THE WAR ADMINISTRATION OF ALEXANDER RANDALL

by

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The following account is a part of the work begun in a seminar study of the Civil War. The original topic was "The Four Wisconsin Civil War Governors", but time and space were insufficient to enable an adequate completion of the whole work; hence this work deals with only the administration of Governor Randall. The author has attempted to show in particular the part played by the chief executive of the Wisconsin Commonwealth in organizing war machinery, in administering social relief, and in aiding the Federal Government with loans of money and regiments of volunteers. Some use has been made of the Secondary accounts of Wisconsin history, but it has been the aim of the writer to employ the personal letters and messages of the Governor to a great extent in order that personality and individuality of gubernatorial leadership may be portrayed more effectively.
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INTRODUCTION.

A close study of the War of the Rebellion reveals the fact that the Governors of the Respective Commonwealths played an extremely important part in carrying that struggle to a successful close. In 1861 the machinery necessary for carrying on an offensive war was "hopelessly inadequate". The United States up to 1861 had never fought a war that involved such tremendous problems of war administration that the Civil War did. The War of 1812 and the Mexican War had been "military picnics" in comparison to the gigantic scope of the War of the Rebellion in 1861. The national government had no definite policy of universal military training. The machinery for training, uniforming and equipping an army had yet to be created. It is true that the militia maintained a nominal existence but the instruments for making it effective had long gone out of use. Moreover, a uniform system of social relief that was necessary in a war was totally lacking. The War of 1846 had revealed the need of remedying all of these deficiencies but that struggle closed before such administrative reforms could be realized.

Thus when the fall of Sumter plunged the United States into two hostile camps, the burden of organization and administration of war machinery fell to the Governors of the States. It was extremely fortunate for the North that extraordinary able men of sterling integrity were serving as chief magistrates of five of the free commonwealths. These were Randall of Wisconsin, Curtin of Pennsylvania, Morton of Indiana, Buckingham of Connecticut, and Adnrews of Massachusetts. These five executives labored indefatigably to put their States upon a war basis before 1861. Long before secession took place they had sounded the need of a universal policy of preparedness, but a vacillating electorate would not sustain them. In spite of considerable
opposition Andrews caused to be drilled, equipped and uniformed several Regiments. When Washington was endangered by the gloomy prospect of a Confederate bombardment and occupation, Andrews immediately dispatched the famous regiment the "Dandy Seventh" to defend the Capitol. As the troops marched up Pennsylvania Avenue to the Capitol in faultless column the spectacle was a fitting tribute to the remarkable ability and foresight of the Governor of Massachusetts.

Governor Randall of Wisconsin in spite of popular opposition organized seven Regiments before Sumter fell and these were offered to the President as soon as the call for volunteers was issued. This distinguished leader was born October 31, 1819, at Ames, New York. He received a good elementary education; then began the study of law and was admitted to the bar at the early age of 19. In 1840 he moved to Wisconsin and settled at Prairieville (now Waukesha) where he was instrumental in founding Prairieville Academy (now Carroll College).

In 1846 he was elected to the first State Constitutional Convention where he became conspicuous by introducing a resolution which provided for the separate submission of the question of negro suffrage to a vote of the people. Up to 1855 Randall had been affiliated with the Democratic Party but the rise of the new Republican party seemed a better outlet for the political ambitions of the young lawyer so he accepted the nomination as Republican candidate for the Assembly. He was elected by a substantial majority. Soon after he took his seat, he was called upon to defend Bashford in the famous Barstow-Bashford contest for the Governorship. Randall distinguished himself by demonstrating his remarkable ability in his profound knowledge of law and his fearless integrity.

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Bashford won in the lawsuit and Randall was pushed into the limelight of Wisconsin politics. In 1857 he was nominated candidate for Governor by the Republican party, and was elected by a substantial majority in spite of the fact that Carl Schurz the Republican candidate for Lieutenant Governor was defeated. Randall was re-elected in 1859 and refused a third nomination to become minister to Rome.
THE GENERAL CONDITION OF WISCONSIN PRIOR TO THE CIVIL WAR.

When Randall took up his gubernatorial duties, January 1, 1858, Wisconsin was just recovering from a severe crisis. The panic of 1857 had just swept across the northwest almost completely paralyzing business in the new states. All of the banks of Wisconsin had suspended specie payments thus stifling credit, which the debtor class needed badly at that time. The banking and insurance laws had not provided adequate limitations upon business firms and as most of these institutions were in the infant stage of development, they suffered bankruptcy at once. Manufacturing establishments that didn’t have adequate reserve funds to tide them over the financial revulsion closed and thus thousands of laborers were thrown out of work. In Milwaukee some of the factories that continued to operate paid their men in currency that had depreciated below one half its face value.  

A riotous demonstration took place and a great deal of property was destroyed. The workers demanded gold payments but the banks couldn’t provide the factory superintendents with gold. The police put down the popular demonstration and the men went back to work for wages which were increased enough to make up for the depreciation. The largest group of the debtor class was the agricultural element. Farmers had little market for their products and thus were unable to pay their taxes at the stipulated time. The Legislature was forced to grant certain counties an extension of time to raise their allotted amount of taxes. Thus the State Treasurer reported to the Legislature a heavy deficit for the year 1857.2

1Lynn, Ira Schoonover, The Administration of Governor Randall, Madison, 1913. p 1.

