 Moore, Frank (ed), op. cit., p. 448.
There was much speculation as to the identity of the secret instigators of the riots. Some believed that these secret leaders were Confederate agents in affiliation with Jefferson Davis. Confederate agents had been caught engaging in "outrages upon the Unionists, stealing military supplies, destroying bridges, engaging in bushwhacking, mapping fortification, carrying treasonable correspondence, and otherwise assisting the enemy." 18 Since the laws were insufficient and the courts inadequate to cope with such circumstances, the Conspiracies Act of July 31, 1861, and the Treason Act of July 17, 1862, were passed by Congress. 19

Certain writers maintained that there were Confederate agents everywhere, 20 just as there were Union Secret Service Agencies throughout the South. 21 No doubt the Southern authorities believed that at the drawing of names for conscription there would be an uprising of all in the North who were hostile to emancipation, to war taxes, to Lincoln, and to the draft. Lee's defeat at Gettysburg rendered such an uprising on a large scale out of the question, but it could not quiet the fermentation of the elements already seething and boiling in the City of New York.

20 The Volcano Under the City, p 310.
Alluding to these riots, the New York Tribune on July 15, while its office was threatened with attack, bravely said,

They are in purpose and in essence, a Diversion in favor of Jefferson Davis and Lee. Listen to the yells of the mob and the harangues of its favorite orators, and you will find them surcharged with 'Nigger', 'Abolition', 'Black Republican', and denunciation of prominent Republicans. 22

During the entire war, Mr. Davis maintains secret communications with many distinguished Northern politicians, generally those of the Democratic Party. The letters and documents he received from them were so numerous that they were kept in a special private archive, entitled the Presidential Bureau of Correspondence. These confidences were kept from the Confederate Congress as well as from Mr. Davis' Cabinet; few persons in Richmond knew of the existence of such a bureau; 23 no one was ever admitted to its papers; and so anxious was Mr. Davis to conceal them that some days before the surrender of Richmond, he had them conveyed to Danville, Virginia, where their location was unknown. 24

22 New York Tribune, July 15, 1863

23 Pollard, Edward A., Life of Jefferson Davis With a Secret History of the Southern Confederacy, p. 405

24 Rowland, Dunbar, Jefferson Davis's Place in History, p. 18.
An article in the Sentinel, a Richmond journal, to which rumor assigned Mr. Benjamin, Secretary of State of the Confederacy, as a regular contributor, warned the North that a few secret hands might be sufficient to destroy by fire her finest cities.25

Since Confederate agents had been arrested in the North, since the utterance of the mob at the Tribune office indicated Southern support, since secret correspondence from the North kept Mr. Davis well informed as to conditions in the Union, since the cities of the North had been threatened with destruction, the conclusion is reached that the Confederate agents would not have omitted an opportunity as the drawing of names for the draft to exert their influence upon the discontented masses in New York.

The Irish objected to being drafted for an "abolition war" though that does not diminish the excellent record of thousands of Irish who either as volunteers or drafted men fought through it.26 Fox in his History of Regimenetal Losses said that 150,000 men of Irish nativity were numbered among those who fell and an equal number of Irish born soldiers returned to civilian life when the war was over.27

26 Adams, James Truslow, America's Tragedy, p. 322.
27 Fox, William Freeman, History of Regimental Losses, p. 118-119.
Throughout the northern states the Irish population generally declared for the Union. Irishmen enlisted, hoping in some way to strike a blow at England, and carried the green flag along with the American colors in the regiment. In this conflict the Irish race proved once again their aptitude for war, and their personal valor on the field of battle.

Great inducements were presented to the Irish to enter the army. There were 92,157 Irish who came to New York in 1862, while the next immigrant group in number were the Germans, totaling 35,002. Their passage was paid by the United States Government and charged to the enlistment expenses. The sum appropriated for this purpose was $3,000,000, and it was estimated that it would bring to this country 120,000 Irish persons. It was believed that the cost would be only fifty dollars each for 60,000 men, and in any other way the cost to the United States would be one hundred dollars per soldier.

Irish immigrants were beset on landing by the recruiting officers with promises of one hundred dollars from the Federal Government, fifty dollars from the State of New York, and fifty dollars from the Common Council of the city. Bewildered and dazzled at the prospect of such enormous wealth, they marched direct from the immigration depot, to the recruiting office, and


29 American Annual Cyclopaedia, 1863, p. 359.

became soldiers of the Union before they had been twenty-four hours in the country. 31

Another reason for enlisting was the national feeling of excitement which leads a fiery and impetuous people to enlist in any great popular movement; and finally, perhaps strongest of all was the desire to learn the use of arms and the strategy of war, with the hope of turning them to practical service at some future time in the cause of Ireland.

