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The Election of 1800 - III

Lead: In 1800 Thomas Jefferson defeated incumbent President John Adams in a closely fought election that brought what some have called third American Revolution.

Intro.: *A Moment in Time* with Dan Roberts.

Content: Adams was swept into office in 1796 on the basis of his revolutionary credentials and with the support of the Federalists. He did not like political parties and many in his party did not like him or felt him insufficiently supportive of party principles, thus he revealed his

political ineptitude in a changing political environment. He was not a naturally popular person and took positions that made matters worse. He kept the nation out of a declared war with competing European powers, particularly France, but did so in such a way as to offend the national honor. ‘Millions for defense, but not one cent for tribute,’ was on the lips and minds of many voters. A low-grade naval war with France kept the pot boiling and, in the summer of 1798, with pro-war sentiment at a fever pitch, he signed into law the Alien Acts and the Sedition Act. Aliens deemed dangerous by the government could be deported with little due process even in peacetime, and those who published “malicious”

statements about Congress or the President that were judged seditious were liable for heavy punishment. Newspapers editors were being thrown into jail for political criticism.

Out of power, the Republicans, a coalition of Southern planters, northern workingmen, organized in New York by Aaron Burr allied with a political club known as Tammany Hall, and quietly led by Vice-president Jefferson, were having field day. Political propaganda, very similar to modern negative television attack ads, falsely accused Adams of wanting to restore monarchy and the Federalists of undermining freedom of the press and of wanting too much power for the national government.

The Federalists did not know what hit them, lost control of the national conversation and went down to a crushing defeat. After a long battle in the House of Representatives, the states elected Jefferson as President over his New York ally, Burr.

Disillusioned and broken-hearted Adams did not even attend the new President's inauguration, but had something of the last laugh. In the closing days of his administration, the lame-duck Federalist congress vastly expanded the Federal courts and the number of Federal judges. One of those so chosen was Supreme Court Chief Justice John Marshall, whose longevity and intellectual horsepower helped firmly establish the Federal

**government eventually as pre-
imminent in national life and the
Judicial Branch as an equal partner
in the Federal constitutional scheme.**

**At the University of Richmond,
this is Dan Roberts.**

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