

Henry Addington, Prime Minister

1801–1804

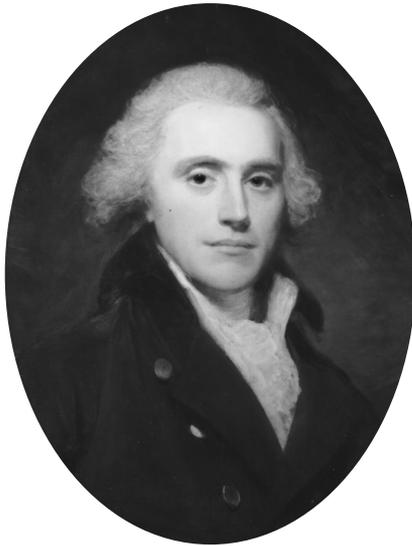
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*Henry Addington, Prime Minister, 1801–1804:
Peace, War, and Parliamentary Politics*



*Henry Addington,
Prime Minister, 1801–1804
Peace, War, and Parliamentary Politics*

Charles John Fedorak



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For Jacquie



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*Be not afraid of greatness. Some are born
great, some achieve greatness, and some
have greatness thrust upon 'em.*

Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night*



Preface

I have incurred many debts of gratitude in the writing of this book. The greatest I owe to two mentors, who provided guidance and encouragement at different stages of my academic life. The first is the late Kenneth Bourne of the Department of International History at the London School of Economics and Political Science, who supervised the doctoral dissertation that evolved into this work. Professor Bourne was an ideal supervisor. He granted me considerable independence in the conduct of my research and writing, but was available whenever I needed his advice or assistance. Sharing with me his unparalleled expertise in the field of nineteenth-century British foreign policy, he also inspired in me a reverence for historical sources and a deep affection for the people we write about. His research explored the personal lives as well as the public lives of leading politicians. He could recite an abundance of entertaining anecdotes about the romantic lives of members of aristocratic society. The historian's task was described by one of my undergraduate instructors as communing with the dead and bringing them to life. Professor Bourne exemplified this approach to history and helped me understand the value of exploring the personal side of the politicians and officials we study.

I also owe a great debt to Edward Ingram of the Department of History at Simon Fraser University. Professor Ingram was the honors supervisor of my under-

graduate studies. He first suggested Addington as worthy of study and has continued to provide me with encouragement and support ever since. He possesses the remarkable talent of being able to instill in me a sense of self-confidence tempered by humility. I have always found invaluable his advice and criticism, and the success that I have enjoyed as a historian would not have been possible without his assistance.

I wish to acknowledge the helpful advice provided by the examiners of my doctoral dissertation, Ian Christie and Michael Duffy. Dr. Duffy has also continued to provide me with valuable feedback and advice. I am grateful to Michael Carley, Amy Petersen, and the staff at the University of Akron Press for their support and assistance. I also wish to thank the anonymous reviewers for the University of Akron Press for providing me with suggestions to strengthen my manuscript. I wish to thank John Ehrman for drawing my attention to useful references on Addington contained in the papers of Pitt the Younger and for showing an interest in reading my dissertation. In addition, I am indebted to Anthony Howe, Janet Hartley, David Stevenson, Piers Mackesy, John Breihan, Karl Roider, and Gordon Martel for advice on sources and other aspects of the historian's craft. The Earl of Elgin, Lord Vernon, Francis Sitwell, Giles Adams, and Lieutenant-Colonel Henry Scott were kind enough to allow me into their homes and offices to consult archives in their personal possession. I also wish to thank Christiana Thomas, F. Pacquin, Mary McCormick, Pat Christopher, Celine Silve, Terence Ollerhead, Viscount Sidmouth, Sir Richard Carew Pole, the Earl of Harewood, the anonymous owner of the Liverpool Manuscripts loaned to the British Library, the trustees of the Chatsworth Estate, Service International de Microfilms, Dr. Ing. Schmidl, and the staff at all of the archives and record offices that I have mentioned in the bibliography. I would also like to thank the National Portrait Gallery, London, for permission to include prints of portraits of Henry Addington, George III, William Pitt, and Lord Hawkesbury.

None of my research would have been possible, however, without the generous financial assistance of the Imperial Order Daughters of

the Empire, National Chapter of Canada, the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, the Trustees of the Overseas Research Scholarship, and the Central Research Fund, University of London. I wish to thank the former London House for Overseas Graduates (now Goodenough College) for providing me with a place to stay while in London. I am particularly grateful to Barbara and Norman Collier for providing me with a Cornish refuge on several occasions when the noise, soot, and overcrowding of London impinged on my physical and mental well-being. I wish to thank the Royal Ballet School Junior Section for permitting me to write this preface at White Lodge, and especially Robert Dickson-Fuller for taking me on a tour of the building and providing me with a desk at which to write.

I am indebted to my parents, Sandra Cusack and John Fedorak, for providing me with moral and financial support during my undergraduate and graduate school years. Marc Fedorak and Frank Fedorak assisted me greatly by retrieving books that I needed from the University of British Columbia Library. Manuela Myers helped me read German monographs and French documents and acted as an interpreter on my research trip to the foreign office archives in Vienna and Paris. Nadine McGraw assisted me in translating the French quotations that I had transcribed from the French, Austrian, and Russian diplomatic correspondence. Finally, I wish to thank my partner and soul-mate Jacquie Edwards for her love, support, and assistance, which helped me to complete the revision of my manuscript after a hiatus of several years. I dedicate this book to her.

Charles John Fedorak
White Lodge, Richmond Park, Surrey
December 2000



Politicians and Diplomats

Positions Held January 1801 to May 1804

Addington, Henry. M.P. for Devizes 1784–1805; Speaker of the House of Commons 1789–1801; First Lord of the Treasury (prime minister) and chancellor of the Exchequer 1801–4.

Addington, John Hiley. M.P. for Wendover, Bossiney 1802; Harwich 1802. Lord of the Treasury 1800–1801, 1802–3; joint secretary to the Treasury 1801–2; joint paymaster-general 1803–4.

Bonaparte, Joseph. French plenipotentiary at the Congress of Amiens 1801–2.

Bonaparte, General Napoleon. First Consul of France 1799–1804.

Bragge, Charles. M.P. for Bristol. Chairman of the Ways and Means Committee 1799–1801; treasurer of the navy 1801–3; secretary at War 1803–4.

Canning, George. M.P. for Wendover, Tralee 1802. Joint paymaster of the forces 1800–1801.

Cavendish-Bentinck, William Henry, third duke of Portland 1762. Secretary of state for home affairs 1794–1801; Lord President of the Council 1801–5.

