

*Susan Easton Black*

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## THE PIVOTAL ROLE OF JOHN TAYLOR IN THE POLITICAL CAMPAIGN OF JOSEPH SMITH

**H**ERETOFORE the role of Elder John Taylor in Joseph Smith's bid for the presidency of the United States has been obscure. Perhaps some blame rests with a dismissive comment by B. H. Roberts, who wrote, "Of course President Smith could have no hope that he would be elected to the presidency,"<sup>1</sup> or a statement attributed to Joseph Smith, "I care but little about the presidential chair. I would not give half as much for the office of President of the United States as I would for the one I now hold as Lieutenant-General of the Nauvoo Legion."<sup>2</sup> Whatever the reason or reasons, an acknowledgment of the impact of Englishman John Taylor on the American political scene in 1844 is long overdue. The intent of this chapter is to highlight the pivotal role of Elder Taylor in the political campaign of Joseph Smith. It will show that being

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the editor of two Nauvoo newspapers, *Times and Seasons* and *Nauvoo Neighbor*, placed Taylor in a position to advance the presidential candidacy of Joseph Smith through the printed word. It will reveal that he took advantage of that position by printing fifteen hundred copies of Joseph's political platform. He then sent copies of the platform to influential newspaper editors and prominent leaders throughout the nation. Believing that he could do more, Taylor wrote a series of editorials explaining Joseph's political solutions to problems that vexed the nation. He affirmed Joseph's superior ability to lead a divided country on the verge of open conflict. He printed news of and advice to electioneering missionaries stumping in twenty-six states and the territory of Wisconsin, and printed clippings and exchanges in defense of Joseph and his political position. Without question, the editorial skills of Taylor jump-started and sustained the campaign of Joseph Smith. Joseph, a dark-horse candidate in January 1844, by June, just six months later, had become a recognized third-party presidential candidate, much to the credit of Taylor.

### WHO SHALL BE THE NEXT PRESIDENT?

By 1843, newspaper editors across the nation were asking, "Who shall be the next president?" From New York to Michigan, the Carolinas to Missouri, the question begged for an answer in the United (but too often politically divided) States. To editor Taylor, the answer was "the man who will be most likely to render us assistance in obtaining redress for our grievances" with the state of Missouri.<sup>3</sup> Joseph Smith agreed with Taylor's assessment. Acting "in behalf of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints," he sent letters to five leading candidates—Martin Van Buren,<sup>4</sup> Lewis Cass, Henry Clay, John C. Calhoun, and Richard

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Johnson—asking, “*What will be your rule of action relative to us as a people,*” should fortune favor your ascension to the chief magistracy?”<sup>5</sup> In his letter to Democratic hopeful Van Buren, Joseph expressed concern over “whether your views or feelings have changed since the subject matter of this communication was presented you in your then official capacity at Washington, in the year 1841 [1839–40], and by you treated with a coldness, indifference, and neglect, bordering on contempt.”<sup>6</sup> When an answer was not forthcoming, Joseph concluded, “It is morally impossible for this people, in justice to themselves, to vote for the re-election of President Van Buren—a man who criminally neglected his duties as chief magistrate in the cold and unblushing manner which he did, when appealed to for aid in the Missouri difficulties. His heartless reply burns like a firebrand in the breast of every true friend of liberty—*Your cause is just, but I can do nothing for you.*”<sup>7</sup>

Like Van Buren, Richard Johnson, vice president in the Van Buren administration, did not respond.<sup>8</sup> The response of Democratic hopeful Lewis Cass is not available for review.<sup>9</sup> Only letters from Henry Clay and John C. Calhoun are preserved. Clay, leading candidate of the Whig Party, responded to Joseph’s query, “Should I be a candidate, I can enter into no engagements, make no promises, give no pledge to any particular portion of the people of the United States. If I ever enter into that high office I must go into it free and unfettered, with no guarantees but such as are to be drawn from my whole life, character and conduct.”<sup>10</sup> Southerner John C. Calhoun wrote, “As you refer to the case of Missouri, candor compels me [to pen] . . . the case does not come within the jurisdiction of the Federal Government, which is one of limited and specific powers.”<sup>11</sup>

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Joseph wrote of his contempt for Clay's unfettered stance and Calhoun's narrow view of the power vested in the presidential office, "*I am surprised* that a man or men in the highest stations of public life should have made up such a fragile 'view' of a case. . . . But why—tell me why are all the principal men held up for public stations *so cautiously careful* not to publish to the world that they will *judge a righteous judgment, law or no law?*"<sup>12</sup> The fact that Joseph gave the Clay and Calhoun letters and his rebuttal to John Taylor to print in his newspapers is the first hint that Taylor would use the power of the press to further Joseph's political purposes.<sup>13</sup> Joseph was convinced that a printed disagreement between himself and the two most powerful political figures of his day would be noticed if printed in the *Times and Seasons* and *Nauvoo Neighbor*. His open letter was read by editors nationwide who, in turn, reprinted the letters for their subscribers, who also wrestled with the question of who would be their next president.