2Schoonover, The Administration of Governor Randall, p 1.
Moreover, the political situation of Wisconsin was very acute. The Barstow-Bashford contest for the governorship in 1855 had created two hostile camps in Wisconsin and Civil War between the two factions was feared. However, the affair was finally settled on peaceful terms but for three days three different men claimed the office of chief magistrate of Wisconsin. Thus Randall who had been one of the defending attorneys for Bashford had to face a great deal of "mud slingling" from the Barstow element when he (Randall) became Governor.

In spite of all these setbacks, Wisconsin began to recover quite rapidly. Its position was compatible with rapid growth and development. A hardy stock of Germans and Scandinavians kept pouring into the favored agricultural regions of Wisconsin. Thus the population was increased each year by a tremendous influx of migrants and emigrants. The census of 1860, numbered 800,000, an increase of over 500,000 in ten years. Since 1848 the date of Wisconsin's admission, Wisconsin had passed from 24th State in population to 13th. It was favorably situated for commerce, as it had a large number of navigable rivers and many extremely good harbors on the eastern coast. It also abounded in an inexhaustible quantity of mineral resources; such as zinc, copper, and lead.

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3Henry Colin Campbell, Wisconsin in three Centuries(4 volumes), New York, 1906, Volume 3, p 142.
RANDELL'S FIRST ADMINISTRATION.

When Randall entered upon his first term he clearly foresaw what was needed to put Wisconsin back on her feet again. He immediately called the Legislature together and made the following demands: 1 he asked for a more efficient organization of the militia, he urged the legislature to pass a low interest law, he suggested that banking and insurance companies be better regulated and limited by statute law, and he insisted that the Legislature should subsidize the growing of new agricultural products like sugar cane and flax. 2 The Legislature complied with his requests. By law insurance companies were required to issue reports of their business so that the public could know their financial status. 3 Banking firms were required to create heavier reserves as sinking funds, and the rate of interest was fixed at a 12 2/3 maximum. 4

The most important achievement of the 11th annual Legislature, however, was the law that required the complete reorganization of the militia; it was through the personal initiative of the Governor that this act was passed. The law in its final form provided that "the Adjutant General was authorized to divide the state up into new military divisions, brigades, regiments, battalions, and companies in such a manner as he deemed advisable and convenient". The next section of the law demanded that certain officials should make return of the

1Clark S. Matteson, History of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, 1892, p 304.
2Messages and Proclamations, Thwaites, p 14.
3Schoonover, The Administration of Governor Randall, p 7.
4General Laws of Wisconsin, 1859, Chapter 160, p 165.
number of persons liable to military service, to the Adjutant General each year. Any official that failed to comply with this requirement had to forfeit and pay a sum not less than $50.00 and no more than $100.00. The age limit of all male citizens liable to military service was fixed by law from 18 to 45. This was the first official enrollment of Wisconsin that was carried out to any degree of effectiveness.

By act of Congress, April 23, 1808, the state militia of the various States would be provided with an allotment of arms, equipment, and stores from the National arsenals, providing that the Governors of the various Commonwealths would make due application to the Adjutant General at Washington. As the yearly enrollment had not been taken in Wisconsin, the applications thus were imperfect and the allotment received was not equivalent to the increased population; consequently Wisconsin's amount of stores, equipment in arms was very deficient by 1858. It fell upon Randall to make good this deficiency. In spite of his indefatigable energy to put his state upon a strong defensive basis, the militia laws were not thoroughly enforced. In his 13th annual message he comments upon the situations as follows: "The returns of the enrolled militia show great neglect of duty by the assessors. From a large majority of the counties of the State no returns are made as provided by law. As this annual return is necessary under a law of Congress to insure the distribution of an annual quota of arms to the State, it is to be hoped that more care may hereafter be taken."

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5 General Laws of Wisconsin, Chapter 24, p 28, 1857.
6 Messages and Proclamations, Thwaites, p 29.
7 Messages and Proclamations, Thwaites, p 29.
In a great majority of Randall’s speeches to the Legislature, he often forecasted that Civil War was approaching. "In his conversation with confidential friends, says H. A. Tenney, often alluded to its certainty (Civil War) in a manner that became almost prophetic in the events that speedily followed". On January 9, 1861, when secession actually had been accomplished by four of the southern States, the Governor made this prophetic comment to the Legislature, "It is for you (the Legislature) to consider whether this state of things (inadequate state defense) ought to continue and whether there is any thing in the signs of the times which should cause steps to be taken to place the Volunteer militia upon a more efficient footing". Upon the question of secession Randall spoke fearlessly and candidly, "Secession is revolution; revolution is war; war against the government of the United States is treason. It is time now to know whether we have any government and if so whether it has any strength. The nation must be lost or preserved by its own strength. Its strength is in the patriotism of the people. It is time now that politicians become patriots, that men show their love of country by every sacrifice but that of principle, and by unwavering devotion to its interests and integrity." The closing paragraph of Randall’s annual address is remarkable in spite of its ambiguity:

