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AT THE CROSSROADS: THE NULLIFICATION MOVEMENT
AND THE CRISIS OF MODERNIZATION

by

TIMOTHY KILLIKELLY

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in
Political Science in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University
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Abstract

AT THE CROSSROADS: THE NULLIFICATION MOVEMENT
AND THE CRISIS OF MODERNIZATION

by

Timothy Killikelly

Adviser: Professor Irving Leonard Markovitz

In the 1820's and 1830's the conflict over tariff policy led to a powerful social movement in South Carolina, the Nullification movement. This movement helped create a new Southern world view. The movement was psychologically connected to slave agrarianism, and found itself unnerved by changes that were occurring due to the modernization process.

The tremendous growth of textile manufacturing in Great Britain had direct impact on the cotton and textile industries in the United States. This caused great strain on the relationship of the North and the South. Although the South became dependent on the British, the planters felt threatened by the North's protective tariff policies, not the British and this perpetuated further dependency. The forces that contributed to this dependency were not merely economic, but ideological and cultural as well. The rise of white egalitarianism associated with the age of Jackson

could have threatened the planters' aristocratic hegemony. The planters' own attitudes towards work, industrialization, and education also strengthened its dependence.

The Nullifiers attempted to adapt to the modernization process by blending elements of what Louis Hartz refers to as the liberal and feudal fragments. This mix of the liberal and feudal fragments is central to understanding Nullification. The movement's liberal-feudal amalgamation is explored by examining the works of two Nullification leaders, James Hamilton, Jr. and Thomas Cooper. They reflected both the turmoil in South Carolina and the ambivalence of the Nullifier ideology. Ironically, Hamilton mobilized mass support for minority rule and slavery by taking advantage of the newly emerging white egalitarianism of the Jacksonian era. Cooper created a progressive defense of the slave system by using the ideas of the political economists. His work merged the feudal and liberal fragments into a new defense of the Southern slave system.

The Nullifiers were truly at the crossroads of the modern world. Although the British textile industry enriched them, they feared industrialization. Although they feared majority rule, they mobilized the white working class. They synthesized seemingly contradictory elements into a unique world view that served as the basis of Southern planter hegemony until the end of the Civil War.

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CHAPTER ONE

THE NULLIFICATION CRISIS IN COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE:

THE PROBLEM AND FRAMEWORK FOR ANALYSIS

THE PROBLEM

South Carolina at the time of the Nullification Crisis of 1832-33 was undergoing a crisis of modernization. The Nullification Crisis occurred when South Carolina claimed that individual states had the right to nullify federal law which it felt irreparably damaged the interests of their state. South Carolina wanted to nullify the Tariff of 1828, the so-called Tariff of Abominations, because it thought the tariff placed an unfair burden upon itself and the South by raising the tax on imported goods from around 33% to about 50%. Lurking behind the tariff question were the issues of slavery and abolition. The aristocratic Southern culture and world view were, in fact, created in the context of modernity. The arguments of the Southern aristocrats for slavery and sectionalism were increasingly modern, even as they sought to defend slavery and tradition.

This dissertation focuses on the Nullification movement and how the groups most intimately and psychologically connected to the slave agrarianism adapted to modernization. The Nullifiers alternately embraced modernity and defended tradition and reaction and ended with a unique synthesis. They called for radical solutions, then ultimately backed down and compromised. Their beliefs and actions reflected their deep ambivalence about the coming of the modern world. In trying to understand this process of adaptation and adjustment the focus of this thesis will be on Nullification

leaders, James Hamilton, Jr. and Thomas Cooper because their thoughts and actions reflect the ambivalence and turmoil South Carolina faced during the period of nullification. But neither these figures nor the issues that their actions raise have been studied in relation to themes of modernization that political scientists historically apply to contemporary "third world" countries.

Cyril E. Black states that "the process of modernization is too complex to be reduced to simple terms without the danger of grave distortion."¹ Martin J. Sklar's following description of the modernization process does include the essential elements to avoid the distortions Black warns about. I have categorized Sklar's description into five key characteristics of modernization.

1) Division of labor - nationally and internationally. "As national and international markets superseded local markets, ...division of labor generated both specialization and... integration... in production and exchange. Social relations devoted to production and exchange... and to accumulation and reinvestment..., resulted in... sustained economic growth... and significantly modified all other social relations."

2) Change in older status relations can lead the way to more democratic institutions. "Class distinctions based on relations... the market displaced status by birth... and created new status orders... in... politics and government."

3) Increase in urbanization. "As urban-industrial life... dominated rural-agricultural life, capitalists displaced the landed aristocracy and clergy... [as] the dominant economic and moral authority in society."

4) Intellectual transformations occur. "Forms of consciousness corresponding with market relations... infused with a technoscientific outlook... attained ascendancy over... other-worldly... and traditionally prescriptive modes of thoughts."

5) Free labor and free trade predominate. "Property

¹ Black, Cyril E. 1996. The Dynamics of Modernization: A Study in Comparative History. New York: Harper and Row. p. 9.

rights... and... labor-power, became freely salable or mobile, and subject to diminishing restraint from religion, custom, or other prescriptive norms."

"All of these developments tended to become interrelated and, whether in severe conflict or in mutual support, to generate relatively rapid change."²

James Hamilton, Jr.: Mass Organizer for Minority Rule

James Hamilton, Jr. was the South Carolina Nullifier who was critical in organizing mass electoral support for nullification. The antebellum South Carolinian leadership was often accused of being aristocratic and antidemocratic, but part of the Nullifiers' electoral campaign strategy was based on gathering increased support from previously unmobilized voters. Hamilton effectively mobilized public support for minority rule by taking advantage of the newly emerging white egalitarianism of the Jacksonian era. The organizing drive of the Nullifiers is described by Unionist Benjamin F. Perry, "They are constantly engaged in getting up meetings, adopting resolutions, forming societies, and distributing pamphlets and documents, the 'Union party' has been inactive and inert, opposed to public meetings and taking little interest in the politics of their country."³ Those previously inactive nonvoters who became politically active between 1830 and 1833 voted Nullifier 2-1.⁴ In the election of 1832 in Charleston the Nullifiers had organized

² Sklar, Martin J. 1992. The United States as a Developing Nation: Studies in United States in the Progressive Era and in the 1920's. Cambridge: University of Cambridge. p. 48-52.

³ Perry, Benjamin F. 1980. The Writings of Benjamin F. Perry. eds. Meats, Stephen and Arnold Edwin T. Spartanburg, S.C.: The Reprint Company Publishers. p. 258.

⁴ Pease, William H. and Jane H. 1981. "The Economics and Politics of Charleston's Nullification Crisis", The Journal of Southern History, 47, 358-360.

their way to victory. Although the Nullifiers were fearful of democracy and their notion of freedom was limited, they now operated, quite successfully, within the new institutions of democratic rule, a white egalitarian rule. They were on the cutting edge of modern techniques of democracy in mobilizing mass support, yet dreaded the effect the nation's democracy would have on them.