As early as October 1843, that question was asked by John Taylor. At that time, Taylor believed the Mormon vote could sway the 1844 election in Illinois. The editor of the *Columbus Enquirer* in Georgia agreed: "The disciples of Joe undoubtedly hold the balance of power in Illinois."<sup>14</sup> The editor of the *New York Daily Tribune* added, "If the Whigs are beaten, it will be by the votes of Nauvoo."<sup>15</sup> With the office of president of the United States in the balance, by January 1844 it was not unusual for John Taylor or Joseph Smith to pen political entries. Taylor used the press while Joseph wrote in his journal: "Friday, [January] 26.—I dictated to my clerk an article on the situation of the nation, referring to the President's Message, &c. . . . Sunday, [January] 28.—I had some company in the evening from Warsaw. I conversed with them on politics, religion, &c."<sup>16</sup>

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On January 29, Joseph Smith invited the Twelve Apostles, Hyrum Smith, and John P. Greene to counsel with him on “the proper course for this people to pursue in relation to the coming Presidential election.”<sup>17</sup> At this informal political caucus, it was moved by Willard Richards and unanimously accepted that “we will have an independent electoral ticket, and that Joseph Smith be a candidate for the next Presidency; and that we use all honorable means in our power to secure his election.”<sup>18</sup> Joseph accepted the nomination and allowed his name to be “used by my friends on any wise as president of the united states or candidate for that office.”<sup>19</sup> To John Taylor and other Latter-day Saints, who had been driven by mobocrats and harassed by political enemies, a vote for Joseph was a vote for upholding the Constitution of the United States—the foundational document that was “like a great tree under whose branches men from every clime can be shielded from the burning rays of the sun.”<sup>20</sup> Taylor believed Joseph Smith would use the power of his elected office to shield the Saints in a constitutional manner from further atrocities and mobocracy. To Taylor, the election of the Prophet to the highest office in the land would ensure protection and stability to the Saints, his readership, and what he viewed as a nation in peril.<sup>21</sup>

*VIEWS OF THE POWERS AND POLICY OF THE  
GOVERNMENT OF THE UNITED STATES*

It was not until General Smith’s *Views of the Powers and Policy of the Government of the United States* was signed on February 7, 1844, however, that Joseph Smith sounded presidential. Although William W. Phelps is credited with writing *Views*, including the foreign phrases,<sup>22</sup> Joseph gave guidance to his wording of the document. He wrote on January 29, “I dictated to Brother

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Phelps the heads of my pamphlet, entitled, ‘Views on the Powers and Policy of the Government of the United States.’” Nine days later, he penned, “I completed and signed my ‘Views.’”<sup>23</sup> His signature on the document evidences his responsibility for its contents. The contents included an itemized listing of solutions for the nation’s ills. Most solutions did not originate with Joseph Smith. For example, his suggestion that “congress show their wisdom by granting a national bank” had been proposed in 1791 by Alexander Hamilton. Much of his expansionist approach—“Oregon belongs to this government honorably; and when we have the red man’s consent, let the Union spread from the east to the west sea; and if Texas petitions Congress to be adopted among the sons of liberty, give her the right hand of fellowship”—had been spoken earlier by Democratic hopefuls in 1844. A few of his solutions were new, however. He proposed: “Pay every man a reasonable price for his slaves out of the surplus revenue arising from the sale of public lands, and from the deduction of pay from the members of Congress,”<sup>24</sup> “reduce Congress at least two-thirds,” “[grant] the president full power to send an army to suppress mobs,” “petition your State Legislatures to pardon every convict in their several penitentiaries, blessing them as they go, and saying to them, in the name of the Lord, *Go thy way, and sin no more,*” and “abolish the practice in the army and navy of trying men by court-martial for desertion.” Whether the voting public of 1844 liked repeated solutions or new ones, none could deny that Joseph Smith sounded presidential when he concluded *Views* by stating, “We have had democratic presidents; whig presidents; a pseudodemocratic whig president; and now it is time to have a president of the United States.”<sup>25</sup>

This phrase caught the attention of Thomas Sharp, editor of the *Warsaw Signal*. Before Taylor had placed copies of *Views* in

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circulation, Sharp attacked. Targeting Joseph Smith and referring to Taylor as the “cat’s-paw,” Sharp penned:

Well, Joe is fairly in the field! He can’t go for Clay nor Van Buren, because they can’t trample down the constitution to go for him. All right, Joe; no doubt you will be elected! and, according to the opinion of your “cat’s-paw,” the editor of the Neighbor, you will “administer justice with an impartial hand, and *magnify* and dignify the office of chief magistrate of the land.”

Faugh! Is there a man in the nation but believes that Joe Smith is “a man of sterling worth and integrity, and of enlarged views;” “honorable, fearless, and energetic;” and that “there is not a man in the United States more competent to the task?” Bah! . . . So good bye, Joe! when we can’t vote for anybody else, *may be* we will vote for you. No! We would as soon vote for *Old Nick!*<sup>26</sup>

Seemingly ignoring the implications of the attack, on February 24, 1844, Taylor became the first editor to announce support for Joseph’s candidacy:

There is perhaps no body of people in the United States who are at the present time more interested about the issue of the Presidential contest, than are the Latter Day Saints. . . . we have suffered great injustice from the State of Missouri, . . . [and] we are still groaning under accumulated wrongs. Is there no power any where to redress our grievances? Missouri lacks the disposition, and congress both lacks the disposition and power (?) . . .