Cornwallis, General Charles, first Marquess Cornwallis 1792. British plenipotentiary to the Congress of Amiens 1801–2.

Czartoryski, Prince Adam. Russian foreign minister 1803–4; chancellor of Russia 1804–6.

Douglas, Sylvester, first Baron Glenbervie 1800. M.P. for Plympton Erle 1801–2, Hastings 1802. Paymaster general

- 1801–3; vice president of the Board of Trade 1801–4; surveyor general of the woods and forests 1803–6.
- Dundas, Henry, first Viscount Melville 1802. M.P. for Edinburgh. Secretary of state for War 1794–1801; president of the Board of Control 1793–1801.
- Fitzherbert, Alleyne, first Baron St. Helens 1791. Ambassador to Russia 1801–2.
- Fox, Charles James. M.P. for Westminster. Leader of the Whig party in opposition 1783–1806.
- Frederick, duke of York and Albany. Commander in chief of the army 1795–1809.
- Grenville, William Wyndham, first Baron Grenville 1790. Secretary of state for foreign affairs 1791–1801.
- Hobart, Robert, styled Lord Hobart 1793–1804. Secretary of state for War and the colonies 1801–4.
- Jenkinson, Charles, first earl of Liverpool 1796. Chancellor of the duchy of Lancaster 1786–1803; president of the Board of Trade 1786–1804.
- Jenkinson, Robert Banks, styled Lord Hawkesbury 1796–1808. M.P. for Rye. Master of the Mint 1799–1801; secretary of state for foreign affairs 1801–4.
- Jervis, Admiral John, first earl of St. Vincent 1797. First Lord of the Admiralty 1801–4.
- Otto, Louis Guillaume. French agent in London for the exchange of prisoners of war 1799–1801; French negotiator for the Preliminary Treaty of Peace 1801.
- Pelham, Thomas, styled Lord Pelham 1801–1805. M.P. for Sussex. Secretary of state for home affairs 1801–3; chancellor of the duchy of Lancaster 1803–4.
- Perceval, Spencer. M.P. for Northampton. Solicitor general 1801–2; attorney general 1802–6.
- Pitt, John, second earl of Chatham 1778. Lord President of the Council 1796–1801; master-general of the ordnance 1801–6.
- Pitt, William. M.P. for Cambridge University. First Lord of the Treasury (prime minister) and chancellor of the Exchequer 1783–1801.

- Rawdon-Hastings, General Francis, second earl of Moira 1793. Leading member of the Whig party in opposition.
- Scott, Sir John, first Baron Eldon. Chief justice of the Common Pleas 1799–1801; Lord Chancellor 1801–6.
- Sheridan, Richard Brinsley. M.P. for Stafford. Leading member of the Whig party in opposition 1783–1806.
- Starhemberg, Count Ludwig von. Austrian minister in London 1792–1810.
- Stewart, Robert, Viscount Castlereagh. M.P. for County Down. Chief secretary for Ireland 1798–1801; president of the Board of Control 1802–4.
- Talleyrand-Périgord, Charles Maurice de. French foreign minister 1797–1807.
- Tierney, George. M.P. for Southwark. Leading member of the Whig party in opposition; treasurer of the navy 1803–4.
- Vansittart, Nicholas. M.P. for Hastings, Old Sarum 1802; special envoy to Denmark 1801; joint secretary to the Treasury 1801–4.
- Vorontsov, Count Alexander. Chancellor of Russia 1802–4.
- Vorontsov, Count Simon. Russian minister in London 1784–1800; 1801–6.
- Wellesley, Richard Colley, first Marquess Wellesley 1799. Governor-general of India 1797–1805.
- Whitworth, Charles, first Baron Whitworth 1800. Ambassador to France 1802–3.
- Windham, William. M.P. for Norwich, St. Mawes 1802. Secretary at War 1794–1801.
- Yorke, Charles Philip. M.P. for Cambridgeshire. Secretary at War 1801–3; secretary of state for home affairs 1803–4.
- Yorke, Philip, third earl of Hardwicke 1790. Lord Lieutenant of Ireland 1801–6.

Henry Addington, Prime Minister

1801–1804



Introduction

Henry Addington, first Viscount Sidmouth¹, was one of the most influential men in British politics during the first quarter of the nineteenth century. After serving as Speaker of the House of Commons between 1789 and 1801, he was prime minister for the next three years and held a series of other cabinet offices for fourteen of the following twenty years under four prime ministers. During his term as prime minister he built a following of loyal M.P.s that was larger and more cohesive than that of any other politician between 1806 and 1824. Addington's rise to power was remarkable: when the king appointed him prime minister, he had few personal supporters and no experience in cabinet office. Nevertheless, Addington emerged as the best candidate to lead the government because of a complex series of political, diplomatic, military, economic, and social crises. His performance as prime minister—and the activities of some of his opponents—earned him the political following that was to be the source of his influence for the rest of his career.

Addington has wrongly been depicted as a weak and ineffectual leader, first by his political rivals and subsequently by some historians who have examined his experience as prime minister in the context of a broader

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theme or in relation to the career of another politician.² This book tells Addington's story for the first time from his point of view, in an approach similar to recent biographies of Charles James Fox by Leslie Mitchell and of Georgiana, duchess of Devonshire, by Amanda Foreman.³ Addington was actually an effective prime minister who dealt with enormous challenges in waging war against France, negotiating peace, restoring government finances, and managing Parliament. This is the story of how he fared. It is an examination of the actions he took, his reasons for taking them, and the domestic and international implications of those actions. While the story touches on the interests and actions of other politicians and other states, its focus is Addington.

When Addington accepted the seals of office in 1801, political power in Great Britain was vested in Parliament, which comprised the king, the House of Lords, and the House of Commons. The relative power of these three components lacked clear definition because there were no constitutional documents delineating a division of power. The British Constitution was essentially unwritten, leaving it open to different interpretations based on tradition and precedent. Everyone concurred that legislation required the approval of the king and both houses of Parliament and that the House of Commons must approve taxation and all other measures of financial appropriation. The most contentious issue was the nomination of ministers. It was customary for the king to appoint the prime minister and other great officers of state. There were occasions, however, when the ministers he had chosen became so unpopular with M.P.s that the government was unable to sustain the majorities in the two houses of Parliament necessary to requisition taxes or pass legislation. If enough M.P.s opposed the king's choice of ministers, they could, in effect, force the king to change them. By the end of the eighteenth century it was clear that, in order to govern effectively, ministers required both the confidence of the king and the support of the houses of Parliament, particularly the House of Commons.