The Conflicting Ideas of Thomas Cooper

Thomas Cooper, the President of South Carolina College, was one of the most important Nullifier intellectuals. Understanding Cooper is critical to comprehend how a coherent defense of the slave system emerged in the context of modernity. Cooper used the classical theory of Adam Smith's political economy in slavery's defense in a fascinating, contradictory synthesis of political thought. "Political economy" was an emerging school of thought that after 1815 gained phenomenal rapid acceptance in political and intellectual circles over the older mercantilist school.⁵ Cooper's significance was that he reflected the Nullifiers' contradictions of how modern notions were embraced to defend aristocratic ways. The fact that leading Nullifiers, like Thomas Cooper, accepted Adam Smith's ideas enthusiastically shows how Nullifier thought was influenced by modern ideas about progress. They then used those ideas

⁵ Langer, Gary F. 1987. The Coming of Age of Political Economy, 1815-1825. New York: Greenwood Press. p. 2.

about progress for a "positive good" defense of slave labor. Thomas Cooper defended slavery as being the highest form of civilization because it provided more freedom to the greatest number of people and progress for the community. While Cooper did understand some of the economic problems slavery had in competing with free labor, the significance of his work was to merge the defense of slavery with "political economy" and view liberty and slavery as compatible.

Historical Background to the Problem

Slavery, order and patriarchy were the core values of South Carolina's leaders. The election of Jackson in 1828 had further institutionalized the rise of white male egalitarianism. The anti-egalitarian John C. Calhoun of South Carolina was Jackson's Vice President. The end of the Napoleonic Wars brought major changes in the world economy. The period from 1815-1836 was critical in the birth of modernity. Paul Johnson in his recent book, Birth of the Modern: World Society 1815-1830, states that modernization "could begin in full measure only when peace came and the immense new resources in finance, management, science and technology which were now available could be put to constructive use."⁶

Charles Sellers in his The Market Revolution: Jacksonian America 1815-1846 states that the "postwar boom ignited a generation of conflict over the republic's destiny. History's most revolutionary force, the capitalist market,

⁶ Johnson, Paul. 1991. The Birth of the Modern: World Society, 1815-1830. New York: Harper Collins. Preface xvii.

was wresting the American future from history's most conservative force, the land."¹

Of particular importance for the American South was the development of the British textile industry. The plantation economies went through cycles of boom and bust from 1815 on, but had a general decline in cotton prices from 1819. As the leaders of the South became closer economic allies of the British industrialists, their relations with nascent U.S. industrialists, merchants and their allies became weaker and sometimes hostile.

There was also a corresponding change in this period of ideas. "Political economy" had gained widespread acceptance. In South Carolina there was a shift from nationalist to sectionalist sentiment and thought. The North was now the exploiter, not the British. In 1833, the year of the Nullification Crisis, the British ended slavery in their colonies, after the development of strong abolitionist and humanitarian movements in Britain. This added to the pressure on the Nullifiers.

Why did Nullification occur in South Carolina and not in some other part of the South? South Carolina had special circumstances that exacerbated its fears of abolition. South Carolina had the highest ratio of slaves to free people of any state. In 1820, 51.4% of the population were slaves and

¹ Sellers, Charles. 1991. The Market Revolution: Jacksonian America, 1815-1846. New York: Oxford University Press. p. 4.

in 1830 it had grown to 54.3%.⁸ Louisiana was the only other state in 1820 or 1830 with a majority slave population with 50.8% in 1830.⁹ Moreover, the swamp regions of the state were infected by malaria and the absentee rate of the planters was high. Although some blacks did get sick and die, they tended to be much more immune than whites. These circumstances created an extreme degree of fear of a slave rebellion, particularly after the Denmark Vesey slave revolt of 1822 in Charleston. Slaves, because of the relative absence of their white masters and whites in general, did preserve more of their African traditions than in other parts of the South. Whites had become somewhat more aware of this after 1822 and it only increased their fears.

The Nullifiers felt besieged. The British government was about to eliminate slavery in its colonies. The Northern states were often hostile to their interests and way of thinking. The rise of white male egalitarianism threatened their hegemony over the white population and possibly their slaves. They found themselves at the crossroads of the modern world.

Ideological Contradictions of the Nullifiers

The Nullifiers were caught in an important ideological

⁸ A Century of Population Growth, 1790-1900. 1901. United States Census. p. 82. Green, Duff. 1832. Abstract of the Returns of the 5th Census. p. 22.

⁹ Green, Duff. 1832. Abstract of the Returns of the 5th Census. p. 33.

contradiction. They were the most vociferous advocates of free trade. They did not want a tariff designed to protect Northern infant industries. Free trade meant that all markets were open and that British textile industries would have open access to Southern cotton without any possible tariff or quota retaliation. The British, however, not only needed free trade, they also needed free labor. The Nullifiers did not want free trade if it also meant free labor. The Nullifiers depended on an argument which, carried to its logical conclusion, would threaten the institutions that they so adamantly defended. The Nullifiers were caught between trying to have to resolve the problem of an argument that served their short-term interests, but was fraught with serious long-term contradictions. To make matters worse, the British were becoming increasingly powerful vis-a-vis the South due in part to the economic backwardness of slavery relative to British and Northern industrialism. This was part of the crisis of modernization.

Abolitionism, Industrialization, Urbanization and Democracy,
at Home and Abroad

The growth of the abolitionist movement and industrial capitalism were closely related. The abolitionist and humanitarian movements first started in Great Britain. As the economy of Great Britain expanded and diversified into industrialism, the ideological contradictions between slave labor and free labor became more pronounced. This was

related to the growth of urbanization. As cities grew and diversified they also developed a unique culture and world view. It was the great industrial boom that led to the spectacular growth of British cities, and in turn the abolitionist movement developed from that urban culture. The same process was occurring in the United States on a smaller scale, mostly in the Northern cities.

In South Carolina, urbanization also played a significant role. At the same time that Charleston declined economically, its cultural importance to the agrarian South grew. The city's intellectuals increasingly sought to expand its sectional role. Charleston played an important symbolic role as the "capital of Southern Civilization".

"Ironically, by codifying and elaborating their culture, Charlestonians had transformed it. To the extent they had given voice to the Plantation South, They had urbanized - civilized - the planter regime."¹⁰

The modernizing effect of a declining urban center played a major role in shaping the voice of the Southern aristocrats. The aristocratic Southern voice was created in the context of modernity. The arguments of the Southern aristocrats for slavery and sectionalism increasingly had to meet modern standards, even as they sought to defend slavery and tradition.