We acknowledge that a great majority of the mob was composed of the Irish, but this is to be expected since this nationality constituted the greatest number of the foreign-born in New York; these people belonged to the working class of immigrants and were forced to live in a poorer district than the native Americans. The mob started in the region where these people lived; thus, being in this district, being an excitable type of people and liking a fight, it is natural that the Irish were well represented. Furthermore, a number of these immigrants had been working in New York; now when their wages were increasing the draft demanded that they participate in an "abolition war." Then when the Southern negroes were free they would migrate to the North and compete with the white people in the labor market; thus, under this excitement many of the negroes were assailed.

As far as the Irish Catholics are concerned there is no evidence that religion functioned in any way; most of the Irish were Catholics, but this riot was not concerned with religion. The part Archbishop Hughes took in this

31 Ibid, p.137
controversy was only that of one who could have some control over these people, and the Archbishop wanted to do what was best for the Irish as well as for the negro and the entire country. It is probable that the Confederate agents were working upon the discontented masses of New York at the time of the drawing of names for the draft. The Irish participated quite actively in the draft riots. The draft was the immediate cause for the disturbance, but fear of the negroes in the labor market was the underlying cause of the New York draft riots.
The Newspapers and the Draft Riots

I. The Work of the Newspapers in Causing the Draft Riots.

The actual influence of newspapers upon the draft riots has caused much comment. As accounts appearing the available contemporary papers are traced, an attempt shall be made to come to some conclusion as to the press in this disaster.

A Copperhead Meeting was held in New York, June 3, 1863, and at that time Fernando Wood, ex-mayor of New York gave an address in which he spoke of the Northern people as having fewer privileges than the European people who live under the greatest despots. He also referred to their glorious friend, Vallandigham, who had been banished within the Confederate lines. Then with the greatest emphasis he declared that he was for peace and cessation of hostilities; yet he made a definite appeal for the Union.¹

In the Copperhead Meeting at which Fernando Wood spoke, the members made certain resolves. These resolutions declared loyalty to the Constitution and claimed that since the war was contrary to the Constitution, hostilities should be brought to a close. Unlimited submission to the Executive branch of the government was unworthy of any American citizen. Furthermore, the meeting recommended the appointment of a

¹ National Anti-Slavery Standard, June 13, 1863.
State General Committee, to call future conventions of the peace Democrats. By a study made of this meeting and the free speech which was permitted, it seems unusual that there was not more resentment against the national government and the war than did exist.

The masses in New York had given very little attention to the war. Reference was frequently made to the draft, but to these people it seemed something remote, that which had no direct relation to them. Then July 10, 1863, the newspapers announced that the drawings for the draft were to begin immediately. Now everyone began to realize the effect the war was to have upon them; previously the war meant that it was easier to secure work, and wages were higher than ever before. However, an article appeared in the Times on the first day of the draft which said that there was a universal satisfaction with the draft. Articles of this type help to put the public in a receptive frame of mind; the article read:

In justice to our people, it must be recorded that the almost universal expression is that of satisfaction and acquiescence in the wisdom and propriety of the measure. 3

The Administration met criticism from every source; even publications, which would seemingly have no particular interest in national affairs, lost no opportunity to criticise and use

2 Ibid, June 13, 1863.

sarcasm in relation even to victory achieved by the North. The Saturday Review, an English journal which was conspicuously hostile to the Union, published an account shortly after the victory at Vicksburg declaring that the "fall of Vicksburg might perhaps embolden the government to venture on enforcing the conscription." The National Anti-Slavery Standard commented that the attitude of the English journal would be used against the country by their enemies when an attempt was made to enforce the draft.

Conflicting opinions were expressed at this time by various newspapers. Some delineated the Copperheads, others praised the Northern executives. It was predicted that the Southern sympathizers believed the South would soon be victorious. Some Northern leaders who violently opposed the Confederate sympathizers also criticized the Administration. These Unionists said that since the President had worked into the grasp of the South by delays, a number in sympathy with the rebels were determined to reinstate him in office that the South might continue to advance their military tactics, while the armies of the North would be retarded by the inability of the president. It was maintained that the diversified opinion of the North had encouraged the opposition to such an extent that Pennsylvania had been invaded.