Under these circumstances the question again arises, who shall we support? GENERAL JOSEPH SMITH. . . .

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Whatever therefore be the opinions of other men our course is marked out, and our motto from henceforth will be GENERAL JOSEPH SMITH.<sup>27</sup>

Within days of his endorsement, a prayer was offered that “‘General Joseph Smith’s Views of the Powers and Policy of the United States,’ might be spread far and wide, and be the means of opening the hearts of the people.”<sup>28</sup> Following the prayer, copies of *Views* were mailed to President John Tyler, his cabinet, justices of the Supreme Court, members of Congress, newspaper editors, postmasters, and other prominent men in the nation.<sup>29</sup>

## THE POWER OF THE PRESS

Taylor then wrote a series of political articles, the first being “For President, Joseph Smith,” which appeared on Wednesday, February 28 in the *Nauvoo Neighbor*: “We think that the man of our choice is the most able, the most competent, the best qualified, and would fill the Presidential chair with greater dignity to the nation; and that his election would be conducive of more happiness and prosperity at home and abroad, than that of any other man in these United States.”<sup>30</sup> In the same issue was an advertisement for *Views*: “A neat pamphlet of twelve pages, are for sale at this Office, the Clerk’s Office in Gen. Smith’s store, at the Mansion House, and all the principal stores in the city.”<sup>31</sup>

On Friday, March 1, Taylor printed two more articles in support of Joseph’s candidacy. In each, he announced plans to inform the voting public of the character of Joseph Smith: “Mr. Smith is not so generally known personally. . . . It is for us [meaning Taylor through newsprint] to take away this false coloring, and by lecturing, by publishing, and circulating his works; his political views; his honor, integrity, and virtue; stop the



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foul mouth of slander, and present him before the public in his own colors, that he may be known, respected, and supported.”<sup>32</sup> As Taylor’s editorials reached the desks of editors throughout the nation, clippings and exchanges of his words were reprinted. At least forty-five newspapers in twenty-two states printed words by Taylor that first appeared in the *Times and Seasons* or *Nauvoo Neighbor*. The first clipping of note was reprinted in an editorial by James Gordon Bennett, editor of the *New York Herald*: “We received on Thursday some very curious and important intelligence from Nauvoo—the capitol of the new Mormon Empire. . . . Joe Smith . . . has taken the field as a political agitator, determined to wield political influence and political votes.”<sup>33</sup> Another was written by W. G. Goforth of Belleville, Illinois, in the *Politician*. Under an artistic banner of sun rays bursting out of the clouds, Goforth printed, “For President, Gen. Joseph Smith, of Nauvoo, Illinois. A Western man, with American principles.”<sup>34</sup>

As for editorials that discounted or slandered the candidacy of Joseph Smith, Taylor was quick to counter. Thomas Sharp of the *Warsaw Signal*—who looked for such occasions to discredit Taylor, the *Times and Seasons*, the *Nauvoo Neighbor*, and the political agenda of Joseph Smith—was poised for a rebuttal. “We have by accident stumbled on a copy of Joe Smith’s pamphlet,” Sharp began, “Candidly, from a review of your pamphlet we have come to the conclusion, that you are a greater dunce than nature ever intended you to be, and that you have about as much knowledge in your cranium of the relative limits and structures of our Governmental policy, as there is essential moisture in a January corn stalk.”<sup>35</sup> Taylor’s answer was one of praise for Joseph Smith: “We know [Smith] to be a man well qualified for the highest station in our government, for he is a learned man and one that is well versed in the affairs of State, but he is a philanthropist.

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He is certainly the man that every person who regards the welfare of our country should vote for, at the next Presidential election.”<sup>36</sup> As expected, Sharp strongly disagreed: “The *Neighbor* says, ‘Gen. Smith’s views on the great affairs of government, are unanswerable.’ So we think, perfectly *unanswerable*; and so are Jo’s views of that ‘old white hat,’ the ‘spiritual wife system,’ and the ‘turning the wife out of door system,’ all unanswerable,—And then his views of his follower’s purses, (we mean those who happen to come to Nauvoo with such appendages,) are unanswerable—a little *transcendental*, to be sure; but still better defined than his views of the Bank and Tariff.”<sup>37</sup> Sharp concluded, “Joe can’t be beat—except by a *jackass*.”<sup>38</sup>

As the newspaper war between Taylor and Sharp heated up, editors as far away as New York City, Philadelphia, Boston, and Pittsburgh joined in the fray. The *Tioga Eagle* of Wellsborough, Pennsylvania, printed, “General Smith is excessively severe on Mr. Van Buren, and is indeed in all respects quite a model of a coon [meaning follower of Henry Clay].”<sup>39</sup> The editor of the *Wayne County Sentinel* of Palmyra, New York, printed:

Another Presidential Candidate—The Nauvoo *Times & Seasons*, published at the city of the Mormons, announces as a candidate for President of the United States, “General Joseph Smith—alas, (as he would be more readily recognized here,) the “Hero of Stafford street.” So it seems that Jo is coming down from his high calling of revelation, and entering into the kingdom of this world. . . . We have been favored by the author with a pamphlet copy of the address, which may be seen by those of his boyhood acquaintances in this region who may feel a solicitude in regard to his rising greatness and future intentions.<sup>40</sup>

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The *Globe* in Washington DC concluded: “We will do General Smith the justice to state, that we think his financial doctrines more sound, his *Views* more honest, and his scheme more feasible, than those of the hypocrites and quacks, who supported by a great party, have fleeced the country to the very quick, and are now eager to repeat the application of the shears. . . . Joseph is unquestionably a great scholar as well as financier. Cannot Mr. Clay persuade the General to accompany him on his electioneering tour?”<sup>41</sup>

ELECTIONEERING MISSIONARIES

Surprisingly, the candidacy of Joseph Smith advanced during the heated newspaper debate. The advancement was due to interest in the debate and volunteers who wanted to push forward the candidacy of Joseph. At first 244 men volunteered, but within weeks their number grew to 337.<sup>42</sup> Each volunteer was anxious “to speak in public throughout the land to electioneer and make stump speeches, advocate the ‘Mormon’ religion, purity of elections, and call upon the people to stand by the law and put down mobocracy.”<sup>43</sup> “You must go in for it. Go to John Quincy Adams,” said Joseph Smith to the electioneering volunteers. “Go to Henry Clay and other prominent men. Call public meetings in the city of Washington.”<sup>44</sup> “Tell the people we have had Whig and Democratic Presidents long enough: we want a President of the United States.” As to their success, Joseph said, “There is oratory enough in the Church to carry me into the presidential chair the first slide.”<sup>45</sup>

Before electioneering missionaries left Nauvoo for their assigned fields of labor, Willard Richards admonished them to “use all honorable means in our power to secure” the election

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of Joseph Smith.<sup>46</sup> He promised, “Open your mouth wide, and God shall fill it. Cut your quill, and the ink shall flow freely.”<sup>47</sup> Hyrum Smith advised, “Lift up your voices like thunder: there is power and influence enough among us to put in a President.”<sup>48</sup> Brigham Young said, “Some will vote for him for the novelty of the thing, and some to see what a Prophet will do at the head of government.”<sup>49</sup> John Taylor advised them to carry copies of General Smith’s *Views* to distribute in their assigned areas. He admonished them,

Tell the people who would be the best man, and the most able statesman; who could stand uncorrupted by bribes, and uninfluenced by power, other than the power of justice, and the cause of right; tell them where they can find a man of morality, purity, and virtue; tell them where they can find a man of sterling integrity, who is governed by the principles of righteousness; a patriot and a philanthropist, who has both the disposition and moral fortitude to administer justice, and whose delight it would be to administer to the wants of the nation; to “break off[f] every yoke and to let the oppressed go free.” Use all of your own influence, and get the brethren, in every part to use theirs also. Recollect, for President, GENERAL JOSEPH SMITH.<sup>50</sup>

And with that said, missionaries left Nauvoo, some receiving three cheers from the shore, “Joseph Smith, the next President of the United States!”<sup>51</sup>

As they campaigned from New York to Washington and Michigan to Alabama, John Taylor continued to play an active role in reporting their activities and advising them. He saw that “the names of the Elders who are appointed to the several states, together with their appointments” were printed.<sup>52</sup> He notified

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Latter-day Saints living outside of Illinois that elders were coming to speak on national politics. He printed in the *Times and Seasons* a schedule of forty-seven political conferences to be held in fifteen states, beginning with Quincy, Illinois, on May 4 and ending with Washington DC on September 15.<sup>53</sup>

With Taylor acting as the checkpoint between the missionaries and the presidential candidate, Joseph Smith's campaign moved forward at an accelerated pace.<sup>54</sup> Brigham Young and Willard Richards reported, "We shall make a great wake in the nation. Joseph for President."<sup>55</sup> Wilford Woodruff and George A. Smith wrote of a man in their acquaintance, who now "considered General Smith the smartest man in the United States, and best calculated to fill the presidential chair."<sup>56</sup> Such reporting worried Sharp, who failed to counter the momentum of the campaign. Sharp wrote, "In the last *Nauvoo Neighbor*, we find a long list of the names of Elders of the Church, in the different states of the Union." He advised the missionaries to "'preach the gospel, and thereby gull the people, and then fleece them of their money, or induce them to elevate *me* to office'.—That is the sum and substance of all your teachings. Ain't it Jo?"<sup>57</sup>