The Denmark Vesey revolt in Charleston in 1822 also

¹⁰ Moltke-Hansen, David. 1986. "The Expansion of Intellectual Life: A Prospectus." in Intellectual Life in Antebellum Charleston. eds. O'Brien, Michael and Moltke-Hansen, David. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press. p. 43.

reflects the influence of the liberal tradition among the Charleston black population. Denmark Vesey himself was a free black sailor. The free black sailors who came to the port of Charleston on British or Haitian ships were influenced by the rhetoric of freedom from the French Revolution, British reformers and Northerners from the United States. They were able to make arrangements for work and had money to spend. Sailors, local free blacks and "city slaves" were the most influenced by the liberal tradition and were the leaders of the revolt.

There was also a relationship between the growth of the abolitionist movement in Great Britain and the growth of democracy. The passage of the Reform Act of 1832 enlarged the voting population to include more of the middle-class. In the United States, the course of similar events was different in Great Britain. Democratic institutions and the expansion of voting rights to all white men was nearly complete by 1832. Increasing participation had already had an impact on American politics. Andrew Jackson was the President and his appeal had been to these new voters. The abolitionists in the United States were insignificant compared to the British. Because Jackson's coalition was largely agrarian it included slaveholders as well as "free farmers", and a white egalitarianism emerged that specifically excluded blacks and Native Americans. Race had a great impact on the internal politics in the United States

in a way that it did not in Great Britain. In Britain, slavery was an economic and moral issue that was removed from its internal politics because it did not exist as an institution in Great Britain itself. This made it politically possible to connect abolitionism and the growth of democratic institutions in Great Britain.

Abolitionism, industrialization, urbanization and a growing democratization appear to be related phenomena. The coming together of these changes all at once was what gave the Nullifiers their sense of fear. The confluence of these forces created the crisis of modernization that the Nullifiers were attempting to deal with.

Framework for Analysis

In developing a framework to look at the Nullification movement's response to the modernization process, I will look at three relevant variables.

1) The international context. Changes in the Transatlantic economy and the cultural hegemony of the newly emerged international business community influenced Cooper and Hamilton. In particular, trade with the British directly effected South Carolina's shift from nationalism to sectionalism which was at the core of the Nullifiers' world view. The contradiction of being pro-free trade, Adam Smith disciples and anti-free labor reflected the Nullifiers' attempt to wed elements of the liberal and feudal fragments in a coherent world view.

2) The domestic politics. The world view of the Nullifiers and the internal politics within South Carolina and in the United States limited their effective strategic responses to the crisis. The high ratio of black slaves to whites in the sea islands and lowcountry created tremendous apprehension among whites and this was a factor in the development of the Nullification movement. Nullifier electoral mobilization managed by Hamilton was impacted by the growth of Jacksonian democracy. The decline of

Charleston as an urban trading center relative to other seaports was a major cause in the development of Nullification and of Charleston becoming the center of the ideology of Southern civilization.

3) The political and economic space for the leaders. The Compromise Tariff worked out between Calhoun and Clay and the Nullifiers' reluctant acceptance of it shows that room existed for leaders to maneuver to make new arrangements as a response to the crisis. This reflects some shared values of the liberal tradition. But South Carolinian Nullifiers and ultimately the Southern planters were reluctant to accept industrialization and the labor relations of the North, the West and Great Britain.

This thesis seeks to offer an original contribution to the literature on modernization by answering the following questions: How did Hamilton use the democratic institutions to organize a popular mobilization for the defense of slavery and minority rule? Did his political activity and private thoughts reflect a unique amalgam of what Louis Hartz refers to as the liberal and feudal fragments?¹¹ How did Cooper use the work of the political economists to create a progressive defense of slavery? Did Cooper's public writings and private letters also reflect the liberal and feudal fragments?

This thesis also seeks to make an original theoretical

¹¹ Hartz, Louis. 1964. The Founding of New Societies. New York: Harcourt Brace. Hartz, Louis. 1955. p. 3. The Liberal Tradition in America. New York: Harcourt Brace. p. 3-4 In The Founding of New Societies, Hartz states that a fragment is part "of the larger whole of Europe... detached from the whole of it, and hurled onto new soil." Once it is on its own "it loses the stimulus towards change that the whole provides. It lapses into a kind of immobility." In The Liberal Tradition in America, Hartz admits that he is using "broad terms", like liberal and feudal, "broadly here." Liberalism he uses in "the classic Lockian sense" and feudalism, he states, "refers technically to the institutions of the medieval era."

contribution by answering the following questions: What role did ideology and local culture play in South Carolina's relative lack of development? What impact did international industrialization have on the Nullifiers' thinking? How did the Nullifiers integrate British, Northern, and Southern institutions into one systemic thought? What role do such factors as industrialization, local and international ideology and culture play in the development process? Was the feudal fragment much stronger in antebellum South Carolina's political culture than Hartz estimates?

MODERNIZATION AND DEPENDENCY LITERATURE

Often overlooked in the modernization and dependency literature is the antebellum American South, a region that was in many ways more like Latin America and the Caribbean in economic arrangements than the American North. The relative lack of interest in studying the problems of development in the antebellum American South is puzzling considering how Southern cotton was central in the development of British industrial capitalism which eventually led to British domination during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

CULTURE AND IDEOLOGY IN THE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

Dependency Theory: Little Attention Paid to Culture and Ideology

This thesis demonstrates that strategies for development are influenced by culture and ideology,

particularly the ability of the ruling groups to create what Antonio Gramsci calls "hegemony" over society. This adaptation process is a central concern of this thesis.

The lack of the inclusion of culture and ideology in dependency theory leaves it without a key element in understanding how a dependent nation or region could develop a successful adaptation strategy that could reduce dependency or even escape it. Eugene Genovese's critique of Andre Gunder Frank's dismissal of feudalism as relevant in Latin America, is particularly significant to the formation of my view of the antebellum South and the nature of the development process itself. Genovese argues that Frank's problem "stems from his singular concern with economics... When he implicitly dismisses subsistence and nonmarket economic relations as either insignificant or one more manifestation of colonial capitalism, he ceases to make sense. But more serious is his implicit equation of economics... with culture and therefore specifically with ideology... It is one thing to argue that European capitalism has intruded itself into every part of the world and has exploited and subjugated the most diverse peoples, societies and social systems; but it is quite another to argue that therefore every such people, society, and social system has become one more variant of bourgeois culture."¹²

In the midst of what was the most bourgeois culture on earth, antebellum America without a feudal tradition, the South exhibited strong "feudal" elements mixed with bourgeois thought and sought to create its own hegemony and ideology and had striking similarities with Latin America

¹² Genovese, Eugene D. 1971. In Red and Black: Marxian Explorations in Southern and Afro-American History. New York: Pantheon Books. p. 385-386.

and its feudal tradition. My focus would be on how that "world" culture of a cosmopolitan international business community is internalized by the different groups in the periphery. This interaction is not a new phenomena. For example, in viewing Nullification, I ask the following: How did Cooper incorporate the local culture and outlook of the new international industrialists into a progressive defense of slavery? What implications did this defense have for economic and political development? How did the cosmopolitan city slaves incorporate the liberal tradition of the era into their worldview? How did James Hamilton, Jr. democratically organize white public sentiment for a defense of minority rights and slavery? How did the white farmers and mechanics mix Nullification with Jacksonian democracy?