An editorial which appeared in a paper, July 4, 1863, lamented that the Copperheads would rejoice in the victories

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4 National Anti-Slavery Standard, July 25, 1863
of the enemies of their country. Moreover, it was charged that the leaders of The World, The Express, The Chicago Times, and The Boston Courtier wished that the South would conquer the North. Furthermore, in keeping with the belief of the discussion of July 4, the rebel sympathizers encouraged Lee to change his policy from a line of defense to that of invasion.5

An uprising was the anticipated result of all the controversy indulged in by the newspapers in relation to the draft. Opposition was raised because no allowance was made for the militia which had been sent into Pennsylvania and Maryland; moreover, to lessen the Democratic votes at the next election was another reason given for the conscription. The papers suggested that the workingmen assemble peaceably to discuss the draft, express their opposition for it, and make it necessary that the Administration give up emancipation, and cause negotiations to be made followed by peace.6

The National Government was censured because an appeal was not made for volunteers immediately after the victories at Vicksburg and on the Susquehanna; many believed that this would have made a draft unnecessary; moreover, the enemy would have known by the response to the call for volunteers

5 Ibid, July 4, 1863.

6 The Daily News, July 13, 1863.
that the Union had the support of the people. This opportunity was taken to speak of Mr. Stanton's inability for his position.

When Governor Seymour made his inaugural address, he asserted that he had pledged allegiance to the Constitution of the United States, but he had also sworn to uphold another constitution and that was the constitution of the state of New York; he commented that these two constitutions did not conflict. The Governor of New York was for state rights, but no more so than other governors of the Empire state. Mr. Seymour questioned the constitutionality of the Conscription law. An article appeared in The Daily News which said that it was hoped that the constitutionality of the law, which threatened to remove over sixty thousand citizens from the state of New York, would be tested before a single individual was forced to take part in the conflict. This article repeated that Governor Seymour believed that "neither the President nor Congress, without the consent of the State authorities had any right to enforce such an act."  

With reference to the work of the papers in leading to the riot, it may be said that the newspapers lost no opportunity to print accounts of the Copperhead Meetings as well as resolutions and speeches made there by the popular party leaders.

7 The World, July 13, 1863.

8 The Daily News, July 13, 1863.
Critical accounts of the administration were published; also criticism was made of the Secretary of War because he had failed to issue a call for volunteers after the victories at Vicksburg and on the Susquehanna. The evident aim of conscription, according to some journals, was to lower the number of Democratic votes in the next election. It was suggested that the workingmen meet peaceably to see that the draft negotiations for peace be made. As would be expected Mr. Seymour's belief on state sovereignty was given much support.

However, there were other papers which complimented the people on their wisdom in receiving the draft so quietly. With all the criticism of the Conscription Act, the law which the workingmen naturally disliked, it would be expected that the riots would be more prevalent and even more difficult to calm than they were in New York.
II. Newspaper Comments as to the Causes of the Draft Riots.

After the draft riots comments were made by the papers which were of assistance in determining their causes. A number of instances which might lead to the mob were revealed after that excitement. These facts were not available during the time of the incident.

The Confederacy had allies working in the Union forces; this work had far reaching results. Those in authority may have known that those conditions were in existence, but were unable to prove that any particular individual or group was the cause of this source of disturbance. An editorial appeared under the title The Left Wing of Lee's Army which expressed the opinion that at the inauguration of the war an element of power upon which the rebels depended was the cooperation of the New York mob. As soon as the war started, the members of the Confederacy saw that they had been mistaken. These men upon whom they had relied joined the Union forces. However, the rebels knew the value of the mob in causing a defection in the North and contrived to continue the existence of the mob element. This editorial concluded:

There is no doubt, whatever, that it is this same influence which has brought about the present violent opposition to the National Enrollment Act in this City. There has appeared no distinct individual leadership in this rioting yet—the instigators holding themselves prudently in the background. 9

There is much conflict concerning the cause of the riots as presented by the papers. Newspapers blame the editors of journals of the opposing party, but to learn the different opinions it is necessary to read various papers. The Herald gives an account of the views of several newspapers:

The Tribune, Times, and Post are abusing the Copperheads as the cause of all this trouble, while the World, News, and Express are equally certain that the Niggerheads provoked the disturbance, and are thus the originators of the riots. There is a great deal of truth in each of these charges. 10

The World charged that the radical journals of New York had educated the people to the extremes of desperate feeling; while Greeley accused The World of assuming the leadership of the rioters and of fostering their plans. The Post expostulated that a Democratic paper printed articles which incited the people to violence. The News replied that the Black Republican Party was alone responsible for the disgrace which had fallen upon the city. The niggerhead Times and the copperhead Express continued the war of words. Consequently, all the papers attempted to make political capital out of the riots before the mob was hardly suppressed; and each accused the others

10 New York Herald, July 16, 1863.
of starting the riots.\footnote{11} While the conclusion is reached that all the newspapers were more or less responsible for this disaster.