The House of Lords was led by the great landowners but also included members of the royal family, senior officials of the Anglican

Church, and politicians who had obtained peerages for political reasons. The great landowners exercised considerable power because of their wealth, their social connections, and the number of tenants and other individuals who were dependent on them. Some commanded large loyal followings in the House of Lords and controlled the election of many M.P.s in the House of Commons. Many were related through marriage. Although there were no formal political parties in the modern sense, a series of political groups coalesced around particular leaders. None of them were strong enough on their own to control a majority in the House, but if enough of them formed an alliance, they could exert considerable control over the business of the House.

The House of Commons comprised those elected to represent county or borough constituencies. Most members were related to the landed aristocracy. Many were the sons of members of the House of Lords. The right to vote in parliamentary elections was restricted to a fraction of the adult male population, based on wealth or other privilege. Some large constituencies had a few thousand voters; members from these constituencies could exercise political independence when Parliament was in session. Other constituencies had fewer than fifty electors and were effectively under the control of a peer or another M.P. As electors had to declare their votes publicly, the great landowners could control the votes of their tenants and others to ensure that the candidates of their choice were elected. Some members of the Commons were, in effect, leaders of their own parties, which included allies in the Lords. The government also exercised control over some constituencies which elected members loyal to the king or his ministers. Nevertheless, there were too many diverse groups and genuinely independent members in the Commons for any one group to sustain a secure majority.

The extent of the king's power depended on the relative power of the leading parties in Parliament. Whenever the parties remained divided, the king was able to exercise greater latitude in his choice of ministers, but when the king's ministers provoked united opposition among the parties, a majority in either the Lords or Commons could

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force a change in government. Sometimes the union of the leading parties was strong enough to compel the king to appoint their leaders as ministers. Ministers who forced the king to appoint them against his will, however, did not usually last long in power, as they proved unable to sustain their parliamentary majorities without the king's support.

Securing the necessary majority in both houses of Parliament was not an easy task for any prime minister. As there was no formal party system during the late eighteenth century, the making of a parliamentary majority required a combination of diverse parliamentary elements. If it was clear that the king had confidence in the prime minister, the latter could count on the support of a certain group known as "the king's friends" who would back any government that the king approved. The next ingredient was a group known as placemen, who held offices, pensions, and other financial grants at the discretion of the prime minister. Cabinet ministers, too, brought the votes of their loyal supporters. Thus it was important that the cabinet include some of the great landowners who controlled or influenced the elections of M.P.s. Upon this foundation, the prime minister would add the support gained through electoral patronage: the Treasury controlled a small number of seats and could ensure the election of members who would support the government.

All these votes, however, were still insufficient to guarantee a working majority. There remained a large number of members who were independent of party and liable to change their votes depending on circumstance. The support of these independent members could be volatile and, on any particular issue, liable to be swayed by the quality of the debate. The prime minister and the senior members of the cabinet had to be able, during the course of debate, to persuade independent members to support government policy. Therefore, it was particularly important that the cabinet include effective parliamentary speakers. Finally, the ministers had to ensure that their supporters attended debates and voted with them. Each of these components was necessary to sustain a parliamentary majority. The prime minister could never take for granted the confidence of the king or the sup-

port of Parliament, because he could lose either of them suddenly over a clash of personality or a change in government policy. This meant that a change of government could occur almost at any time.

The most influential politician between 1760 and 1801 was King George III. He had studied the role of the monarch in British politics as a boy and committed himself to certain political principles before he became king. He felt that the king should retain the right to choose his ministers and veto legislation. Devoted to the Church of England, he had a strong sense of Christian morality. He disliked corruption, both in politics and in private life. It was his view that, during the course of the eighteenth century, a small group of corrupt politicians had attained a level of political power that enabled them to infringe on the right of the king to appoint his choice of ministers. George III was determined to reassert what he considered to be his constitutional rights and to withstand those politicians who had tried to usurp the powers of the Crown. A frugal man, he tried to set an example with his own personal behavior, and he disapproved of the dissolute lifestyle of many members of the aristocracy and the licentious activities of his two eldest sons.⁴

When George III ascended the throne in 1760, he almost immediately came into conflict with a group of politicians, known informally as the Whigs, who had, over the course of the previous fifty years, become accustomed to holding office. Representing the wealthiest and most powerful landowners, they came to regard themselves as the natural governors of the kingdom. As a result, there was considerable turnover in political office during the early years of the king's reign, while he and the Whigs struggled for ascendancy. During the course of this struggle, there developed a particularly acute antipathy between the king and a young man named Charles James Fox, who was to become the leader of the Whig party in the House of Commons. The clash between the king and Fox was as much a result of personalities as of politics. Fox was the son of Henry Fox, an M.P. who had amassed a fortune and considerable political power through corruption in political office during the reign of George II. He mar-

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ried into the aristocracy and was granted the title Baron Holland for his political services. Charles Fox, both charming and a brilliant orator, was extremely popular and inspired a fierce loyalty among his personal friends and political allies. Nevertheless, he followed a libertine lifestyle of excessive eating, drinking, and gambling, which the king abhorred. Fox became a close friend of the Prince of Wales, and the king blamed him for corrupting his son. Fox, in return, resented the king and openly criticized what he perceived to be the growing influence of the Crown in British politics.

In 1783, Fox and the Whigs built a parliamentary alliance that enabled them to force the resignation of the king's ministers and establish themselves as the only candidates for office who could command a majority in both houses of Parliament. The king was unable to find any alternative candidates who were willing to take office, and had no choice but to appoint Fox and his allies. They took office with William Cavendish-Bentinck, the third duke of Portland, who was one of the most powerful landowners and whose family had been leading members of the Whig party for most of the eighteenth century, as prime minister and Fox secretary of state for foreign affairs. Fox's triumph was, however, only temporary. The king became increasingly resentful of Fox and determined to dismiss him, Portland, and the rest of the government at the earliest opportunity. Although Fox and his allies had sufficient parliamentary support to govern, many independent M.P.s felt that Fox had crossed the bounds of acceptable parliamentary conduct in forcing the king to appoint him. Governing was a partnership between the king and the houses of Parliament. While it was unacceptable for the king to appoint ministers Parliament opposed, it was equally inappropriate for Parliament to compel the king to appoint ministers whom he detested. The king could not dismiss Fox and Portland, however, until he found replacements for them.