The Nullification Crisis: Applying Culture and Ideology to
A Dependent Situation.

Of direct concern to this dissertation is how the leaders of the Nullifiers, who felt less powerful in their relations with other dominant groups in the nation and the world, created its unique world view. The Southern nationalists, as exemplified by the Nullifiers, did not adapt well to the coming of modernization. They participated in their own economic and political dependence. Not a dependence necessarily created by themselves, but worsened by their inability to develop a successful adaptation strategy to industrialization and modernization.

Historically, the antebellum Southern planters were by no means the worst in adapting. In fact, I argue that the strange combination of, what Louis Hartz refers to as, the liberal and feudal fragments helped them develop some success in coping with dependence. Thomas Cooper drew from the liberal fragment the thought of Adam Smith to defend the feudal fragment of the Southern slave system. James Hamilton, Jr. used the liberal fragment democratic institutional arrangements of the nation to organize white public sentiment to defend the feudal fragment ways of the old South. But figures on a number of indices of modernization bear out that compared to the more liberal societies of the American North, the American West and Great Britain, the South lagged behind. The South had less money, less industry, fewer libraries and a smaller percentage of urbanization than these other societies.

In South Carolina, different groups, the Nullifier leadership, the Charleston white working-class and the slaves all had one thing in common. They either viewed or acted in the world in ways that increased their region's dependence on international industrialists. The Nullifiers feared industrialization and internal improvements projects. Although more dependent on the British than the North, they admired the British while despising the North. The slavery system itself helped create what Robert Keohane called

"growth without development" in the region.¹³ The Nullifiers blamed the protective tariff for their dependency, but not all South Carolinians agreed. The Unionist Greenville Mountaineer argued that "the Northern people are an industrious, frugal and economical people. The citizens of the South are...idle, extravagant and uncalculating in the management of their business."¹⁴ The white mechanics and artisans from Charleston identified with the planters, abhorred the slaves and joined Nullification to gain dignity, which came from being white, to the detriment of the region's development. The city slaves' acceptance of the dominant American liberal tradition led to resentment and rebellion. This was the only group that by rebelling, in effect, pushed for economic and political modernization and development. But the effect of the Denmark Vesey revolt actually led to further dependence for the region. The unsuccessful revolt led to greater repression from South Carolina leaders and further entrenched the whites' feudal fragment characteristics. This became a significant cause in development of the Nullification movement.

The rest of the chapters of this dissertation will answer the questions that I have proposed about

¹³ Keohane, Robert O. 1983. "Associative American Development, 1776-1860: Economic Growth and Political Disintegration." in Antinomies of Interdependence: National Welfare and the International Division of Labor. ed. Ruggie, John Gerard. New York: Columbia University. p. 67.

¹⁴ Greenville Mountaineer. September 22, 1832.

Nullification and modernization earlier in this chapter.

Chapter Two examines the Nullification's political and economic crises and their relationship to the broad theoretical debates on modernization. Special attention is paid to the role of ideology and culture.

Chapter Three focuses on the internal political context of Jacksonian America and its impact on Nullification.

Chapter Four focuses on the role of James Hamilton, Jr. as a mobilizer of public sentiment and the driving force behind the Nullifiers' electoral success. His political activity and thought will provide insight into how the Nullifiers used democratic institutions to agitate for a defense of slavery and tradition to create a crisis of legitimacy.

Chapter Five centers on the turbulent modernizing changes occurring in the Transatlantic economy and its impact on the relations among the British, the American South, North and West. This chapter seeks to show how the interaction among these forces shaped the economic and political developments that fueled the Nullification movement.

Chapter Six highlights the thought of Thomas Cooper. Specifically, his use of the ideas of the "political economists" in creating a progressive defense of slavery. His thought sheds light on the influences from both inside South Carolina and the outside world on the Nullification

movement.

Chapter Seven summarizes my conclusions.

CHAPTER TWO

THE POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC CRISES OF NULLIFICATION

INFLUENCES ON FRAMEWORK AND THESIS

There are several central thinkers who have played a significant role in the development of this thesis. The work of Eugene Genovese, Antonio Gramsci, Louis Hartz and Barrington Moore Jr. have helped shaped the argument.

Genovese and Gramsci have been influential in this dissertation; Genovese, because of what he directly says about the antebellum South, and Gramsci, for showing how ruling classes maintain themselves through the consent of the population by developing what he calls "hegemony" and "common sense".¹⁵ Genovese is a Gramscian. He understands the crucial role that economic arrangements and social structure play, but views economics as intimately tied to cultural and ideological influences in the overall hegemonic process. Gramsci's main contribution was his emphasis on the importance of cultural and ideological, rather than mere economic factors, which are emphasized in a more economistic Marxism. Genovese, in his The Political Economy of Slavery analyzes the crisis of 1860 in the South in the following way. "This crisis must not be confused with an economic crisis of either a cyclical or secular type." It was instead a "general crisis" that "manifested itself in all spheres of life...The general crisis had its economic as well as political, social, ideological and psychological aspects but was not essentially an economic crisis. It was the crisis of a social class and of the civilization it was painfully

¹⁵ Adamson, Walter L. 1980. Hegemony and Revolution: A Study of Antonio Gramsci's Political and Cultural Theory. Berkeley: University of California Press. passim.

trying to build."¹⁶ This crisis was a threat to the planters' "hegemony" and viability brought on in part by economic considerations. Again, Genovese states that economics alone is not the reason for the crisis, "To speak of the [economic] viability of the South is meaningless; of slavery misleading. It is the political viability of the slaveholders, [my note: of their continued "hegemony"] and the necessary economic basis of that viability that are in question."¹⁷

Genovese is describing a modernization crisis.

In discussing the antebellum South, the aristocratic cultural aspects of the Southern ruling class and its habits and codes of behavior become relevant. Genovese mentions one difference of Southern, compared to Northern, ruling class style was "the high propensity to consume - and squander... Precapitalist landowning classes generally exhibit such a propensity, which arises naturally from their relationship to labor and other classes."¹⁸

The Southern slave system was a different type of capitalist society. Capitalist, but hardly bourgeois.

Hegemony, in Gramsci's conception, is "Consent given by the great masses of the population to the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group; this consent is 'historically' caused by the prestige (and consequent confidence) which the dominant group enjoys because of its position and function in the world of production."¹⁹

¹⁶ Genovese, Eugene D. 1961. The Political Economy of Slavery: Studies in the Economy & Society of the Slave South. New York: Pantheon Books. p. 284-285.