"The hopes of civilization and Christianity are suspended now upon the answer to this question of dissolution. The capacity for, as well as the regent of self-government, is to pass its ordeal and speculation to become certainty. Other systems have been tried and have failed, and all along the skeletons of nations have been strewn, as warnings and landmarks upon the great highway of

8H. A. Tenney and David Atwood, Fathers of Wisconsin, Madison, 1880, p 136.
9Messages and Proclamations, Thwaites, p 29-30.
10Messages and Proclamations, Thwaites, p 32.
historic government Wisconsin is true and steadfast. She will not destroy the
Union nor consent that it shall be done. Devised by great, and wise, and good
men in days of sore trial, it must stand like some bold mountain, at whose base
the great seas break their angry floods and around whose summit the thunders of
a thousand hurricanes have rattled, strong, unmoved, immovable,—so may our Union
be, while treason surges at its base, and passions rage around it, unmoved,
immovable,—here let it stand forever". 11

The Governor's remarks made an impression upon the Legislature. Senator
Charles Gill, a Democrat who subsequently proved to be a very able patriot intro-
duced a resolution which provided for a committee of Senators and Assemblymen
whose duty it was to make a thorough investigation of affairs with a view of
ascertaining if the time arrived when it was wise and advisable to place Wisconsin
upon a war footing. The committee met and immediately decided in the affirmative
and proceeded to draft a bill. Later the bill was presented to the Governor who
suggested a change whereby the Executive of the State would be justified in
incurring a much greater expense than had otherwise been provided for in arming,
equipping, and fitting soldiers for the field. 12 The chief points in this law
were: Section 1. In case of a call from the President of the United States to aid
in maintaining the Union and the supremacy of the laws, to suppress Rebellion or
insurrection, or to repel invasion within the United States, the Governor was
authorised to provide in the most efficient manner for responding to such call —
to accept the services of volunteers for active service in companies of 75 men
each rank and file and in regiments of ten companies each, and to commission
officers for the same. Section 2 authorized the governor to contract for uniforms

11 Messages and Proclamations, Thwaites, p 32.

12 Charles Richard Tuttle, A History of the State of Wisconsin, Boston, 1875.
p 218.
and equipment necessary for putting such companies into active service.

Section 3 appropriated $100,000 for the purpose of carrying out the provisions of this act, and to pay for the transportation of troops, arms, and munitions of war. 13 The Adjutant General's report of 1860 revealed a pitiful condition of equipment necessary to fight a long war:

56 tents in very poor condition.
6 brass cannon long out of use.
135 flint lock muskets, the kind used in the war of 1812.
796 percussion muskets.
811 rifles of very old model.
35 flint lock pistols.
66 percussion pistols.
40 cavalry sabers.
118 artillery sabers.
44 swords. 14

It is fortunate that the Governor was authorized by law to buy equipment for when Sumter fell Randall had several Regiments ready to go to camp.

13 General Laws of Wisconsin, 1861, Chapter 239, p 266.

THE ORGANIZATION OF WAR MACHINERY.

On April 15th, the President issued his famous call for volunteers to put down the rebellion. Randall immediately organized a regiment, from a number of independent companies like the "Kenosha Grays" and the "Milwaukee Light Guards" plus a number of the best drilled companies of the volunteer militia. This first regiment was organized in six days and on April 24th was dispatched to Milwaukee. Governor Randall had appointed James Halton of Milwaukee to provide quarters for the Regiment. A camp was hastily constructed on the fair grounds and the work of uniforming the companies began. Captain Starkweather who had been prominent in making the Milwaukee Light Guards the most efficient and popular militia company in the northwest was commissioned colonel of the Regiment. This first regiment was thoroughly drilled until June 7th when it was dispatched to Virginia.

The State office became a focus and headquarters of military activity. Randall not concurring with the public believed that a long war was to follow. He sent messages to Washington to get information on the handling and outfitting of troops. He contracted for a large number of side arms with several ordinance firms in Chicago. He called experts to assist him in organizing war machinery. As an administrative officer, Randall had no parallel. He thought quickly, acted quickly but safely, and seldom made any grave mistakes, in spite of the facts that his great volume of work gave him little time for careful deliberation. The Governor urged the large cities to call mass meetings to stimulate recruiting. At Beaver Dam, as early as the 18th of April a mass meeting was held and 150 men enrolled as volunteers. The following resolution was passed: "Resolved that we

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1William de Loss Love, Wisconsin in the War of the Rebellion, Chicago, 1866, p 41.
3Campbell, Wisconsin in Three Centuries, Vol 3, p 168.
will support the present policy of the government of the U. S. with men and money and that the glorious old banner of our nation shall again wave on the walls of Fort Sumter and every other fort, arsenal, dockyard, and navy yard which belongs to this nation". The State Journal urged that a mass meeting be called for the purpose of adopting measures to provide for the support of the families of "those brave men who volunteer in the service of the country". Such a meeting was called in the Assembly chamber and a number of Madison's prominent citizens gave patriotic speeches. Subscriptions for dependent families of volunteers aggregated $7,500. At a regular meeting of the Chamber of Commerce in Milwaukee on Saturday, 19th of April, only one half of the members being present, $11,175.00 was subscribed in fifteen minutes. Several other meetings were held netting $30,000. Such meetings were held all over the State.