This conflict between the king and Fox launched the remarkable career of William Pitt, the Younger, who was to dominate British politics from his appointment as prime minister in 1783 until long after his death in 1806. Pitt was the second son of William Pitt, the first earl

of Chatham, who had been a popular politician and a successful war leader during the Seven Years War against France (1756–63). Chatham was a political outsider whose political power derived from his skill at parliamentary debate rather than from his social connections. He educated and trained his son at an early age to become a great public speaker, so that William would also be a successful politician. The younger Pitt exceeded his father's high expectations. He became the most effective speaker ever to debate in the House of Commons, at a time when speaking ability was the most important quality a politician could possess. Pitt often spoke for hours, late into the night, impromptu without notes, and yet every word seemed meticulously selected. His timing was remarkable. He placed precise emphasis on every word to give it maximum effect, as if the whole production had been extensively rehearsed.

Although he was only twenty-four years old and had only a few month's previous experience in cabinet office as chancellor of the Exchequer, he appeared to have the skills and abilities necessary to form a government strong enough to survive the opposition of Fox and Portland. After the king dismissed Fox and Portland and appointed Pitt in December 1783, the new prime minister faced a daunting task. Fox and his allies retained a majority in both houses of Parliament. Pitt persevered in the face of this parliamentary opposition and over the course of a few months won the support of enough members of Parliament to establish a majority. The M.P.s who supported Pitt were not all politically attached to him, but as long as Fox was the only alternative, they preferred Pitt. Pitt called an election in the spring of 1784 in which many new government supporters were elected and a number of Whigs were defeated. This victory was as much a triumph for the king as it was for Pitt, because the electorate identified Pitt as the king's choice, reinforcing the king's position that he had the authority to appoint his own ministers. This triumph for the government also spawned a great personal rivalry between Fox and Pitt. From that moment forward, Fox proclaimed himself "the champion of the people" because he opposed what he considered to be the increasing power that the king was exerting over the people's repre-

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sentatives in Parliament. Fox accused Pitt of being merely an agent of the king. Fox's loyal following in Parliament was strong enough to ensure that Pitt had to manage Parliament carefully to retain his majority and that the king remained dependent on Pitt to keep Fox out of office. This polarized both houses of Parliament, because a solid minority in each house felt that the king had acted contrary to the Constitution when he dismissed the Whigs and appointed Pitt. Pitt and Fox were the only possible candidates for office, and the antipathy that existed between them and between their supporters made remote any possibility of their serving together in office.

Pitt remained in office until 1801. During the 1780s, he was able to sustain a majority on votes of confidence, but he was not able to pass all legislation he introduced. The French Revolution of 1789 and the war that followed in 1793 made managing Parliament even more challenging. The French Revolution acted as a catalyst to a popular movement for parliamentary reform in Great Britain: the French attempts to construct a new system of government upon principles of reason provided a contrast to the British electoral system, in which only a small, privileged portion of the male population could vote and the franchise qualifications varied greatly between constituencies. Some regions of the country were over-represented and others under-represented. Many radical political observers believed that more men should have the right to vote and that a reform of Parliament would lead to better government. The French Revolution and the radical movement in Great Britain also precipitated a conservative reaction. Conservatives believed that any measures of parliamentary reform in Great Britain ran the risk of devolving into the violence and anarchy that occurred in France as a result of the Revolution. The issues that the French Revolution sparked ultimately split the Whig opposition. Fox and a small group of radical Whigs continued to support the parliamentary reform movement in Great Britain even though most of the great landowners in the party led by Portland came to oppose it. Pitt was able to reinforce his parliamentary majority by forming a coalition with Portland and the conservative Whigs in 1794, leaving Fox alone in opposition with a smaller but staunchly loyal band of

supporters. The coalition gave the government so much strength that, in 1797, Fox despaired of his situation and ceased to attend Parliament. This left Pitt's parliamentary position virtually unassailable at the time, but that did not mean he was invulnerable over the long term. The challenges of fighting the war with France and the domestic crises that it provoked eventually created the circumstances that compelled him to resign in 1801.

The most important issue in British politics during the final decade of the eighteenth and into the nineteenth century was the war with France. The war lasted from 1793 until 1815 with two brief interludes in 1802–3 and 1814–15. Great Britain and France had fought a series of wars throughout the eighteenth century over conflicting strategic interests. Both were commercial maritime states competing for markets in Europe and control of trade overseas. They developed colonial empires in close proximity in North America, the Caribbean, and India. They competed for maritime trade in the North Sea and the Mediterranean and built large navies for commercial and military purposes. Spain and Holland also had commercial empires, but by the end of the eighteenth century Great Britain and France possessed the two strongest.

The most important region of strategic interest for Great Britain was the Low Countries, comprising modern Belgium and the Netherlands, which contained the best harbors on the Channel coast for both commercial and military purposes. The ports were key trade links between Europe and the outside world. Antwerp had the potential to rival London as the main commercial center in Western Europe. For this reason, Great Britain had arranged through international treaty with the Great Powers of Europe for the closure to all naval traffic of the Scheldt River, which linked Antwerp with Central Europe. It was vital to Great Britain's interests that France not control this region. As France did not have good harbors on the Channel coast, the harbors of the Low Countries would improve the ability of the French navy to attack Great Britain. Control of the commercial centers in the region also would have enabled France to sever impor-

tant British trade links with Europe. France was interested in obtaining this territory not only for its commercial and strategic value, but also because the southern portion of this region was inhabited by French-speaking people. During the eighteenth century, an important principle of French foreign policy was to expand the territory of France until it encompassed its “natural boundaries.”

When the French Revolution began in 1789, Great Britain was satisfied with the international status quo. The territorial settlements that had resulted from the previous wars with France had conformed with British strategic interests. French politics during the early years of the Revolution concentrated on internal affairs to the extent that France became largely inactive in international politics. The Revolution itself was not originally a significant concern for other states. Some observers in Great Britain believed that the French were attempting to establish a constitutional monarchy in imitation of the British model. It was in these circumstances that Pitt told the House of Commons in 1792 that Europe had never had a better prospect of fifteen years of peace.

Anglo-French relations changed almost immediately after Pitt uttered those words. The French were soon at war with Austria and Prussia. Although the eastern monarchies had initial success in battle, the French drove their invading armies out of France, across Belgium, and over the Rhine. France then annexed the territories that the Austrian and Prussian troops had evacuated. Shortly thereafter the French opened the Scheldt River to navigation. The opening of the Scheldt and French annexation of parts of Belgium made war with Great Britain almost inevitable. The French then made an appeal of fraternity to the oppressed people of Europe, calling on them to throw off their oppressors. As this was also directed at Great Britain, it made the resolution of differences between the two states even more improbable. In the end, the French government declared war on Great Britain shortly after beheading Louis XVI in early 1793.

