1809, he signed a repeal of the embargo shortly before he relinquished the "splendid misery" of the presidency. In the election of 1808, the presidency passed to another Virginian, Secretary of State James Madison.

THE DRIFT TO WAR The brilliant Madison proved to be a mediocre chief executive. From the beginning his presidency was entangled in foreign affairs and crippled by his naïveté. Madison and his advisers repeatedly overestimated the young republic's diplomatic leverage and military strength. The result was humiliation and near defeat. Still insisting on neutral rights and freedom of the seas, Madison continued Jefferson's policy of "peaceful coercion" by different but equally ineffective means. In place of the embargo, Congress had substituted the Nonintercourse Act, which reopened trade with all countries except France and Great Britain and authorized the president to reopen trade with whichever nation gave up its restrictions on American trade. Nonintercourse proved as impotent as the embargo. Madison's policies created an economic recession and brought no change in British policy. In the vain search for an alternative, Congress in 1810 reversed itself and adopted a measure introduced by Nathaniel Macon of North Carolina. Macon's bill reopened trade with the warring powers but provided that if either dropped its restrictions, nonintercourse would be restored with the other.

Napoléon's foreign minister, the Duke de Cadore, announced that he had withdrawn the Berlin and Milan Decrees, but the carefully worded Cadore letter had strings attached: revocation of the decrees depended upon withdrawal of the British orders in council. The strings were plain to see, but Madison foolishly went along in the hope of putting pressure on the British. The British initially refused to give in, and on June 1, 1812, Madison reluctantly asked Congress for a declaration of war. On June 16, however, the British foreign minister, facing economic crisis, revoked the orders in council. Britain preferred not to risk war with the United States on top of its war with Napoléon. But it was too late. On June 18, Congress, unaware of the British repeal, granted Madison's request for war. With more time or patience, Madison's policy would have been vindicated without resort to war.

THE WAR OF 1812

CAUSES The main cause of the war—the violation of American shipping rights—seems clear enough. Yet the geographic distribution of the congressional vote for war raised a troubling question. Most votes for war came

from the farm regions that stretched from Pennsylvania southward and westward. The maritime states of New York and New England, the region that bore the brunt of British attacks on U.S. shipping, voted against the war declaration. One explanation for this seeming anomaly is simple enough: the farming regions suffered damage to their markets for grain, cotton, and tobacco while New England shippers made profits from smuggling in spite of the British restrictions.

Other plausible explanations for the sectional vote, however, include frontier Indian attacks that were blamed on British agents, western land hunger, and the American desire for territory in British Canada and Spanish Florida. The constant pressure to open new lands repeatedly forced or persuaded Indians to sign treaties they did not always understand, causing stronger resentment among tribes that were losing more and more of their land. It was an old story, dating from the Jamestown settlement, but one that took a new turn with the rise of a powerful Shawnee leader, Tecumseh.

Tecumseh recognized the consequences of Indian disunity and set out to form a confederation of tribes to defend Indian hunting grounds, insisting that no land cession was valid without the consent of all tribes, since they held the land in common. By 1811, Tecumseh had matured his plans and headed south from the Indiana Territory to win the Creeks, Cherokees, Choctaws, and Chickasaws to his cause. His speeches were filled with emotion and anger. "The white race is a wicked race," he declared. "They seize your land; they corrupt your women." Only by driving them out "upon a trail of blood" would the Indians survive.

General William Henry Harrison, governor of the Indiana Territory, learned of Tecumseh's plans and met with him twice. In the fall of 1811, however, Harrison decided that Tecumseh must be stopped. He gathered 1,000 troops near the Shawnees' capital on the Tippecanoe River while the Indian leader was away. Although Tecumseh had warned the Shawnees against fighting in his absence, they attacked Harrison's encampment. A quarter of Harrison's men died or were wounded, yet the Shawnees lost the Battle of Tippecanoe; their town was burned, their supplies destroyed. Tecumseh's dreams of an Indian confederacy went up in smoke, and the Shawnee leader sought British protection in Canada.

The Battle of Tippecanoe reinforced suspicions that British agents were inciting the Indians. Frontier settlers believed that a U.S. conquest of Canada would end British influence among the Indians and open a new empire for land-hungry Ar[illegible]cans. Canada was also one place where the British, in case of war, were vu[illegible]able to an American attack. Madison and others acted on the mistaken assumption that the Canadians were eager to be liberated from

British control. Thomas Jefferson had told Madison that the U.S. "acquisition of Canada" was simply a "matter of marchin" north with a military force." The British were vulnerable in Florida as well. East Florida, still under Spanish control, also posed a threat to the Americans, since Spain allowed sporadic Indian attacks across the border with Georgia. Moreover, the British were suspected of smuggling goods through Florida and intriguing with the Indians on the southwestern border.

Tecumseh

The Shawnee leader who tried to unite Indian tribes in defense of their lands. Tecumseh was killed in 1813 at the Battle of the Thames.

Such concerns helped generate war fever. In the Congress that assembled in 1811, several new members from southern and western districts clamored for war in defense of "national honor" and demanded an invasion of Canada. Among them were Henry Clay and Richard Mentor Johnson of Kentucky, Felix Grundy of Tennessee, and John C. Calhoun of South Carolina. John Randolph of Roanoke christened these "new boys" the "war hawks." The young senator Henry Clay, a tall, rawboned westerner know for his combative temperament and propensity for dueling, yearned for war. "I am for resistance by the *sword*," he vowed. He promised that the Kentucky militia stood ready to march on Canada and acquire its lucrative fur trade.

PREPARATIONS As it turned out, the war hawks would get neither Canada nor Florida, for in 1812 James Madison had carried into war a nation that was ill prepared both financially and militarily. The Republican emphasis on small federal budgets and military cutbacks was not an effective way to win a war. And Madison, a studious, soft-spoken man, lacked anything resembling the martial qualities needed to inspire national confidence. He was no George Washington.

Moreover, the national economy was not prepared for w[illegible] The year before, despite urgent pleas from Treasury Secretary Albert Galla[illegible]Congress had let the twenty-year charter of the Bank of the United States expire. Meanwhile