Since Sharp's opinion contrasted so greatly with the printed words of Taylor, newspaper editors demanded to know the truth of the matter. When they could not discern the facts, they made up their own. The *Free Trader* of Ottawa, Illinois, reported political missionaries being "instructed to preach the truth in righteousness, and present before the people General Joseph Smith's views of the powers and policy of the general government, and *seek diligently to get up electors who will go for him for the presidency.*"<sup>58</sup> The *Working Man's Advocate* of New York lent encouragement to the campaign: "General Smith's views of the powers and policy of the United States" with the disclaimer

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that *Views* was read “with much pleasure . . . [as] many excellent ideas worthy of the perusal of a free people.”<sup>59</sup> The *Mobile Register and Journal* of Alabama in “Hurrah for the Prophet” concluded, “Gen. Jo promises every thing and a little more.”<sup>60</sup> As these editors and many others printed their own political bias, Taylor clipped exchanges, especially favorable exchanges, and reprinted them in his newspapers. For example, an article in the *Iowa Democrat*, “A New Candidate in the Field,” was reprinted in the *Neighbor* with this comment: “All that we have to say on this point is, that if superior talent, genius, and intelligence, combined with virtue, integrity, and enlarged views, are any guarantee to General Smith’s being elected, we think that he will be a ‘full team of himself.’”<sup>61</sup> An article titled “General Joseph Smith a Candidate for President,” which appeared in the *Illinois Springfield Register*, was also reprinted in the *Neighbor*: “It appears by the Nauvoo papers that the Mormon Prophet is actually a candidate for the presidency. He has sent us his pamphlet, containing an extract of his principles. . . . [Joseph Smith] ought to be regarded as the real Whig candidate for President, until Mr. Clay can so far recover from his shuffling and dodging as to declare his sentiments like a man.”<sup>62</sup>

Even a mock vote reported in the *St. Louis Organ* was clipped for reprint: “We learn from the polls of the steamboat *Osprey*, on her last trip to this city, that the vote stood for General Joseph Smith, 20 gents and 5 ladies; Henry Clay, 16 gents and 4 ladies; Van Buren, 7 gents and 0 ladies.”<sup>63</sup>

With newspaper editors nationwide wanting to know more about Joseph Smith and his bid for the presidency, Taylor invited electioneering missionaries to reprint *Views* in their fields of labor. Lyman Wight printed two thousand copies of *Views* in Cincinnati “for the elders to scatter them with the velocity of

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lightning and the voice of thunder.”<sup>64</sup> Charles C. Rich arranged for five thousand copies to be printed in Pontiac, Michigan, and James Holt printed five hundred copies in Tennessee.<sup>65</sup> To ease the demand and negotiations necessary to secure printers for *Views*, on May 6, 1844, through the *Times and Seasons*, Taylor announced, “Owing to the extensive call for Gen. Smith’s *Views of the Powers and Policy of the Government of the United States*, we have concluded to publish them in our next number.”<sup>66</sup> Within weeks, additional copies of *Views* were on editors’ desks throughout the country. Editors reviewed and compared the platform of Joseph Smith with that of Clay, Van Buren, Calhoun, and James K. Polk, who had recently entered the presidential race. For those who lent support to these leading candidates, Taylor’s weekly editorials gave them pause to consider who would be the best candidate for the office. Taylor printed the views of a citizen who wrote: “General Smith is a man who understands the political history of his country as well as the religious history of the world, as perfectly as any politician or religionist I have ever met with. He advances ideas which if carried into effect would greatly benefit the nation in point of commerce and finance. . . . Mr. Smith’s ‘*Views of the Powers and Policy of the Government*’ manifest a Republican spirit, and if carried out, would soon place the nation in a prosperous condition. . . . Joseph Smith is a man who is in every way calculated to make a free people happy.” The anonymous writer assured readers that he was not an adherent of Mormonism before concluding, “I shall in every instance advocate his principles and use my utmost influence in his favor.”<sup>67</sup> When Joseph read such supportive statements, he said, “When I get hold of the Eastern papers, and see how popular I am, I am afraid myself that I shall be elected.”<sup>68</sup>

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Yet not all was positive on the political scene for Joseph Smith or his electioneering volunteers. Missionaries Alfred Cordon and Terry Nixon wrote of being abused: “The people that were assembled to hear began to abuse them, throw tobacco in their face, took Joseph’s *Views* and tore them up.”<sup>69</sup> Jacob Hamblin wrote that while campaigning in Quincy, Pennsylvania, “[A moblike element] threatened us with a coat of tar and feathers if we did not leave.”<sup>70</sup> For these missionaries and those too timid to speak in favor of Joseph Smith and his platform, Taylor advised, “We must do what we can to elect him. We will not be cowards in this thing.”<sup>71</sup> He admonished them to speak out no matter the difficulty: “Of General Joseph Smith some are afraid, and think it doubtful about his election; and, like the ostrich, stick their heads under a bush, and leave their bodies out, so that we can all see them; and after this it will be a by-word—‘That man is an ostrich who hides his head in this cause.’”<sup>72</sup>