Pitt attempted to fight France the way his father had during the Seven Years War, by paying allies to divert French forces on the Continent and deploying the Royal Navy to attack French trade and

colonies overseas. Pitt's strategy was successful in the maritime and colonial sphere. The British captured French colonies in India and the Caribbean, and the British navy won a series of naval battles in the Channel and the Mediterranean which greatly decreased the strength of the French navy. Pitt's European strategy, however, failed miserably. French forces drove out the small army he sent to Belgium. He made loans to the Austrians and granted subsidies to the Prussians to fight the French, but these allies eventually withdrew from the war without driving the French from the Low Countries. The French army, swelled by the ranks of conscripted soldiers, fought with a revolutionary zeal against European armies, comprised largely of mercenaries, who did not have the same vested interest in the outcome of the war. By 1797, France had annexed parts of Belgium, Germany, and northern Italy. Austria and Prussia made peace with France. Spain and Holland, which had begun the war allied to the British, changed sides and joined the French.

Great Britain's other main strategic interest was the Mediterranean Sea. The British had valuable trading interests in the region, but its overriding strategic importance was illustrated by Napoleon Bonaparte's expedition to Egypt in 1798. The French occupation of Egypt, if it were followed by an invasion of Syria, threatened to give France control of the overland routes to India. A permanent French base could also threaten British trade in the Eastern seas. If the French opened a new trade route between Europe and the East through the Red Sea-Suez region (with a projected travel time between France and India of eleven weeks, half the time required for British trade around the Cape of Good Hope), such competition would undermine Great Britain's commercial monopoly in the region.⁵ It was for this reason that, in the autumn of 1800, Pitt's administration sent a costly expedition to Egypt to dislodge or neutralize the French presence, so that the French army would be removed as part of a comprehensive peace settlement.⁶

Bonaparte's expedition to Egypt also highlighted the significance of Malta, which was the most important strategic post in the Mediterranean. Bonaparte had captured Malta as a base for his invasion of

Egypt. In so doing, he demonstrated that the Knights of St. John, an international Catholic military order that for centuries had been responsible for protecting the neutrality of the island, could no longer defend Malta. In 1799, the British invaded Malta, defeated the French, and retained a British garrison on the island. The security of British naval interests in the Mediterranean and imperial interests in India required that Malta be secure from French control. British possession of Malta, however, threatened French interests in the Mediterranean. There was also a Russian angle to this issue, as Tsar Paul I, the honorary grand master of the Knights of St. John, wanted the island to be restored to them, free of either French or British control. Therefore, British policy on Malta had an important impact on both Anglo-French and Anglo-Russian relations.

Bonaparte's invasions of Malta and Egypt helped Pitt forge a Second Coalition with Russia and Austria, who also opposed French interference in the Ottoman Empire, to which Egypt belonged. The new coalition experienced initial success during the campaign season of 1799, when Russian and Austrian forces drove the French back through Switzerland and Italy and an Anglo-Russian expedition invaded Holland. The failure of the allies to coordinate strategy or devise compatible war aims, however, weakened the alliance and allowed the French to regain the initiative. The Anglo-Russian forces withdrew from Holland and the French army drove the Russians and Austrians back across Switzerland and northern Italy. By the end of 1800, the Russians had withdrawn from the war and the French had defeated the Austrians decisively in Italy and Austria.

Some British historians of the period have argued that this represented a stalemate between the predominant sea and land powers with neither being able seriously to threaten the other. These assessments fail to appreciate the desperate nature of Great Britain's strategic position.⁷ French control of Western and Southern Europe posed a considerably greater threat to British interests than British command of the sea did to French. The British economy was more dependent on international trade than was the French, and Great Britain's most important markets were in Europe. French control of

the Mediterranean and Channel ports almost completely severed important British trade links with Europe. Closer to home, the French were in better position to invade Great Britain than the British were to invade France. Far from having fought France to a stalemate, Great Britain was at a considerable disadvantage.

Great Britain's naval policies had also provoked the enmity of other states. The Royal Navy frequently boarded neutral ships in international waters to seize contraband of war destined for France. Denmark and Sweden tried to take over French trade that had been disrupted by the British blockade of French ports, and the Danes and Swedes became extremely annoyed with British interference. They turned to the tsar for protection.⁸ The result was that Russia, Denmark, Sweden, and Prussia signed the convention of the League of Armed Neutrality in 1800–1801. The convention had two important results. First, the League denied the British access to Baltic trade in grain and naval stores—masts, tar, pitch, and hemp—which were vital to the Royal Navy. This caused the price of grain in Great Britain to rise and led to severe shortages in some areas. Second, Great Britain was virtually in a state of war against all of Europe, and the Royal Navy had to face the combined naval strength of France and the northern powers.⁹

The Anglo-French War between 1793 and 1801 illustrated several important points about the capacity of Great Britain to wage a Continental war. The British had not won a European war without the assistance of Great Power allies since the triumph of Henry V over the French at Agincourt in 1415. Geography and manpower worked against them. Great Britain was primarily a naval and commercial power on the periphery of Europe and lacked a permanent base on the Continent. Its population was considerably smaller than that of France, Austria, or Russia. This, combined with a political culture characterized by a strong aversion to standing armies, rendered the British unable to compete with the larger armies of the other Great Powers. The result was that the British alone could not defeat the French in battle. The North Sea and the English Channel acted as a defensive barrier for the British, but hampered their ability to put

troops into the Continental battlefields. Even the largest British fleet was not capable of delivering a sufficient number of troops into a decisive battle. The Royal Navy could gain command of the seas, but this was insufficient to force the French to retreat from regions of vital British interest. The best the British could achieve on their own was to capture overseas colonies, win celebrated naval battles, and establish naval blockades.

Assertions that Great Britain was the strongest power in the world and recent historical analyses of the foundations of British power obscure an essential point about the nature of that power.¹⁰ Power is relative: relative to other states, relative to particular fields of interest or geographic locations. State power is significant only to the extent that it can preserve the fundamental interests of that state. Despite having the strongest navy, the most extensive colonial empire, and the greatest commercial and financial wealth in the world, Great Britain's most essential economic and strategic interests lay in Western Europe, where on its own it could not defend those interests against Revolutionary and Napoleonic France. Great Britain may have been the most powerful state in the world, but it could not exercise that power effectively where it mattered most. The other Great Powers knew that Europe was the only theater of war that really mattered. That is why they considered the British contribution to the allied war effort to be of secondary importance.