The Copperheads believed that it would be impossible for the Union to succeed, because of the Southern sympathizers in the northern cities. The Copperheads opposed the war from the beginning; they were determined to have peace at any price. To secure the ceasing of hostilities, they opposed any and all programs set forth by the Administration, and predicted riots in case of prospects of a Northern victory; now when it appeared that success for the Confederacy was impossible, draft riots occurred in New York. An article appeared in a newspaper July 17, 1863, under the title, \textit{What Caused the Mob}; this account reported an incident occurring on the Saturday evening before the last State election. An active Democrat, because of his professed Unionism, was asked to vote the Republican Union ticket on the next Tuesday. Still expressing devotion to the Union, the Democrat declined, but added:

I know that this war for the Union cannot succeed. If there should be a prospect of success, there will be formidable, bloody riots in every city and every considerable village of the Free States, whereby the Government will be so weakened and paralyzed that its advantage will be lost. Rest assured that I speak what I know, and do not press me further. The war must break down.\footnote{12}

\footnote{11}{\textit{Ibid.}, July 16, 1863.}

\footnote{12}{\textit{New York Daily Tribune}, July 17, 1863.}
Reviewing the publications appearing in 1863, the reader wonders that there were not more men failing to appear for the draft and more desertions among those who made no particular study of the actual situation. The opponents of the Union cared not what was attacked, just so they could oppose some issue pursued by the Administration. Thus, all publications opposing the Lincoln government severely criticized the Conscription Act, in order that they might gain favor with the people, since it was generally suspected that the draft would be opposed by the masses, because most of the working men would be financially unable to hire a substitute or pay three hundred dollars to the national government.

The National Anti-Slavery Standard published an article asserting that the riot was "the natural fruit of the teachings of the Copperhead papers." This news item maintained that the draft was the ostensible pretext, but opposition to the war and sympathy with the rebellion were the real causes of the mob. This publication assigned the responsibility of the riots to the leaders of the Democratic Party.

Insistence was made that the riots were caused by sympathy with Jefferson Davis and General Lee. No better passport through the mob could be secured than the expression of sympathy with the Rebels and cheers for Jefferson Davis.

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13 National Anti-Slavery Standard, July 18, 1863.
When destruction was at its height, reporters contended that some of the rioters said this loss would compensate Jefferson Davis for his defeat at Vicksburg.\textsuperscript{14}

Some newspapers discussed very frankly the existence of a rebel organization in the North, and its increasing potency. A statement had been made by Mr. Wood that New York should be a free city; a group believed that this sentiment would be revived to make New York City a free port with which the Confederacy could trade to their own advantage. The men apprehended at Philadelphia on a charge of treason showed how easy it had been for the accomplices of treason in New York to act in concert with the leaders of the rebellion. Among the letters found on board their ship addressed to persons in Virginia was one from Andrews who figured as a leader of the mob in New York City.\textsuperscript{15}

Not opposition to the draft, but sympathy with the Confederacy promoted the riots according to The Tribune; otherwise, the negroes would not be assailed since they were poor men and could not pay the three hundred dollars. The National Anti-Slavery Standard believed that without sympathy from aldermen, judges, and a governor, who addressed them as "Friends" and who enforced their demands on the President, this disturbance would have been the weakest of mobs.

\textsuperscript{14} New York Daily Tribune, July 17, 1863.

\textsuperscript{15} National Anti-Slavery Standard, July 25, 1863.
The riots are 'a fire in the rear' on our country's defenders on the field. They are in purpose and essence a diversion in favor of Jeff. Davis and Lee. 16

Each newspaper placed the responsibility of the draft riots upon some other paper or group of papers, of the opposing political party; each publication, no doubt, contributed to this terrible disaster. Several articles assigned the draft as the pretext of the disturbance, but maintained that opposition to the war and sympathy with the Confederacy were the fundamental causes of the Draft Riots.