Missionaries did speak out. They gathered potential voters together in regional conferences and held successful political rallies. The same could be said of those who remained behind in Nauvoo. On May 17, 1844, the people of Nauvoo held a state political convention in which Joseph Smith was officially nominated for president, *Views on the Powers and Policy of the Government* was ratified, and representatives to the electoral college in Illinois were chosen.<sup>73</sup> As for John Taylor, on June 26, the day before the Martyrdom, he printed a letter calling for greater support of Joseph’s presidency: “Let us now have a righteous man at the head of the government. Citizens of the United States awake! . . . Let us have a man of pure and upright principles—of an independent mind—of true patriotism—a man who will execute the laws with justice and equity, regardless of consequences—a friend to the poor—an advocate of liberty—in short a Christian and a man of



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God. . . . Let all citizens of this vast republic answer, *at the polls* next fall, GEN. JOSEPH SMITH.<sup>74</sup>

But there would be no polling for Joseph Smith. Stephen Markham reported a meeting held in Carthage in which “views on government were widely circulated and took like wildfire. They said if [Joseph Smith] did not get into the Presidential chair this election, he would be sure to the next time; and if Illinois and Missouri would join together and kill him, they would not be brought to justice for it.”<sup>75</sup> Then shots were fired on June 27, 1844. Among the dead was Joseph Smith, candidate for president of the United States.<sup>76</sup>

Electioneering missionaries were called home from the twenty-six states and the territory of Wisconsin following the death of the Prophet. Copies of *Views* were in circulation, but the demand was gone. The pivotal role of Englishman John Taylor in the American political scene in 1844 was over. Although still editor of the *Times and Seasons* and the *Nauvoo Neighbor* and in a position to advance another presidential candidate, Taylor, wounded in the gunfire at Carthage, had no more desire for American politics.

In the fall of 1844, Latter-day Saints voted for James K. Polk of Tennessee as president and Silas Wright of New York as vice president. A few of the Polk–Wright tickets proposing solutions to the nation’s ills matched those of Joseph Smith—to annex Texas and Oregon and create an Independent Treasury Act that called for a federally owned national bank.<sup>77</sup> The Latter-day Saint vote helped give Polk a 54 to 42 percent victory over Whig candidate Henry Clay in the state of Illinois.<sup>78</sup>

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### NOTES

1. B. H. Roberts, ed., *A Comprehensive History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 1965), 2:208.
2. Joseph Smith, *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts, 2nd ed. rev. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1965), 6:243.
3. “Who Shall Be Our Next President,” *Times and Seasons*, October 1, 1843, 344.
4. Smith, *History of the Church*, 6:65. In November 1836, in Kirtland Township, Latter-day Saints supported Van Buren in his bid for the presidency by a margin of four to one—396 votes cast for Van Buren and 116 for William Henry Harrison. In 1839 Van Buren refused to help the Saints redress wrongs suffered in Missouri. By so doing, he lost Latter-day Saint support in the 1840 presidential election. In the 1844 election, Van Buren lost the Democratic presidential candidacy to James K. Polk. In 1848, Van Buren ran as a presidential candidate for the Free Soil Party. He did not receive one electoral vote (Smith, *History of the Church*, 4:89).
5. Smith, *History of the Church*, 6:65.
6. Smith, *History of the Church*, 6:65. On November 29, 1839, Joseph Smith met with President Van Buren to discuss wrongs inflicted upon the Latter-day Saints in the state of Missouri. Documentation suggests that Joseph also met with Van Buren on February 6, 1840. Some historians assert that the February 6, 1840, account is a retelling of the November 29, 1839, meeting (Smith, *History of the Church*, 4:40, 80).
7. Smith, *History of the Church*, 6:188.
8. Joseph Smith did not write to Democratic candidate James K. Polk. Polk had not entered the political race by February 1844 (Don C. Seitz, *The “Also Rans”: Great Men Who Missed Making the Presidential Goal* [New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1928]).

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9. Joseph never specified what Lewis Cass said in his letter. He only acknowledged receipt of the letter: "I received letters from General Lewis Cass, of Michigan" (Smith, *History of the Church*, 6:144).
10. For the complete text of the Henry Clay letter, see Smith, *History of the Church*, 6:376; "Correspondence between Gen. Joseph Smith and the Hon. Henry Clay," *Times and Seasons*, June 1, 1844, 544.
11. Smith, *History of the Church*, 6:156; see Matthew A. Fitzsimons, "Calhoun's Bid for the Presidency, 1841–1844," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 38, no. 1 (June 1951): 39–60.
12. Smith, *History of the Church*, 6:156; see also 156–60.
13. Joseph Smith responded to Clay on May 13, 1844. His response was not printed until June 1, 1844 ("Correspondence between Gen. Joseph Smith and the Hon. Henry Clay," *Times and Seasons*, June 1, 1844, 544; Smith, *History of the Church*, 6:376–77).
14. *Columbus Enquirer*, February 14, 1844; as cited in Michael K. Winder, *Presidents and Prophets: The Story of America's Presidents and the LDS Church* (American Fork, UT: Covenant Communications, 2007), 67.
15. *New York Daily Tribune*, June 10, 1844; as cited in Winder, *Presidents and Prophets*, 67.
16. Smith, *History of the Church*, 6:186.
17. Smith, *History of the Church*, 6:187.
18. Smith, *History of the Church*, 6:188. For a more complete understanding of the candidacy of Joseph Smith, see Arnold K. Garr, "Joseph Smith: Candidate for President of the United States," in *Regional Studies in Latter-day Saint Church History: Illinois*, ed. H. Dean Garrett (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University, 1995), 151–68; Arnold K. Garr, "Joseph Smith for President: The Quorum of the Twelve Apostles in New England," in *Regional Studies in Latter-day Saint Church History: The New England States*, ed. Donald Q. Cannon, Arnold K. Garr, and Bruce A. Van Orden (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2004), 47–64.