In order to defeat the French, the British required the assistance of allies with larger military resources and the ability to put them into the field effectively. The Russians, Austrians, and Prussians were not, however, always prepared to fight at the prompting of the British or for British strategic interests. Pitt used British gold to entice Continental allies to fight for British interests, but did not succeed. The Russians, Austrians, and Prussians would fight the French only when it was in their interests and they were militarily and financially prepared. The British were at the mercy of developments on the Continent, over which they had little control. By early 1801, Continental politics had left the British in a dangerous situation indeed.¹¹

The French Revolutionary Wars of 1792–1801 were complicated by

factors of ideology and nationalism. The wars were fought primarily for strategic interests, but the ideological differences between the French Republic and the monarchies of Europe intensified the existing antagonism. The French feared that defeat in war would lead to a restoration of the monarchy, while European monarchies feared that defeat would lead to their overthrow and replacement by republics. From the British point of view, Pitt never claimed that the restoration of the French monarchy was one of Great Britain's war aims, and he did not stipulate that he would not negotiate with the Republic, but he doubted whether any peace settlement could remain secure until there was political stability in France. He also adopted a policy of assisting French counter-revolutionary forces against the Republic, which made the French government distrustful of him, rendering a peace settlement even more difficult. The king and some members of the British cabinet did believe, however, that the restoration of the French monarchy should be one of Great Britain's war aims, and they opposed negotiating with French republicans.

There was also a national animosity between the British and the French. The sense of British national identity that emerged during the eighteenth century was centered largely on antipathy to France.¹² As Great Britain was a culturally and ethnically diverse island, the people derived a sense of unity not from characteristics common to its inhabitants but from their distinctiveness from the rest of the world.¹³ In this way, the British distinguished themselves from France, their greatest commercial, military, and cultural rival.¹⁴ Popular patriotic societies, such as the Anti-Gallican Association formed in 1745, were established to combat French cultural influence in Great Britain by promoting British commerce, manufacturing, and indigenous artistic achievement, while denigrating French fashions, food, and literature.¹⁵

This general antipathy toward France carried over into politics. The British identity defined itself in terms of Protestantism and parliamentary government, in contrast to the Catholicism and arbitrary monarchy of eighteenth-century France and to the atheism and republicanism of Revolutionary France. It was common for both radicals and conservatives to tar their political enemies as dupes of the

French. The series of wars fought between Great Britain and France over the course of the eighteenth century also created the impression that the two states were natural enemies, reminiscent of rivals Rome and Carthage. These nationalist ideas and emotions supported proponents of an anti-French foreign policy, and often fettered the government when British diplomatic interests required an accommodation with France. Foreign policy initiatives that appeared to be pro-French were considered unpatriotic. These feelings ran so strong during times of war that some Englishmen supported fighting France to the end and opposed peace terms that were in any way favorable to France.¹⁶ This made Anglo-French treaties of peace even more difficult to negotiate.

Pitt's inability to win the war or negotiate peace created military and diplomatic crises, and precipitated a serious social crisis that further hampered the government's ability to fight the war. Great Britain experienced a general war weariness that verged on violent dissatisfaction, as the rich were pinched by high levels of taxation and the poor by the high price of grain.¹⁷ The crops of 1799 and 1800 were deficient owing to poor weather. Between January 1800 and March 1801 the price of wheat tripled. As bread was the staple diet of many people, hunger became widespread and resulted in an unprecedented series of massive food riots across Great Britain.¹⁸ Demanding a fair price for bread, large groups of the poor intimidated bakers, corn factors, and farmers. Workers and the unemployed attacked rural farmers who inflated their prices.¹⁹ Protest against high prices often merged with protest against the war, as many blamed the war for price inflation.²⁰ There was truth in this assumption, as the war prevented the importing of adequate food supplies from the Continent.²¹ The British could obtain no grain from France, and Great Britain's dispute with the League of Armed Neutrality cut Baltic supplies of grain, which had provided more than 75 percent of British imports.²²

The poor and the lower classes were not the only ones affected: the grain crisis also precipitated a drastic and widespread economic recession that caused the domestic market for British commodities to collapse, coinciding with the loss of major European markets for

British goods.²³ While the war provided certain economic benefits (such as stimulating demand for shipbuilding, armaments, and clothing for the armed forces), and new colonial conquests provided sources of raw materials, the war also created large numbers of unemployed who were displaced from traditional industries. At the local level, this caused industrial and commercial decline. The middle and upper classes, already losing revenue because their tenants defaulted on their rents, at the same time had to pay higher prices for goods and higher taxes to finance the war, while making larger contributions to poor relief in order to prevent a severe famine.²⁴

The government was in serious financial difficulty. By 1800, Great Britain was importing more than it was exporting and the value of the pound had dropped against European currencies.²⁵ Government borrowing to finance the war also restricted short-term credit available to commerce and industry and drove up long-term interest rates.²⁶ Many industrialists and financiers believed that Great Britain required peace, and the stock market noticeably fluctuated in relation to the prospects for peace.²⁷

These dire social and economic conditions gave members of the British establishment grounds to fear social revolution. While high grain prices and food riots had occurred often in the past without causing serious alarm, the revolutionary context of the 1790s provided an added dimension to the danger posed by the social unrest. The example of the French Revolution and the publication of radical pamphlets gave an ideological impetus to protest against the existing system of government. A working-class political movement arose in support of parliamentary reform. When this political protest began to use language that verged on sedition, Pitt responded by curbing the activities of radicals through legislation, and in 1794 their leaders were arrested for treason. In 1797, sailors in the Thames and Channel fleets mutinied over poor pay and living conditions. The greatest threat to British security, however, was the Irish Rebellion of 1798. Ireland, with its predominantly Catholic population, posed a strategic liability to Great Britain whenever it was at war with Catholic states in Europe, because the island was an excellent base for an invasion of Great

Britain. British legislation that denied Catholics basic political rights and the brutal manner in which English absentee landlords treated their Irish tenants eventually provoked a rebellion by both Catholics and Protestants. Although British forces quelled the rebellion, British strategic interests remained insecure. As Irish rebels continued to correspond with the French government, British officials expected that another rebellion would coincide with a French invasion.

By 1801, ministers and local officials believed that there was an important connection between food riots and revolutionary insurrection in England. They feared that although most of the rioters were only responding to the distress of the moment, a small group of revolutionaries was trying to use scarcity as an excuse to incite general discontent.²⁸ The regions where the most serious unrest occurred, such as Nottingham, Yorkshire, Lancashire, and Norwich, were also the centers of skilled artisan labor and the focus of the most extensive activity of the English and Irish revolutionary underground.²⁹ This mixture of radical ideology, underground organization, unstable industrial relations, and widespread famine was a recipe for insurrection.