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Ibid, July 25, 1863.
CONCLUSION

Governor Horatio Seymour was not always in sympathy with the Lincoln government. It was believed that the governor's opposition to the administration encouraged the masses to oppose the execution of the federal law; this opposition resulted in a riot with the greatest destruction of life and property. The New York governor, Mr. Seymour, opposed the Republicans during the campaign of 1860, but supported the Lincoln Administration after it assumed office. At a meeting held at Utica in 1862, he made the statement that the Northern Democrats were going to take every opportunity to support the Union. He was a liberal contributor to the funds in Oneida County for enlisting soldiers. Addressing a meeting of the State Military Association at Albany, 1862, he introduced his address with this patriotic sentence:

We denounce the rebellion as most wicked, because it wages war against the best government the world has ever seen.¹

Throughout his administration Governor Seymour was energetic in raising troops, although a strong advocate for state rights.²

When Pennsylvania was invaded, within three days, twelve thousand militia were on their way to assist the Union forces; when the draft riots in New York took place, the militia was in Pennsylvania, and as Mayor Opdyke said in his proclamation the riot "would not have interrupted your peace for a day but for the temporary absence of all our organized local militia." Several public addresses given by Mr. Seymour tended to array the working men against the administration; thus, the governor contributed indirectly to the draft riots.

Crafty politicians were ever reiterating to the working men the restriction of their liberties enacted by the national government. The public speeches made by such leaders as ex-President Pierce, Chief Justice Taney, Mr. Vallandigham, and Governor Seymour excited the masses who made no investigation of the true political situation, but allowed their emotions to entice them to participate in mob violence.

Another source leading to the riots was the persistent misinterpretation of what was meant to be a beneficial provision of the Conscription Law—the section stating that a man whose name was drawn, if he did not wish to go into the service, might procure a substitute or pay three hundred dollars to the government and be released. The "three hundred dollar clause"

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3 New York Herald, July 16, 1863.
was attacked by the journalists who assumed to champion the cause of the poor. Mr. Vallandigham said in a speech at Dayton:

The three hundred dollar provision is a most unjust discrimination against the poor. The Administration says to every man between twenty and forty-five years of age, three hundred dollars or your life. *

The "three hundred dollar clause was finally repealed and the price of substitutes rapidly went beyond a thousand dollars. Another point of controversy with reference to the Conscription Act, which was continually heralded before the people was that a section of New York, later the scene of the riots, had been assigned an unjust quota. The three hundred dollar clause, the unjust quota, together with the belief that any draft was unconstitutional did more than anything else to promote the New York Draft Riots of 1863.

An economic fear dominated the lives of the Irish, as they believed that if the negroes were emancipated they would migrate to the industrial cities of the North and compete with them in the labor markets, lower their wages and make work more scarce. The politicians and the press contributed to this apprehension of the Irish immigrants who were naturally

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excitable as well as turbulent. Bishop Hughes requested the rioters who were Catholics to come to his home and since four or five thousand appeared, it was believed that the Catholics started the riot; however, no available evidence indicates that the Catholics had any part in instigating this riot. Numerous Catholics were in the mob, but Catholicism is the religion of most Irish people. When the Irish were told that they were to fight an "abolition war" they easily became the victims of leaders inciting the draft riots.

The newspapers in the interest of the Peace Party spared no efforts to incite the populace. On the morning when the draft was to begin, several of the most widely circulated Democratic journals contained editorials that appeared to be written for the very purpose of inciting a riot. They asserted that any draft at all was unconstitutional and despotic, that the quota demanded from the city was excessive, and in addition to this denounced the war as a "mere abolition crusade." 5

The South had representatives working in the North during the Civil War, and some Democratic politicians corresponded with Jefferson Davis; but it is doubtful if there was any well-formed conspiracy to instigate a riot. Everything correlated to form the outbreak. It was unfortunate that the draft began on

Saturday. On Sunday the men were not occupied; thus, they congregated in groups and were encouraged by the enemies of the administration to retaliate. Consequently, the insurrection which followed was more truly a popular uprising than a rebellion against the government.

In summary, the factors involving the background and causes of the New York Draft Riots of 1863, were as follows: the attitude of Horatio Seymour toward the National Government, the work of crafty politicians, the Conscription Law, the Irish and Catholics, and the journalists.

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6 Johnson, op. cit., p. 298.
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