¹⁷ *ibid.* p. 283.

¹⁸ *ibid.*

¹⁹ Gramsci, Antonio. 1971. Selections from the Prison Notebooks. eds. Hoare, Quintin and Smith, Geoffrey Nowell. London: Unwin Brothers. p. 12.

Gramsci's idea of hegemony is an important theoretical tool in understanding how a class comes to power and maintains itself. Hegemony is reached by consent and instituted by civil society, which Gramsci says is "the ensemble of organisms commonly called 'private.'"²⁰

NULLIFICATION AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN ALTERNATIVE HEGEMONY

The intellectual climate in Charleston in the 1820's and 1830's bred the planters' attempt to create a hegemonic ideology. They were trying to create an alternative hegemony based on a somewhat different set of ideals than the liberal values that prevailed in the rest of the nation. They largely succeeded in developing this vision and achieved mass white acceptance of these values. In the North and the West another set of values based on the dignity of free labor and social mobility developed. The North, South and West all accepted an egalitarian social mobility model for whites and a racial inferiority argument for blacks. This was a key element in forging a working society for whites with liberal values. But the free labor vs. slave labor debate was the central fault line in their world views. The clash of these visions ultimately led to the Civil War. Gramsci argues that before a class can truly create hegemony it must "raise the great mass of the population to a particular cultural and moral level, a level which correspond to the needs of the productive forces and hence the interests of the ruling class."²¹

²⁰ *ibid.*

²¹ *ibid.* p. 258.

COMMON SENSE AND HEGEMONY

Free trade and liberalism were part of the "common sense" of the Nullifiers' ideology. But liberalism without free trade was "common sense" in the North. The idea of white supremacy was also "common sense" for whites as a whole. They accepted this "common sense" because it brought them dignity in the overall liberal hegemony of American life. Creating a new hegemony in Southern life meant defending slave labor in terms of the liberal ideas of progress. Gramsci, as a Marxist, wanted to create an alternative hegemony to bourgeois ideology, and he wanted to understand how this process occurred. He developed the idea of "common sense". For Gramsci, "common sense" is "the folklore of philosophy and is always halfway between folklore... and the philosophy of science and economics of the specialists."²² If looked at in terms of the development of hegemony, "common sense" can be seen not only as prescriptive from a Marxist point of view, but also as observation on historical processes. The "common sense" that develops always has contradictory elements within it. According to Gramsci, it is the job of the intellectuals both to use and attack the existing "common sense" to help create an alternative hegemony. Then through this dialectic process, they bring the masses around to a new world view through persuasion. This was occurring in South Carolina in

²² Gramsci, Antonio. 1971. Selections from the Prison Notebooks. eds. Hoare, Quintin and Smith, Geoffrey Nowell. London: Unwin Brothers. p. 326.

the development of the Nullification Crisis. Thomas Cooper incorporated the ideas of Adam Smith, Jeremy Bentham, and Thomas Malthus into a defense of slave labor.

STRONG AND WEAK STATES

The North had what Gramsci called a "strong" state because it used consent rather than force to rule. The South, and South Carolina especially, had a "weak" state because its primary economic relationship was based on coercion since slightly over 50% of South Carolina were slaves. Its "weakness" came from relying on force and not consent. But the planters developed consent among the whites based on the beliefs of white supremacy and social mobility. The pro-slavery defense that emerged in the late 1810's and 1820's was the turning point for the development of a new hegemony for the white South. In South Carolina, this ideology united the moderate and radical Nullifiers. The moderate Nullifiers, like Calhoun, wanted to preserve a Southern heritage in the context of the liberal values of the United States. The more radical Nullifiers, like Cooper, were anxious to develop the South's own values and institutions, but which would also include some liberal values.

CULTURE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Gramsci's focus on the development of values to the maintenance of a power structure ruled by a class conscious of itself and believing in its own ethical standing is

important to understanding economic development. Samuel P. Huntington is correct that modernization creates instability and that strong institutions help guide a society through this process to reach modernity.²³ This means, in Gramscian terms, that a strong hegemonic rule is one key to economic development. Societies with a strong feudal fragment, Latin America and the South, were less successful in creating economic development than the more liberal societies. Forced and coerced labor, and the degradation of labor itself in these cultures created less hegemonic support. In turn, in international trade relations the stronger hegemonic states could more easily exploit the weaker ones. Also the maintenance of force and control through repression requires enormous effort and makes a regime less likely to take chances on new economic projects that may get out of their control. An example of this was the fear and suspicion that the Nullifiers had of internal improvements and industrialization. They feared that new industrial leaders from above and/or slave revolts from below might threaten their way of life.

HEGEMONY AND DEVELOPMENT

Gramsci's "hegemony" examines a set of values that go beyond economic relations. Economic relations, like slave labor or free labor are important in understanding

²³ Huntington, Samuel P. 1968. Political Order in Changing Societies. New Haven: Yale University Press. passim.

antebellum American development and are an integral part of culture and ideology. The lower classes and weaker states play a role in their own victimization by accepting the hegemony of the ruling group. In international trade relations weak state leaders, like the planters in antebellum South Carolina, depended on the industrialists of strong states, like the British. But the relationships among leaders in the South, North, West and Britain were complex. They needed each other for economic reasons, but different types of hegemonic thought developed in different regions. Generally, strong states leaders look down on the weak states' rulers with an attitude of superiority. The

Charleston Mercury editorialized, "It is impossible for any one who does not read the Northern papers to form the smallest conception of the general tone of contempt, affected pity, and ridicule which they invariably employ towards the Southern states".²⁴

The sense of inferiority and dependence did not go unnoticed by Nullifier leadership and they wanted to challenge it.

Robert Hayne wrote, "The time was when our young men were educated in Great Britain and it filled them with contempt for everything American. That period has passed away - We have been emancipated from dependence on Great Britain, but as if destined to pass our lives away in a state of mental slavery, we have merely exchanged the chains of Old England for those of New England. Southern States have long been regarded abroad, and have submitted to be regarded as incapable of any great literary efforts."²⁵

Some Unionists saw British dependency if Nullification

²⁴ Charleston Mercury. July 11th, 1828.

²⁵ Letter from Robert Y. Hayne to Warren Davis dated September 25th, 1827. Robert Y. Hayne Papers at the South Caroliniana Library.

succeeded. South Carolina would become "the football of every great foreign power. England will dictate to us as she pleases."²⁶

Unionist James L. Petigru thought all this talk was

nonsense. He pondered, "That we are treated like slaves, that we are slaves in fact, that we are worse than slaves and made to go on all fours, are stories that seem to me very odd, and make me doubt whether I am not under some mental eclipse."²⁷ The hegemony that the strong states

perpetrate attitudes through out the entire international system. Their control became, to themselves, the moral thing to do. Of course, there were ideological points of weakness. The socialist movements in Europe showed that there was room for radical alternative hegemonic thought. In creating a new hegemony, all the ideas of the past are not rejected.