The British government felt that it had to take serious measures in the defense of order, but suppressing unrest required armed force. With crises erupting in every region of the kingdom, there were insufficient resources to meet the challenge. Ireland had been relatively quiet since the rebellion of 1798, but lingering uncertainty required a commitment of 16,000 regular infantry and 10,000 cavalry to maintain order.³⁰ Diverting troops to quell unrest also tied up a large number of British troops needed to fight the French. In order to release more regular troops from the task of suppressing unrest, local authorities often employed regiments of volunteer soldiers as police forces. The experience of the food riots of 1800 brought this policy into question, as volunteers sometimes disobeyed their officers and joined the rioters. This underlined a frightening and real prospect. In the event that rioting became widespread, Great Britain's military resources might not be able to cope if some of the security forces refused to fight or joined the insurrection. The governing classes were

an active minority surrounded by an indifferent multitude, and, during a crisis, the government justifiably feared that it might be deserted by high and low alike.³¹ This risk increased as the social, commercial, and military crises persisted. An organized revolutionary movement did exist, and although social factors mitigated against a social revolution along French lines, these factors worked largely below the surface of events and were not obvious to contemporaries.³² The culmination of these military, economic, and social crises led to a change in government in 1801 by which Henry Addington became prime minister of Great Britain.

Addington was the first prime minister who was not related either by blood or by marriage to the formal aristocracy. The Addingtons were gentry who had owned land in Oxfordshire since the fourteenth century. By the time Henry Addington took office in 1801, he owned land in Berkshire, Wiltshire, and Devon. Addington's father, Anthony, came to be renowned as a physician. While Addington's political antagonists exploited his father's profession in order to label him as "middle class" and thus unsuited to the office of prime minister, it should be noted that Dr. Addington was not an ordinary physician. He had been educated at Winchester and Trinity College, Oxford. He had money from land and the opportunity to pursue the more orthodox career paths for members of his social background, but the experience of a near fatal illness while at Oxford sparked a keen interest in medicine. Dr. Addington specialized in mental illness, a field in which little work had been done, and one that had become particularly fashionable and revered. Consequently, it granted him entry to the aristocracy. In 1752, he moved to London and eventually became an important member of the Royal College of Physicians. Dr. Addington became celebrated among the great houses of London as an expert on mental illness, having successfully treated William Pitt, the Elder. He was also one of the physicians consulted about the king's illness during the Regency Crisis of 1788–89. Among the most illustrious members of his profession, he made enough of a fortune from his work to purchase the valuable estate of Upton in Devon. Nevertheless, members of the aristocracy and their allies would later tar Henry

Addington with the pejorative nickname “the Doctor,” on account of his father’s profession.

Henry Addington was born in a house on Bedford Row near Gray’s Inn and Lincoln’s Inn in London on 30 May 1757. From a young age, Addington was social by nature and had a strong desire to be liked, which he retained throughout his life. Unable to develop close relationships with his parents (who sent him to boarding school at Cheam in Surrey when he was only five years old), he built strong relationships with his brother and sisters and acquired a large circle of close friends, many of whom would eventually become his political supporters. He made new friends when he went to Winchester School in 1768 and later at Oxford after 1774. He was a successful student but he did not allow his studies to prevent him from enjoying a social life. He played sports during his early years and spent evenings drinking with friends when he was at Oxford.

Addington demonstrated intelligence in school, attaining high marks in classes with boys several years his senior. One of his teachers at Cheam referred to him as a “genius.” At Winchester, he became the favorite student of a junior assistant, who inspired in Addington a lifelong devotion to the Protestant religion, characterized by regular church attendance and a strict sense of personal ethics that he would retain for the rest of his life. A fellow at Brasenose College, which had a reputation for serious study, Addington so loved his academic and social life at Oxford that he stayed on for an extra year after he finished his degree. He demonstrated his intellectual abilities in 1779, when he won the chancellor’s prize for the best English essay for a work entitled “The Affinity between Painting and Poetry in Point of Composition.”³³ The essay attested to his scholarship and his interest in art and poetry. He loved English and French literature, and would later become a great admirer of the poetry of Robert Burns. He also wrote poetry himself. The best example of his skill in this sphere is a clever metaphorical verse that he wrote one evening at Pitt’s home during the Regency Crisis. Addington took a line from the famous eighteenth-century poet Alexander Pope’s translation of *The Iliad* “So Shines the Moon pale regent of the Night” as the theme for a verse in heroic couplets (in imitation of Pope’s style) about how sup-

porters of the king viewed the prospect of a regency under the Prince of Wales.³⁴

After Addington left Oxford he trained as a barrister at Lincoln's Inn in 1780, but his personal life interfered with his training. He fell deeply in love with Ursula Mary Hammond, and married her in 1781 despite the objections of his father. This was significant in that Addington had little money of his own, and Ursula did not have a large dowry. Addington remained devoted and faithful to Ursula for thirty years, and she was a strong support to both his personal and political life. They had seven children upon whom they doted. Addington became so attached to his children that he would interrupt public business to be with them whenever they were seriously ill. Addington demonstrated early on that his family and friends were more important than to him than politics, and in this he never changed.

The most significant friendship that he developed as a boy was with Pitt. Addington met him when Dr. Addington began to treat Pitt the Elder in 1766. Addington was two years older than the shy and reserved young Pitt. Despite the social distinction between their fathers, Addington felt no sense of inferiority toward him. Addington and Pitt met again in 1780 at Lincoln's Inn, where Addington became one of Pitt's closest friends. Their friendship grew steadily during the early 1780s, even after Addington had settled with his wife in Southampton Street and Pitt had entered the House of Commons. Although Addington did not have a seat in Parliament, his friends assumed that his connection to Pitt would lead eventually to his involvement in politics. In early 1783, when Pitt was briefly chancellor of the Exchequer, Addington's friend and future brother-in-law Charles Bragge wrote, "When I left town, I thought the first post would bring me an account of your being called to the service of your country in some honourable station, under the auspices of your illustrious friend."³⁵ This proved premature, as Pitt was soon out of office. Addington met with Pitt after he became prime minister in December 1783, but Bragge was again disappointed when Addington did not receive a government office.