On May 15, 1861, the Governor called the Legislature together in a special session. He asked for at least six new Regiments to be organized and drilled. "The states must be prepared to aid the government by supplies of men and if necessary by the loan of means. Each state can muster its quota of soldiers quickly, - quicker than the government can muster the quota of each state, and so each state can arm and uniform and equip its quota quicker than the government can arm, equip, and uniform them all." "In my judgment at least six regiments ought to be put into camp to learn soldiers' duties," was Randall's comment to the Legislature. This Legislative Department fell into line, and soon the effective

4William de Loss Love, Wisconsin in the War of the Rebellion, Chicago, 1866, p 134.
5Wisconsin State Journal, April 16, 1861.
6Love, Wisconsin in the War of Rebellion, p 128.
7Wisconsin Governor's Messages and Accompanying Documents, 1862, p 29.
machinery of war administration was created. Several training camps were established throughout the state. These were Camp Scott, Milwaukee; Camp Randall, Madison; Camp Hamilton, Fond du Lac; and another camp at La Crosse. At the request of the Chief Executive, a committee consisting of the governor, Secretary of State, and State Treasurer, was formed for the purpose of "negotiating loans not to exceed $1,000,000 on the most favorable terms obtainable." A Joint Resolution was passed on May 21, 1861, authorizing the Governor to leave the State "when in his discretion he thought it was profitable and advisable in connection with the military forces of the state." This act enabled the Governor to visit the hospitals in Washington on July 21st where a number of Wisconsin soldiers were convalescing. He saw that proper medical attention was given to the soldiers, and in many cases he provided them with personal wants.

By November, sixteen new Regiments had been organized and were being given instruction at the various military camps. Thus, when Lincoln made his second call for 42,000 men, the state was able to respond with five more regiments than Stanton could accept.

Randall saw that women were to play a big part in the war. On April 22, he issued the following appeal:

"To the patriotic women of Wisconsin: I know that you will cheerfully respond to my request to contribute your aid in the present crisis, in the way of preparing lint and bandages for the use of the army. A much larger amount of such necessaries for an army may be required by the sons of Wisconsin, but in the long

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8 Campbell, Wis. in Three Centuries, Vol 3, p 169.

9 Messages and Proclamations, Thwaites, p 61.

10 Messages and Proclamations, Thwaites, p 62. Section 7 of Article five - discourage the Governor leaving the State.
likely to follow, there may be thousands who will require such kindness." The governor also urged that spare blankets be donated to the soldiers until the Quartermaster Department could furnish them.

The Wisconsin press as a whole sustained Randall's actions besides giving him their hearty cooperation. The Wisconsin State Journal edited by David Atwood was the official state paper, and it put on a vigorous program to stimulate recruiting. "The Governor's suggestion in regard to organizing the militia and his emphatic denial of the right of secession will meet with hearty response among the people of all parties" was the Journals wholesome comment upon Randall's message of April, 1861. The Milwaukee Sentinel on April 17, published this editorial, "... animated by the infernal spirit which prompted this rebellion, the South has needlessly opened this war. Let the Government now draw the sword and throw away the scabbard. Let us hear no more of peace till it comes in appeal from the lips of conquered traitors." The Fond du Lac Commonwealth was no less emphatic in its patriotism. "... Let liberty blaze brightly upon our banners; and it the falchion for freedom must glitter in the sunlight, when it falls, let tyrants feel the blow".

A detailed study of the organization of the Wisconsin regiments is extremely interesting: These are the following steps of organizing a regiment. A prominent citizen of a community would organize and drill a company. He would then write a letter to the Governor asking for the appointment of a Captain. Accompanying his request would be a large number of signatures urging the

11 Ethel Alice Hurn - A History of Wisconsin Women in the Civil War, Madison, 1910, p 1.
12 Ibid, p 1.
13 Wisconsin State Journal, April 15, 1861.
14 Milwaukee Sentinel, April 17, 1861.
15 The Fond du Lac Commonwealth, April 18, 1861.
appointment. The governor would investigate the proposition and if he acceded to the demand, the new company would be called to some place of rendezvous where with other companies it was organized into a regiment. Here is a letter that is quite characteristic of the governor's correspondence of 1861.

Superior, Wisconsin,
June 10, 1861.

Dear Sir:—

I would like to know if the governor of Wisconsin will accept half-breeds as soldiers. If they will, I think I can raise a company on Lake Superior that can stand more fatigue than any white man I ever saw and I have been a surveyor for eight years. I was on the lake this Spring and almost all the half-breeds wanted me to write to Governor Randall and be appointed captain and they would join my company. If you will accept such men, please write and let me know. Also send me a blank required for the enlistment and the wages that the state pays, the bounties, etc. Please answer immediately.

G. E. Stunts. 16

Many times the prospective recruit lived in a community where the process of organizing a company was not taking place; in this case he wrote to the governor who seemed to be the logical bureau of information:

June 7, 1861.
Portage, Wis.

Mr. Randall - Dear Sir:—

I wish to enlist in the army. Will you accept my service and send me a pass. I am 19 years of age and five feet inches and a half high. I am sound and able bodied. Please let me come if you can find a place for me.

Yours truly,
James Briggs. 17

16 Personal Correspondence of Gov. Randall (in unpublished form at State Historical Society; Manuscript Dept.) June 10, 1861.