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19. Scott G. Kenney, ed., *Wilford Woodruff's Journals, 1833–1898* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1984), 2:349; see Smith, *History of the Church*, 6:210–11.
20. John C. McCollister, *God and the Oval Office: The Religious Faith of Our Presidents* (Nashville: W. Publishing, 2005), 24–25; as cited in Winder, *Presidents and Prophets*, 29.
21. See written editorials in the *Times and Seasons* and the *Nauvoo Neighbor* to support this assumption.
22. Historian B. H. Roberts claimed that Phelps had a “smattering knowledge of languages, which he was ever fond of displaying” but concluded such display in *Views* was “in no way germane to the subjects of which they treat” (Smith, *History of the Church*, 6:75n; see Bruce A. Van Orden, “William W. Phelps Service in Nauvoo as Joseph Smith’s Political Clerk,” *BYU Studies* 32 [Winter and Spring 1991]: 94, n. 24).
23. Smith, *History of the Church*, 6:189, 197. Smith later revised *Views*. Elder John A. Widtsoe claimed, “This campaign document is an intelligent, comprehensive, forward-looking statement of policies, worthy of a trained statesmen” (*Joseph Smith—Seeker after Truth, Prophet of God* [Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1951], 219).
24. Smith, *History of the Church*, 6:206–9. All following quotes from *Views* are in Smith, *History of the Church*, 6:205–9. According to historian Ernest Bates, congressmen were paid eight dollars a day with the exception of Sunday, when the congressional session did not continue longer than five months. The reduction in pay suggested by Joseph Smith would have generated over five hundred thousand dollars (“27th Congress, 3d Session, In Senate of the United States. February 25, 1843. Ordered to be printed.—To accompany bill H. R. 548”; “Statement accompanying the Report of the Retrenchment Committee, as House Bill Number Five Hundred and Forty-Eight;” Ernest Sutherland Bates, *The Story of Congress, 1789–1935* [New York: Harper, 1936], 101).
25. *Views* was not printed in its entirety in newsprint until May 8, 1844 (“For President, Gen. Joseph Smith, Nauvoo, Illinois,” *Nauvoo Neighbor*, May 8, 1844, 2). *Views* was also printed in the *Times and Seasons* (“Gen. Smith’s Views

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- on the Government and Policy of the U.S.," *Times and Seasons*, May 15, 1844, 528–33).
26. "The Presidency," *Warsaw Signal*, February 21, 1844, 2.
  27. See *Nauvoo Neighbor*, February 7, 1844, 2; reprinted in "Who Shall Be Our Next President," *Times and Seasons*, February 5, 1844, 440–41.
  28. Smith, *History of the Church*, 6:225.
  29. Smith, *History of the Church*, 6:225–26.
  30. "For President, Joseph Smith," *Nauvoo Neighbor*, February 28, 1844, 2; see Smith, *History of the Church*, 6:227.
  31. "Notice," *Nauvoo Neighbor*, February 28, 1844, 2.
  32. "For President, Gen. Joseph Smith, Nauvoo Illinois," *Times and Seasons*, March 1, 1844, 455; "For President, Joseph Smith," *Nauvoo Neighbor*, February 28, 1844, 2; see Smith, *History of the Church*, 6:227. Ten days after publishing the editorial, on March 11, 1844, Joseph Smith organized the Council of Fifty in the lodge room over the home of Henry Miller. John Taylor was present at the first meeting of the Council. The Council of the Fifty was instrumental in advancing Joseph Smith's candidacy (Smith, *History of the Church*, 6:260–61; D. Michael Quinn, *The Mormon Hierarchy: Origins of Power* [Salt Lake City: Signature Books in association with Smith Research Associates, 1994], 105–42).
  33. For his favorable reporting, James Gordon Bennett was awarded an honorary degree from the University of the City of Nauvoo. See Leonard J. Arrington, "James Gordon Bennett, 1831 Report on 'The Mormonites,'" *BYU Studies* 3 (Spring 1970): 353–64. On March 20, the *Nauvoo Neighbor* printed verbatim the *New York Herald* editorial ("For President, Gen. Joseph Smith, Nauvoo, Illinois," *Nauvoo Neighbor*, March 20, 1844, 2).
  34. See the logo and motto of the *Politician* published from April 13 to June 8, 1844. W. G. Goforth was baptized, confirmed, and ordained a high priest on April 8, 1845 (B. H. Roberts, ed., *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Period 2: Apostolic Interregnum*, 2nd ed. rev. [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1932], 7:394).