Hegemony can not only be created by new ideas as the basis for moral authority and power. It also must develop and maintain the consent of the population. So ruling classes must preserve aspects of the old order that legitimize their current power.

HARTZ AND THE FEUDAL FRAGMENT IN ANTEBELLUM SOUTH

Hartz emphasizes the importance of European political thought and social conflicts on the development of the "New World".²⁸ The relative lack of economic development in the

²⁶ Camden Journal. September, 30th, 1830.

²⁷ Carson, James Petigru. 1920. Life, Letters and Speeches of James Louis Petigru. Washington D.C. p. 79. Letter to William J. Grayson.

²⁸ Hartz, Louis. 1955. The Liberal Tradition in America: An Interpretation of American Political Thought Since the Revolution. New York: Harcourt Brace. p. 5-6.

antebellum South compared to the antebellum North could be explained not only by the internal factors that existed inside its borders, but from outside, in this case from Europe. Hartz helps us understand that colonial exploitation does not by itself explain underdevelopment.

In The Liberal Tradition in America Hartz puts forward the idea that the lack of a feudal tradition in the United States enabled it to develop a dominant and seldom challenged liberal tradition in American life. Hartz explains how this tradition impacted American life. In The Founding of New Societies, Hartz extends his arguments beyond the United States. Whereas the United States was dominated by the liberal tradition, other regions and nations came to be dominated by feudal and radical traditions. Hartz argues that feudal, liberal, and radical "fragments" from European tradition emerged into these new dominant traditions. For example, in Latin America, the feudal dominated, in the United States, the liberal dominated, and in Australia, the radical dominated.²⁹ Hartz' thesis that the different "fragments" came from Europe, particularly Great Britain, is important to the study of the Nullification Crisis because Nullifiers thought originated from these liberal and feudal ideas. The

²⁹ Hartz, Louis. 1964. The Founding of New Societies: Studies in the History of the United States, Latin America, South Africa, Canada and Australia. New York: Harcourt Brace and World. p. 3.

Nullifiers molded these European "fragments" with influences from the American North and a fear of slave revolts into their own peculiar psychic world. The Nullifiers developed a unique set of beliefs, including a modern defense of slavery, and a pro-free trade ideology that simultaneously feared free labor. It was the strains of the growing liberal tradition pushed up against this strong feudal fragment that created the Nullification Crisis.

Hartz is correct that the lack of feudal institutions profoundly affected the economic and political development in the United States. But the South's feudal fragments were built into its economic arrangements. The economic institutions that dominated antebellum and Jim Crow Southern history, slavery and sharecropping arrangements, helped give the South its aristocratic character. But slavery was also deeply connected to the free labor system and this unique amalgam of the liberal and feudal traditions helps explain Nullification.

Hartz is accurate that white solidarity mixes easily with the liberal tradition. If all whites are equal and opposed to the blacks then poor whites can get dignity through racism. The American dream in the North and West of becoming financially independent was based on free labor, saving and hard work. In the antebellum South this dream for whites was the dream of owning slaves. It was the liberal dream in the feudal fragment.

There are significant "exceptions" to this liberal tradition in the United States that Hartz recognizes. The antebellum South is one of these "exceptions". In The Liberal Tradition in America Hartz discusses the "feudal dream" of the South.

The ideological mix of the feudal and liberal influences keeps coming to the fore in the study of Nullification. The pro-slavery arguments of South Carolina intellectual Thomas Cooper and the organizing of Governor James Hamilton, Jr. reflect this paradoxical matrix. This feudal-liberal amalgam emerges not only from economic circumstances, but also from ideological influences within South Carolina, ideas from the political economists in England, the fear of slave revolts, and relations with the North and West in the United States. Despite Hartz' view of a dominant liberal tradition, the feudal fragment was stronger in the South than Hartz believes. All these forces interacted and conditioned each other to help create the Nullification movement.

BARRINGTON MOORE, JR. AND NULLIFICATION

For Barrington Moore, Jr., the Northern victory in the Civil War that destroyed the slave system in the South was essential to a democratic outcome in the United States, because the commercial and industrial elites had successfully limited the power of the landed upper class, which was an obstacle to a democratic version of capitalism.

Moore's work can help us understand the role the Nullifiers played in the modernization process. Very broadly, they represented the ideology of the landed upper classes and were an obstacle to democracy. The commercial and industrial Northern elite (and their allies) were willing to fight the Nullifiers. The Nullifiers were the group most committed to the landed upper class ideology who were against liberal democracy for the nation as a whole, while using the institutions of liberal democracy to serve their reactionary designs.³⁰ The Southern planters must be swept away for a democratic victory. The Civil War did not completely sweep them away and that is why it was a only a partial, but critical, victory for a democratic version of capitalism. Many elements of the sectional conflict that led to the Civil War first came to a crisis point during Nullification. The Nullifiers were an obstacle to democracy for the nation as a whole.

³⁰ Moore states that much of the white South's view of itself and its institutions as having a superior aristocratic value relative to the crass North was "sheer fake" rationalizations. (Moore, Barrington, Jr. 1966. Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Lord and Peasant in the Making of the Modern World. Boston: Beacon Press. p. 123.) This point must be challenged. The assumption that the slaveholders must have thought slavery was a great moral evil and were merely making excuses to preserve their economic interest is deeply flawed. Slavery is considered immoral because in a liberal society freedom, opportunity and human dignity are deeply connected to free enterprise. Slavery is a complete denial of all of these ideals. Since Moore makes the point himself how economic and moral issues are connected, I do not understand how he thinks that the Southern arguments for slavery were in the main "sheer fake" rationalizations.

Moore, in Hartzian terms, believes that the Northern liberal fragment needed to eliminate the obstacles to democracy by getting rid of those parts of the feudal fragment, "the hereditary status as the basis of human worth.",³¹ that stood in its way of establishing liberal hegemony. Moore saw the Civil War as the key point in the United States' economic and political development.

Otherwise, the result would have been different as Moore conjectures, "One need only consider what would have happened had the Southern plantation system been able to establish itself in the West (United States) by the middle of the nineteenth century and surrounded the Northeast. Then the United States would have been in a position of some modernizing countries today, (1966) with a latifundia economy, a dominant antidemocratic aristocracy, and a weak and dependent commercial and industrial class, unable and unwilling to push toward political democracy."³²

Moore and Hartz view the lack of a feudal past in the United States as having made it easier to establish a liberal democratic society. They both saw the antebellum South as being somewhat dissimilar to the dominant liberal tradition, but to different degrees. For Hartz, the liberal fragment was so dominant in the United States that the exception of the antebellum South's "feudal dream" inevitably must lose out to the liberal fragment because the United States never had feudal institutions like Europe did. For Moore, the outcome was not necessarily liberal democracy

³¹ *ibid.*

³² Moore, Barrington, Jr. 1966. Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Lord and Peasant in the Making of the Modern World. Boston: Beacon Press. p. 153.

because he views the feudal fragment as stronger in the antebellum South than Hartz did.