17 June 7, 1861.
Another interesting letter of the same type:

Lancaster, Wis.

Gov. Randall:

Dear Sir: I reside at Lancaster. My name is Victor Strong. I have a brother in the 2nd Regiment of the Wisconsin Volunteers. I tried to go but could not get off them for I owed some here. I had not the means of settling up until too late, but I want to fight for my country. I am just 5 feet 6½ inches in my stockings. I weigh 156 lbs. I am working on a farm and I am used to walking. If you know of a chance in either of the regiments 7 or 8 please waste a scrap of paper in writing to let me know. You will oblige a would be servant of the country.

Yours in haste,

V. E. Strong. 18

Randall received hundreds of such letters and from all accounts he gave them due consideration. The answers to these letters that are available reveal a fatherly patriotic attitude of the governor to his constituents. He always seized upon an opportunity to put the expert man where he could serve most competently. A large number of Germans who had taken military drill were summoned to the governor to aid in drilling the new raw recruits.

Wisconsin was fortunate in having three able graduates of West Point. The first of these was Rufus King who was appointed Brigadier General in 1861, but was forced to retire from the army due to illness. Later President Lincoln appointed him minister to Rome to counteract the influence that the confederate propagandists were spreading at the Holy See. 19 The second West Pointer to offer his services to Governor Randall was Charles S. Hamilton. He had served in the Mexican War, but had resigned his commission to take up business in Fond du Lac. He was made Brigadier General in 1861 and later was promoted to Major General. 20

18 June 11, 1861.

19 Campbell, p 148.
20 Campbell, p 150.
The last of the group was Thos. Ruger, who was living in Janesville when the war broke out. He offered his services and was made colonel early in the spring of 1861. He served in a number of the Western campaigns and received a number of promotions. Another prominent man who offered his services to Randall was ex-Lieutenant Governor Beall. Beall had been very prominent in Wisconsin politics during the '50's, but in 1861 he was serving the National Government as Indian agent in Colorado. However, he applied to the Governor for military service through his friend, E. L. Phillips, and was immediately commissioned Lieutenant Colonel of the Eighteenth Wisconsin Regiment. He served in a number of the campaigns in the west but was so incapacitated by wounds received at Vicksburg that he was compelled to serve in the Invalid corps through the rest of the war.

On May 3, 1861, a convention of all the governors of the states of the Northwest was convoked at Cleveland, Ohio, for the purpose of discussing problems of defense and war administration. Randall's speech at the convention is worthy of considerable mention. In the course of his address he said, "We have been in the habit of saying that the strength of the government was in 10,000 chords which bind together the people of our land, but now this is all changed, and without fault of ours. Rebellion and treason are abroad in our land and without fault of ours. . . . . . . We know where this commenced and we know to where it must end. There is but one course for us to pursue and that should be followed. We should transport an army down the Mississippi, and blaze a broad track through the whole South from Montgomery to Charleston. Charleston should be razed til not one stone remains."
is left upon another, til there is no place left for the owl to hoot nor the bittern to mourn. Had I the power ... of the thunderbolts of Jove, I would wipe out not only traitors but the seed of traitors ... We are no longer republicans or democrats, but all parties are blended into one. We are brothers and patriots in a common cause". One of the main objects of the convention was to secure better cooperation between the states of the Northwest and the National Government. Randall was selected by the convention to lay a report of its proceedings before the National Government. Randall complied with this request by sending the following letter to Mr. Lincoln.

Executive Office,
Madison, Wis.,
May 6, 1861.

His Excellency, A. Lincoln, President of the United States.

A meeting of the governors of several of the Western and border states, on the evening of Friday last, at Cleveland, Ohio, resulted in a determination to make to you some suggestions in regard to the supposed conditions of portions of the country, and to ask advice from the President ... The extreme anxiety we feel and the anxiety felt by the people of the border and the Northwestern states must be sufficient warrant for urging some more definite course of policy in regard to the relations between the government and these states. We are prepared and the people of these states are prepared to sustain you and your administration in every measure, however extreme, for the suppression of this untoward rebellion and for the punishment of the treason ... We approve most fully what has been done by the government and are prepared to expect still further exhibitions of energy, such as the public exigencies demand. But now we wish to submit to you the absolute necessity (since Washington is safe) of giving more attention to the country contiguous to the line between the free and slave states ... From Pittsburg and Cincinnati to the mouth of the Ohio on the northern side of the river, the country is almost defenseless against an armed enemy. Cincinnati and numerous smaller towns on the river could be utterly destroyed and the country about them laid waste without the means of resistance. It would require no very heavy battery and no very large army to take Cairo and for a long time to hold it ... The Mississippi and the Ohio River must be kept at all times open to the legitimate commerce and business of the Northwest ...