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35. "Joe Smith's Views of the Powers and Policy of the General Government," *Warsaw Signal*, March 13, 1844, 2.
36. "A New Advocate for a National Bank," *Nauvoo Neighbor*, April 10, 1844, 2. For another Illinois paper responding to Joseph Smith's candidacy, see *Northwestern Gazette and Galena Advertiser*, May 1844.
37. "The Neighbor says . . .," *Warsaw Signal*, April 17, 1844, 2.
38. "A Touch of the Sublime," *Warsaw Signal*, March 20, 1844, 2.
39. *Tioga Eagle*, March 27, 1844; cited in LeGrand L. Baker, *Murder of the Mormon Prophet: The Political Prelude to the Death of Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Eborn Books, 2006), 196.
40. *Wayne County Sentinel*, March 20, 1844; cited in Baker, *Murder of the Mormon Prophet*, 198.
41. *Globe*, March 14, 1844; reprinted by John Taylor; cited in Baker, *Murder of the Mormon Prophet*, 200–1.
42. For a list of the volunteers, see Smith, *History of the Church*, 6:335–40, 389–90.
43. Smith, *History of the Church*, 6:188.
44. Smith, *History of the Church*, 6:212.
45. Smith, *History of the Church*, 6:188.
46. Smith, *History of the Church*, 6:188.
47. Smith, *History of the Church*, 6:232.
48. Smith, *History of the Church*, 6:324.
49. Roberts, *History of the Church*, 7:210.
50. "Conference," *Times and Seasons*, March 1, 1844, 455.
51. Roberts, *History of the Church*, 7:136.
52. Smith, *History of the Church*, 6:335.
53. See "Special Conference," *Times and Seasons*, April 15, 1844, 504; Smith, *History of the Church*, 6:335–40.
54. Letters addressed to relatives, friends, and acquaintances also played a role in the campaign process. For example, Benjamin Andrews wrote an open letter "to the Church in Maine" urging support for the candidacy of Joseph Smith ("To the Church in Maine," *Times and Seasons*, June 1, 1844, 556).

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55. Smith, *History of the Church*, 6:351.
56. W. Woodruff and G. A. Smith, "Editor of the Times and Seasons," *Times and Seasons*, June 1, 1844, 557.
57. "Church and State," *Warsaw Signal*, April 24, 1844, 2.
58. *Ottawa Free Trader*, May 24, 1844; cited in Baker, *Murder of the Mormon Prophet*, 208.
59. *Working Man's Advocate*, May 18, 1844; cited in Baker, *Murder of the Mormon Prophet*, 193.
60. "Hurrah for the Prophet," *Mobile Register and Journal*, March 22, 1844; cited in Baker, *Murder of the Mormon Prophet*, 191.
61. "A New Candidate in the Field," *Iowa Democrat*; cited in Smith, *History of the Church*, 6:268–69, and reprinted in "A New Candidate for the Presidency," *Nauvoo Neighbor*, March 20, 1844, 2.
62. "General Joseph Smith a Candidate for President," *Springfield Register*; cited in "A New Candidate for the Presidency," *Nauvoo Neighbor*, March 20, 1844, 2, in Smith, *History of the Church*, 6:268.
63. Smith, *History of the Church*, 6:361.
64. Roberts, *History of the Church*, 7:137.
65. Charles C. Rich Journal (1809–1883), May 14 to June 2, 1844, Church History Library, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City.
66. "For President Gen. Joseph Smith, Nauvoo, Illinois," *Times and Seasons*, May 1, 1844, 519.
67. Smith, *History of the Church*, 6:367–68.
68. Smith, *History of the Church*, 6:243.
69. Alfred Cordon Journal (1817–1868), May 27, 1844, Church History Library.
70. Journal of Jacob Hamblin (1819–1886), autobiographical sketch and diary, 1819–1854. "Record of the life of Jacob Hamblin as Recorded by Himself," 6–8, Church History Library.
71. Kenney, *Wilford Woodruff's Journal*, 2:357.
72. Smith, *History of the Church*, 6:242–43.

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73. Although much was made of the convention, especially the claim that representatives from each of the twenty-six states were present, most in attendance were currently residing in Nauvoo (Smith, *History of the Church*, 6:386–97).
74. Libertas, “The Mormons,” *Nauvoo Neighbor*, June 26, 1844, 373.
75. Governor Thomas Ford was in attendance at the meeting (Smith, *History of the Church*, 6:605–6).
76. Joseph Smith was the first candidate for the office of president of the United States to be assassinated. The second candidate was Robert F. Kennedy.
77. James B. Allen and Glen M. Leonard, *The Story of the Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976), 209.
78. Mark E. Byrnes, *James K. Polk: A Biographical Companion* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2001), 139; cited in Winder, *Presidents and Prophets*, 65.