Moore was correct that the importance of hereditary status in the South was central in relations between blacks and whites, and that these aristocratic notions spilled over into relations among whites, but the strong white egalitarianism in the entire United States also deeply affected the South. The Nullifiers and the Southern slaveholders were less connected to the hereditary status system than Moore implies. Within Southern white society there was a liberal tradition that viewed upward mobility as a social good, which even influenced black slaves. In the cities, slaves hired out during times of little or no activity made work arrangements and kept a certain amount of cash for themselves as part of the deal. It gave them a limited social mobility and a degree of dignity within the dominant liberal society. But it also created deep liberal resentments among these slaves.

UNRESOLVED TENSIONS IN SOUTH CAROLINA

The mix of the dominant liberal tradition with strong aristocratic elements created unresolved tensions within South Carolina and stress between the state and the rest of the nation. These strains blossomed into a modernization crisis - the Nullification Crisis.

NULLIFICATION - FIRST IN A SERIES OF MODERNIZATION CRISES

The Nullification Crisis was the first in a series of

modernization crises in the United States from the 1830's to the 1960's where the South played a central role. In the Nullification Crisis, the Civil War and the Civil Rights movements the resolution of these crises moved the United States in a democratic direction. The alliance of Northern industrial and commercial and Southern agricultural interests during the Jim Crow period delayed a democratic outcome, but was unable to permanently deny voting and civil rights because of the impact of previous democratic victories.

POLITICAL MODERNIZATION CRISIS AND NULLIFICATION:

LEGITIMACY AND PARTICIPATION

South Carolina at the time of Nullification was experiencing crises of both legitimacy and participation. Political order is necessary for the successful political and economic modernization of a nation because the modernization process, not modernity, is destabilizing and a steady hand of authority is needed to guide a society through these troubled waters. Huntington argues in Political Order in Changing Societies that the United States never had to create such an order because the American polity was a transplant of English Tudor polity. While this explanation of American antebellum society can explain the compromises on the sectional question, it is wholly inadequate in explaining the Civil War or Nullification. Huntington glosses over these crises in the American polity

because they do not fit his conception of American political modernization in which he states that there existed a "pleasant uniformity" of the "one-estate" in 18th century America. A better argument would be that despite the inequalities, a liberal Tudor polity was able to establish itself. Huntington accepts the dominance of the liberal tradition in America even more completely than Hartz does. At least Hartz sees the "feudal dream" in the antebellum South. There must have been some underlying social tensions that either developed, or that were there from the colonial era that could cause such crises. The modernization process at the time of Nullification created both participation and legitimacy crises. These crises occurred because of changes that happened mainly after 1815, not the late 18th century. The modernizing problem of greater participation for white men was essentially smooth in the country as a whole, as Huntington points out.³³ But in Nullification, greater participation created a legitimacy crisis.

First, the intense disagreement between South Carolina and the nation, then South Carolina's quick willingness to compromise reflected tensions over legitimacy. The concept of Nullification of federal law questioned the legitimacy of the Union, although Calhoun argued that Nullification would actually save the Union. His argument rejected the

³³ Huntington section on American political development in Political Order in Changing Societies. 1968. New Haven: Yale University Press. p. 93-139.

legitimacy of federal law but was made in terms of protecting the Constitution and the Union. More radical Nullifiers, like Thomas Cooper, argued that it was time to "calculate the value of the Union." But even Cooper argued for secession within the framework of the Constitution by arguing for state sovereignty. Ultimately, the sectional conflict threatened the legitimacy of the national government to rule. But each time a crisis arose, a compromise occurred and national, not sectional, legitimacy was restored. But tensions over legitimacy remained unresolved until the Civil War. Even the Unionists in South Carolina were divided about their loyalties. Immediately after the Nullifier victory in 1832 the Union party of Charleston clearly came out supporting the national government if a showdown with South Carolina took place, but the Unionists from the rest of the state were not so sure.

The Nullifier Charleston Mercury reported, "The Union Party of the interior... assures us... that as soon as the Convention shall have spoken its decision ... they will hold themselves bound by it."³⁴ The Unionist Greenville Mountaineer asked "When the Federal and State Governments come in collision, forcible and violent collision, which must we obey?"³⁵

There was also a crisis of participation. In one of the great ironies in the history of American democracy, the Nullifiers, enemies of the tyranny of the majority, were among the most successful in mobilizing previously

³⁴ Charleston Mercury. November 1st, 1832.

³⁵ Greenville Mountaineer. October 27th, 1832

uninvolved voters to their side using the movement for greater participation to their advantage. New voters in South Carolina who came to the Nullifiers' cause gave the Nullifiers victory. Nullification occurred in the age of Jackson. The politics of Jackson were the main fault line of the nation's politics. The political parties were national and national issues, such as the renewal of the Bank of the United States charter, were prominent. Class differences entered politics, although they were intertwined with sectional differences. The age of Jackson was associated with a growing white male egalitarianism which included the expansion of voting rights to all white men over 21, regardless of class. Participation and opportunity were its cornerstone principles.

Most of the Nullifiers, before Nullification, were part of Jackson's coalition. During the campaign of 1828 Jackson seemed to side with the South on the tariff question. His tariff position and the "corrupt" deal charge of 1824, which alleged that Henry Clay and John Quincy Adams stole the Presidency away from Jackson made Jackson a natural choice for anti-tariff South Carolina. Clay's advocacy of his "American System" that included protective tariffs and internal improvements made him an anathema to the Nullifiers. The "American System" was an attempt to deal with the nation's crisis of participation by creating a social contract that envisioned a new market-oriented future

for the West and the nation. The burgeoning new industrialists and the expansionist visions of white settlers needed to be incorporated into the system. Internal improvements projects were designed to build the physical infrastructure that would lead to a wider, stronger, more independent United States' internal market. The Nullifiers opposed both the protective tariff and internal improvements. They viewed internal improvements as a subsidy to the expansion of Northern business. The protective tariffs hurt the South directly. They had to pay more for manufactured goods. The modernization process also involved dramatic changes in economic life and the antebellum South had not adapted as successfully as the North.

KEYS TO UNDERDEVELOPMENT: EXPLOITATION AND CULTURAL VALUES

The South had "growth without development" because of a combination of factors. First, its dominant planter class was unwilling to make changes that would have helped the region develop as a whole because they feared the possibility of losing power. Ultimately, they wanted to create their own hegemonic state rather than make an alliance with Northern capital because they felt that their way of life, culture and primary economic relations were threatened by the North. Second, because they led a "weak state", the region was able to be more easily exploited. But the planters did not actually lead a "state" in the sense of a nation-state. They were in competition with other regional

elites for control of the nation's policies. But the planter's hegemony in the South does fit the "weak state" model.