24 Edwin H. Quiner, Military History of Wisconsin, Chicago, 1896, p 64.
The Northwest needs a better military organization and a military head to which it can look to for orders, and to which it can communicate its necessities without tedious and mischievous delays... There is no occasion for the government to delay because the States themselves are willing to act vigorously and efficiently. I must be permitted to say it, because it is a fact, there is a spirit evoked by this rebellion, among the liberty loving people of the country, that is driving them to action, and if the government will not permit them to act for it, they will act for themselves... The government must provide an outlet for this feeling or it will find one for itself. These states cannot be satisfied with small call after small call of raw troops, to be put into the field as soon as mustered without discipline or drill. They would not be soldiers but marks for an enemy to shoot at... We want an authority... that will furnish our men with arms. (In Wisconsin) companies for five regiments are drilling now without arms and two regiments but partially armed are in camp. I have endeavored, time after time, to ascertain both by messages and letters to what extent service would be required or proffered service received; and to what extent it was expected the states would arm, equip, and uniform the men; I have failed to receive any satisfactory information. The Government in order to retain the confidence of the people must show some confidence in the people. You will excuse the frankness and freedom of this communication; and I feel sure that you will receive it with the good will with which it is extended.

Yours truly,

A. Randall. 25

The letter made a lasting impression upon the administration. Randall's frank demands produced a complete reorganization of the war department. Cameron who proved to be incompetent for such a large position was removed and Edwin M. Stanton the aggressive war Democrat assumed that portfolio. 26 He was a man of inexhaustible energy which he directed to perfecting the war machinery of the administration. Special agents were dispatched to European countries to buy arms and equipment. Expert commissions were created at Washington to study and perfect methods of organizing and equipping Regiments.


26Lectures of Prof. Carl Russell Fisk, in "Civil War and Reconstruction."
Within a few days after the outbreak of hostilities, Randall appointed Dr. E. B. Wolcott, of Milwaukee, as Surgeon General. Wolcott had enjoyed a number of years experience as an army surgeon and consequently he was able (under Randall's direction) to organize an efficient staff of surgeons. Before every regiment left the state it was adequately supplied with at least three months supply of medicine, instruments, and hospital stores. Besides this, every regiment was provided with a man whose duty was to take care of the health of the soldiers. He was authorized to take any sick or disabled soldiers back to Wisconsin and see that they were properly looked after. The following letter of Governor Randall is illustrative of the nature of the appointment of such agents:

Executive Office, July 6, 1861.

Col. J. C. Starkweather:-
1st Regiment: Wisconsin,

The bearer, Arnold Huching, Esq, is accredited by me to visit your camp to take care of the sick and disabled soldiers. He is authorized to take the remains of dead, and the person if living with the consent of the proper military authorities and bring him to Wisconsin. Mr. Huching is also authorized and empowered with the consent of the proper military authorities first obtained to receive and bring home to Wisconsin any disabled soldier of your Regiment whose condition is such that there is no likelihood of his being able to do further efficient military service before the term of his enlistment expires. The desire of Wisconsin is as far as possible and so long as I represent it, to have a care over the gallant men who have gone forward so nobly to sustain the honor of the State, and the integrity of the Federal Union. They shall be carefully watched and tenderly guarded and supplied in their struggles and sufferings.

Yours truly,

A. Randall.3

It is thus quite evident that Randall would do his share to keep the Wisconsin fighters free from any undue suffering. Long before the Sanitary

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1James William Shannon, State aid to Wisconsin Soldiers and their Families, Madison, Wis., 1915, p 41.
2Ibid, p 42.
3Personal letter of Gov. Randall to Col Starkweather, 1st Regiment, Wis. Volunteers July 6, 1861, In possession of Wis. Historical Library.
Commission was organized and the nursing department was functioning as an active private agent of the military department. Randall received hundreds of letters from young enthusiastic women who earnestly desired to do their part in the war. The following letter is an example of the patriotic fervor of many women enthusiasts:

Milwaukee, April 26, 1861.

Mr. Randall:

Dear Sir: Grant me a small favor that is in few words. I have made up my mind to go as a help to the war as nurse. Do not refuse me. I have a dear and only brother that is going and my sister and myself wish to go. We are strong and healthy and can stand all kinds of weather. God speed you in all that is right . . . We wish to go with the 1st Regiment. Please answer soon. If you refuse us we shall try some way to get there for we are bound to go and go we must and shall stand firm till our country is once again free, yes free from all traitors. Death be their Doom.

Miss Henrietta Hayden. 4

Governor Randall had no authority to appoint nurses, but he referred their applications to Dorothea Dix, who headed the Nursing Department. He was very instrumental in making recommendations and in securing appointments of good capable workers for that branch of the service.

Randall organized several aid commissions, which generally were composed of a number of good doctors and surgeons; these commissions aided by the relief

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4April 26, 1861.
societies of the state would gather a large amount of supplies such as clothing, delicious fruits, tobacco, etc., and make a journey to the south to visit the Wisconsin boys who were convalescing in the hospitals. The surgeons always took a good supply of lint and bandages along and in case there were soldiers who were suffering with fever, an attempt was made to secure furloughs for such unfortunates. The southern climate was very unhealthful and thus a large number of Wisconsin boys died in the early part of the war before the Sanitary Commission could operate effectively. Through these personal agents, Randall secured extended furloughs for a large number of sick men in 1861, but soon this principle came in conflict with orders from the war Department. After the men were restored to health, many of them refused to go back to serve out their terms of enlistments. Some actually deserted by running off to Canada while others went into another state and reenlisted where they could secure very heavy bounties. Thus extended leaves and furloughs were forbidden by Stanton. Randall secured some modifications of this order and later three hospitals were established in Wisconsin for the purpose of taking care of Wisconsin soldiers. One of these was located at Madison and was named after Cordelia Harvey, the wife of Randall's successor to the governorship. The two others were located at La Crosse and Milwaukee.