Addington was one of the many supporters of Pitt elected to the

House of Commons in 1784. His entry into Parliament was facilitated by James Manner Sutton, who had married Addington's sister Eleanor in 1771. Sutton had been M.P. for the borough of Devizes in Wiltshire, which had less than forty voters, and he exercised some influence with them. When Pitt called the election in March 1784, Sutton chose to withdraw from the contest and recommend Addington in his place. Although a number of other candidates took an interest in contesting the seat, all but one withdrew by the time of the vote, and Addington and the other were elected by acclamation. Addington was returned unanimously in 1790, 1796, and 1802, serving as the member for Devizes until his elevation to the House of Lords in 1805.

In his first few years at Westminster, Addington suffered from a lack of ambition and lack of confidence in his speaking ability, characteristics that would continue to hamper his political career. They kept him from taking a visible role in Parliament, even though Pitt persistently encouraged him to speak in the Commons. This did not mean that Addington was idle. He spent time learning about the history and traditions of Parliament. Although he made no speeches, he studied thoroughly the important political issues of the day. Addington was keenly interested in naval affairs and read extensively on the history and theories of taxation. He also took part in some administrative work. Eventually, Pitt decided to force Addington to overcome his reluctance to speak, and selected him to second the address in the House of Commons upon the opening of Parliament in 1786. Pitt wrote, "I will not disguise that in asking this favour of you, I look beyond the immediate object of the first day's debate from a persuasion that whatever induces you to take a part in public, will equally contribute to your personal credit and that of the system to which I have the pleasure of thinking you are so warmly attached."³⁶ Pitt believed that his friend had the potential to be an effective M.P. and an able administrator, if he could only overcome his personal insecurities and develop a greater sense of ambition.³⁷

The House received Addington's maiden speech favorably, but it was not enough to encourage him to overcome his reluctance to speak again for the remainder of the session. He did not make his sec-

ond speech until May 1787, when he spoke on an issue of taxation. Although it was on a subject in which he was particularly interested, he remained typically self-effacing as to his performance. His sister Charlotte, in describing the speech to their father, stated that Addington “acquitted himself so entirely to the expectation of his most sanguine friends, that they now are convinced he can never again feel more than a becoming embarrassment on a similar occasion.”³⁸

Pitt’s faith in Addington’s abilities did not waver and he remained determined that his friend should take a more active role in Parliament. In 1789, the right opportunity presented itself. The office of Speaker of the House of Commons became vacant when Pitt appointed the incumbent, his cousin, William Wyndham Grenville (later Lord Grenville), to the cabinet post of home secretary. Grenville’s brief five-month tenure as Speaker had not been popular and Pitt saw the advantages of appointing someone he thought could restore the respect of the House.³⁹ Addington’s knowledge, skills, and personality made him uniquely suited to this role. He had read extensively on the history and traditions of Parliament, and knew and understood the rules and practices of parliamentary procedure as well as anyone. From a technical perspective, his grasp of duties and responsibilities of the Speaker were unparalleled. Addington also possessed a remarkable breadth of mind. He had a rare ability to understand and sympathize with both sides of every issue. This did not mean that he was indecisive, for he made many difficult decisions throughout his career. He understood and respected differing points of view, and could see shades of gray where others saw only black and white.

Addington was also a natural diplomat. He was conciliatory and had the ability to put people at ease when speaking with them about political issues. Sylvester Douglas, Lord Glenbervie, a politician and diarist who often dined with Addington, described his manner of handling people:

He is a man of considerable address as well natural as acquired, much frankness of manner, but tempered with a sufficiency of reserve; willing enough to speak freely of men, as well as of political transactions and political questions, but that only when he has ascertained what

your opinion is. Not that he is insincere or weak enough to square his own to yours, but if he can he will colour and shade it in to yours if you seem to him to differ from him only in some reconcileable [*sic*] degree.⁴⁰

The desire to be liked that he exhibited in his childhood was also apparent in his political career. He knew how to get on the right side of people. In contrast to Pitt, whose cold and austere personality annoyed many backbenchers, Addington treated them with courtesy and respect. In fact, Pitt often needed to employ Addington to smooth personal relations between him and other M.P.s.⁴¹

Addington was also congenial enough to win the friendship and goodwill of many of those who might be thought his political opponents. Treating everyone with cordiality and respect made him universally liked, even among people who disagreed with his policies, beliefs, or actions. He was the only politician to have been, at different times, the favorite of both George III and George IV. The latter came to like and trust Addington more than the rest of the cabinet, including the prime minister, and insisted that he remain in the cabinet after his resignation of the Home Office in 1822. Although one of the closest friends of Pitt, Addington was also seen walking arm in arm with Fox. He was friends with two other leaders of the Whig party, the great conservative orator and philosopher Edmund Burke (for whom he served as pallbearer) and the playwright Richard Sheridan. Both Burke and Sheridan had been bitter enemies of Pitt. The most powerful woman within the Whig party—who was also a devoted follower of Fox—Georgiana, duchess of Devonshire, admitted that, despite her political differences with Addington, she liked him personally.⁴² Those who opposed him politically acknowledged that no one could question his honesty.⁴³

Although Addington was a close friend of Pitt, opposition members sensed an air of independence about him that set him apart from Pitt's young disciples, whom they held in contempt. Upon Addington's election as Speaker, Sheridan apologized for voting against him for reasons of party, though Addington was about as popular with all parties in the House of Commons as it was possible to be.⁴⁴ Adding-

ton rewarded their confidence by managing the business of the House with impartiality and a strong sense of fairness. Throughout his career as Speaker, he never lost the confidence of the House, and members of both the government and the opposition praised his conduct.

Addington developed a particularly close rapport with the ordinary, backbench county members. Many of the squires felt a social affinity with him that they did not feel with the leading members of the government and the opposition. They admired his attachment to principle, his even temper, and the respectful manner with which he treated people.⁴⁵ While they acknowledged the speaking abilities of Pitt and Fox, some M.P.s found Addington's simple and direct manner more reassuring.⁴⁶ Addington also developed a reputation for integrity, through his refusal to accept the types of honors and financial perks that many other politicians grasped at. He turned down the sinecures that were traditionally offered to the Speaker, even though the office did not provide remuneration sufficient for him to meet ceremonial and social duties expected of the office. He also demonstrated his impartiality by entertaining both the government and opposition. He invited government members of the House to dine on the first Saturday of every session, and opposition members the first Sunday, with similar functions throughout the year.

By 1801, Addington had served successfully as Speaker for twelve years and was not interested in higher office. He would have been satisfied to continue as Speaker indefinitely. Members on both sides of the House liked and respected him to an extent that would have been impossible had he been in a cabinet office. He had achieved all that he had desired from a political career. Political power held no attraction for him. It would take compelling circumstances to convince him to trade the comforts of the Speakership for the onerous duties of government.