Very soon after the battle of Bull Run in July, 1861, the people of Wisconsin realized they must have a regular State Aid Society that could function all the time. Under direction of the governor such an organization was effected. Branches of the society were established throughout the state, and its headquarters

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5 Hurn, p 38.

6 Hurn, p 48.

7 Milwaukee News, July 21, 1861.
were located at Milwaukee. Before the close of 1861, there were 229 auxiliaries established throughout the state and the families of hundreds of soldiers were beneficiaries of this noble work. Vast quantities of delicacies were sent to armies in the field. It is estimated that the value of the articles sent to soldiers were placed at $200,000 for the year 1861. A large number of patriotic men and women of Milwaukee organized what was known as the Wisconsin Soldiers' Home. Here a large number of sick and wounded men were given as good care as they could have received in their own homes. The institution was supported by the people of Milwaukee. At first the question of social relief was left entirely to local administrative units. The state legislature passed a law May 19th granting the local government authorities the power of taxing for the support of the families of volunteers. This was unsatisfactory in practice so the central administration of the state undertook to handle the problem. On May 25, 1861, it was voted that "non-commissioned officers, musicians, and privates mustered into the service of the United States, or of this state . . . receive . . . in addition to the pay provided . . . the sum of $5.00 per month to all volunteers having families dependent upon them for support." The wife or person who was to be the beneficiary of this legislation by applying to the secretary of state could get a warrant for the amount due; this he would send to the State Treasurer who would remit a check to the sender. If the money was not withdrawn at all, it remained in the treasury to the credit of the soldier. The secretary of the state was authorized to make the warrant only while the soldier was in active service, a fact which

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8Hurn, p 53.
9Hurn, p 218.
10General Laws of Wisconsin, 1861, Ch 2, p 322.
11Carl Russell Hish, Social Relief in the Northwest during the Civil War, American Historical Review, V 22, p 313.
12Ibid, p 313.
13Hurn, p 56.
was learned through a monthly report of the regimental officers. Very frequently these reports were defective and very often they were not sent at all; consequently the family in need had to suffer until the complications were unravelled. There were a large number of loopholes in the law. The term family was not definitely limited and thus a flood of demands for the extra pay came to the treasurer. In March 22, 1862, the word family was defined as: "Wife living, and actually dependent", or, there being no wife, children under fourteen, or no children, "infirm parent or parents, actually dependent upon the labor of said volunteer". Due to misunderstandings and complications, the Governor received a large number of letters of this subject. One volunteer in camp writes this threatening letter to Randall demanding action in regard to the care of his needy family:

2nd Regt. Camp Corcoran,
August 5, 1861.

Dear Sir: In my request to you to see to the provision of my family at Madison, you requested me to write to you after your return and you would attend to same.... I trust to your benevolence to see that they are provided for. I have been troubled a good deal as to the welfare of my wife and child and can hardly do my duty as a soldier when I feel that they are at home in want .... If you cannot comply with my first request, I hope you will assist me in obtaining my honorable discharge for I cannot be of much service to my country and would rather die in trying to go to their aid than stay here and know they are left destitute ....

F. W. Compton.

Theoretically Randall could do nothing directly to aid these needy families. The Legislature had made no appropriation for such cases. All the governor could do was to make recommendations to the aid societies in the state who generally acted as quickly as possible.

In the case that a volunteer or the family of a volunteer misunderstood

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14 Fish, Social Relief, A. H. R. V 22, p 313.

15 Personal Correspondence of Gov. Randall, Unpublished Manuscripts - Aug 5, 1861.
the operation or interpretation of the Volunteer Aid Law, the governor generally was the instrument whereby the matter was cleared up. The following letter is typical of hundreds of answers that were asked the Chief Executive.

Arcadia, Wisconsin,
Sept. 18, 1861.

Gov. Randall:—

I have been informed that families of volunteers killed in the service are entitled to $100.00 in cash but whether from the state or national government my informant did not state. Will your excellency please inform me whether the information is correct or not. Also whether the families of volunteers who are minors are entitled to the $5.00 per month allowed by the state. My son, Myron B. Gardner aged 19 years, one of the noblest boys that ever died for any government .. . was killed at the first battle of Bull Run, July 18th. It seems like sacrilege to speak of money in connection with that dear boy’s death, but regrets for the dead should not make us forget our duty to the living or make me forget that is my duty to provide a home for the remaining ones of my family ..

Most Respectfully Yours,

16

Henry Gardner.

Another difficulty arose over the Volunteer Aid law. This piece of legislation did not extend the aid fund to the dependent family of a soldier after he was killed or after like expired any other way. It was true that such families were to receive $100.00 in cash from the National Government, as well as a pension. However, the payments were made slowly and frequently the beneficiaries didn’t receive their due amount until a year after the death of the soldier. In the meantime the bereaved family had to get along as best they could. As the war continued, this class of sufferers increased until sufficient pressure was brought upon the Legislature to relieve this undue suffering.

On March 15th, 1863, Governor Solomon successfully urged the passage of

16Personal Correspondence of Gov. Randall, Sept 18, 1861.
a law which "provided for six months' continuance of extra pay to the families of volunteers who had died in service; such payment to cease, however, when the Federal pension should begin."

To alleviate the complicated conditions that arose when residents of other states enlisted in Wisconsin, Randall issued the following Proclamation, on October 3, 1861:

"It has become necessary that some measures should be taken to prevent, so far as is possible, the enlistment in this state of recruits for companies and regiments in other states. The enlistment of the citizen soldier is a volunteer act; but when the disposition is to depart from the limits of his own state to join organizations in other states, it should be restrained by a consideration of the duty due to the name and reputation of the state of his residence. Until some restraint can be placed upon the wholesale recruiting in progress in Wisconsin for other states, we cannot know the number of soldiers which this State furnishes for the war.

It is my duty to warn all citizens of Wisconsin, that by enlistments in organizations outside of this State, they lose all right to participate in the benefits of our liberal Volunteer Aid Law, and also the benefits of whatever care for her citizen soldiers the State can extend over their welfare; and I hereby make public notice, that henceforward no recruiting officer, for organizations out of this State will be allowed to recruit soldiers for such foreign organizations, always excepting the duly authorized recruiting officers for the United States regular service."

17 Messages and Proclamations, Thwaites, p 192.

18 Messages and Proclamations, Thwaites, p 74.
This warning settled all future complications regarding state pay of non-resident Wisconsin enlistments.

On January 6, 1862, Randall retired from the governorship. He made the following report to the Legislature defending the course he had pursued in carrying on the stupendous task that had befallen him: Randall had been criticized for incurring an extra expense by sending special agents (along with each regiment) whose duty it was to look after the health of the soldiers. Randall's comment in refutation was, "The insufficient accommodations for transporting large bodies or men, and large military stores, except upon the direct lines of railroads, and the want of experience in the care of soldiers both well and sick, induced me to adopt the plan of sending with our regiments agents, whose business it should be to see that our neighbors who had volunteered to fight for us, should not suffer for want of care, in case of accident or sickness. The precaution was a wise one, if it is wise or right to take care of sick and suffering men. While some of the regiments reached the seat of war without accident and serious sickness, and so required no especial attention or expense, some of the soldiers in many of them were left on the way and but for the care and attendance of these agents would have died... This course has been adopted by many of the other states, and has received not only the commendation of the authorities of those states, but the commendation of the Secretary of War, who complimented Wisconsin for inaugurating the system, and for the interest manifested for the welfare of her soldiers... In the movements of our regiments, large amounts of clothing and other State and Government property have been taken care of by these agents, which otherwise would have been lost or destroyed, in value far greater than the
whole amount expended. The policy ought to be continued." 19 Randall had often
been assailed by the military department for incurring other expenses which had
not been provided for for authorized army regulations. The fighting Governor's
response was, "Some expenses have been incurred and money paid by the Paymaster,
Quartermaster, and Commissary that I knew were not according to army regulations
under my direction, because I did not wish to see our soldiers, unused to the
hardships of camp life, and going from comfortable and pleasant homes, suffer or
die according to strict military rule. . . . The policy of experimenting with
soldiers to ascertain how little they can live upon, or how hard fare, and how
extreme privations they can endure, and escape sickness or death, is the policy
of all time, and its result has been with all armies and in all nations, that more
men die in camp than are slain in battle. I believe this rebellion is to be
atoned for in blood, and that the business of an army is to fight, and that,
therefore, that course which will most husband the strength and preserve the
health of the soldier until the day of battle, is the wisest and best." 20 The
fact that Randall's policy was followed by his successors is a vindication and a
commendation of his noble initiative.

19 Messages and Proclamations, Thwaites, p 86.

20 Messages and Proclamations, Thwaites, p 86.
CONCLUSION.

At the close of his second term, Randall sought military service. President Lincoln, however, had watched the young lawyer's career with commendable interest; he had often solicited the advice of the Governor on the big problems of the war. Thus it was not surprising that Randall was appointed Minister to Rome in 1862. The ex-governor couldn't endure being away from his country during those months when the fate of the North hung in the balance. He therefore resigned his position, returned to America, and again sought military service. But Lincoln, unwilling to lose his ability for civil administration, made him Assistant Postmaster General. His record in that capacity was so praiseworthy, that he assumed the head of the department in 1866. At the close of Johnson's administration, March 4, 1869, Randall retired from the cabinet and renewed the practice of law at Elmira, New York. He died there in 1872 at the early age of fifty three.

David Atwood, a prominent citizen of Madison and for a number of years editor of the Wisconsin State Journal, pronounced the following eulogy upon Randall's career: "Important as has been his duties in peace, he must ever stand upon our historic annals as the great war governor of Wisconsin. He originated; others followed; well and wisely, - in the path he had mapped out, - for which they are justly entitled to commendation. But his was the master mind that put its impress indelibly upon all that came after, and is entitled to the credit so justly due." 3

1 Atwood, Fathers of Wisconsin, p 140.

2 Atwood, p 141.

3 Atwood and Teuney, Fathers of Wisconsin, p 141.