STRATEGIES FOR DEVELOPMENT: ASSOCIATE OR DISASSOCIATE?

The question whether to associate or disassociate with major centers of international capital as a strategy for development continues to be the central issue for developing nations. It was no different for antebellum America.

The basic economic strategy for the antebellum Southern planters was to increase production of exports as a means to greater economic growth. Developing nations have tried a variety of strategies in the twentieth century that may not have been relevant to the antebellum South. Stephan Haggard mentions two broad approaches; an import substitution model, and an export-led growth model.³⁶ The export led-growth model of the newly industrializing East Asian nations seems to be irrelevant to the antebellum South. This would have involved not only industrializing, but being able to find markets that it could compete in. The circumstances during the period of 1815-1832 did not favor this as an effective strategy. First, the British had tremendous advantages in industrialization. They dominated the industrializing export-led growth market. Since industrialization was relatively new this strategy did not enter into the thinking

³⁶ Haggard, Stephan. 1990. Pathways from the Periphery: The Politics of Growth in the Newly Industrializing Countries. Ithaca: Cornell University Press. p. 25.

of the Southern planters.

The strategy of import substitution, and diversification of the economy could have been used to create more Southern economic independence. An import substitution strategy was not advocated by the Southern planters, but was central to Clay's "American System", which South Carolina felt violated its interests. Clay wanted the United States to follow a strategy that would develop a strong internal market. Infant industry in a less developed nation could not compete with British advances. Therefore, the state should intervene on behalf of particular industries to protect jobs and economic development. He suggested protective tariffs and internal improvements. The North and the West had a better understanding of their weaker relationship to the British. Internal improvements created the necessary infrastructure that spurred further investments. It opened the West and rural areas to further development by reducing the cost of the transportation of goods and raw materials.

The radical Nullifiers were also opposed to the internal improvements in the "American System". Hamilton stated "I believe that this system of unconstitutional taxation [the protective tariff] on the one hand, and the unjust and unequal expenditure [internal improvements] on the other, makes the condition of the South essentially Colonial."³⁷ Ironically, Hamilton's argument that the

³⁷ Hamilton Speech at Proceedings of the States' Rights Celebration at Charleston July 1st, 1830 p. 5 in James Hamilton Jr. Papers, # 1489 Southern Historical Collection, University of

tariff and internal improvements projects were making the South a colony of the North was made more likely by the rejection of internal improvements. As the situation grew worse from the Nullifiers' point of view the more they railed against internal improvements. There was no Nullifier demand that the South, or South Carolina, get its fair share of internal improvement projects. They could have made a strong case for this, since the tariff policy was making them pay more and could have led to a more moderate politics that might have avoided the Nullification Crisis. The opposition to internal improvements projects as wasteful reflects several ideas. One was the idea that the federal government was going to give the South the bill and the North the money to build more projects that would only help industry. There was certainly reason for them to believe this. But this also reflected a fear of industrialization itself. Southern opposition to the tariff made sense from an economic point of view. They really had to pay more for manufactured goods, and it could hurt them in selling their cotton abroad by encouraging the British textile manufacturers to search elsewhere for cheaper cotton. But internal improvements could have helped South Carolina and the South build its own internal market. The planters' aristocratic thinking was to blame. High tariffs were designed to protect infant industries from British

North Carolina at Chapel Hill Library.

penetration of cheap goods into the American markets. It was to give the United States' industry time to reach to British standards. But because of the power struggle between the North, West and South there was no overall associative or disassociative United States' strategy towards development, but a series of coherent views from different regions.

1815-1833: PARTIAL DISASSOCIATION

The period from 1815 to 1833 was one of "partial dissociation".³⁸ The entire antebellum period, 1776-1860, was one of "unmanaged association". The reason was that the North had a coherent disassociative and South had a coherent associative outlook and neither one could get control of the national government.³⁹ According to Walter Dean Burnham, before 1861, "There was no state."⁴⁰ But sectional differences were not the primary political conflicts of the era. Jacksonian politics were the central points of contention. The sectional conflict merely raised its ugly head from time to time, with Nullification being the ugliest. The associative strategy and the struggle with the North and Henry Clay over the disassociative strategy of his

³⁸ Keohane, Robert O. 1983. "Associative American Development, 1776-1860: Economic Growth and Political Disintegration." in Antinomies of Interdependence: National Welfare and the International Division of Labor. ed. Ruggie, John Gerard. New York: Columbia University Press. p. 77.

³⁹ *ibid.* p. 85.

⁴⁰ *ibid.* p. 84. Keohane quotes a Burnham comment on his text.

"American System" helps explain both the thought of Thomas Cooper and his progressive defense of slavery and the transformation of James Hamilton Jr. from nationalist War Hawk to sectionalist Nullifier. Immediately after the War of 1812, United States' manufacturers could not compete with the British. British goods flooded the market. Many United States firms went out of business.⁴¹ The United States Congress passed high tariffs in 1816 in response. This tariff was passed during a period of growing nationalist sentiment that quickly ended. The North and the South developed different attitudes towards protective tariffs. In general, the South strongly opposed high tariffs, the Western and Mid-Atlantic States supported them and New England was divided.⁴² It was also in this period that the first of the sectional compromises, the Missouri Compromise, occurred.

CULTURE AND IDEOLOGY IN CREATING DEPENDENCY

One dependency argument is that the Southern planters relied on the British industrialists and the South as a whole was exploited. This argument does not give a complete picture of the process. Southern dependence on the British

⁴¹ North, Douglass C. 1966. The Economic Growth of the United States, 1790-1860. New York: Norton. p. 165.

⁴² Keohane, Robert O. 1983. "Associative American Development, 1776-1860: Economic Growth and Political Disintegration." in Antinomies of Interdependence: National Welfare and the International Division of Labor. ed. Ruggie, John Gerard. New York: Columbia University Press. p. 77.

occurred not only because of British superior production, but because of Southern slavery, and the economic and cultural logic associated with it. The South was caught between the dominant American liberal tradition and a feudal one. Hartz refers to the pro-slavery arguments of Fitzhugh as "feudal dreams". They were more than dreams. Southern slavery had important remnants of feudal institutions.

The antebellum South was unique because unlike other slave societies in the Americas the planters did not fully control their national state. They were in competition for power with elements from the North and the West. The Southern world view partially fit in with the more liberal traditions of the North and West. The pro-slavery arguments that developed in the late 1810's and 1820's reflected both the liberal and feudal traditions. And the arguments about the dependent nature of the Southern economy show both the laissez-faire attitudes of Adam Smith and the political economists and a defense of the Southern slave system. The North was the enemy because it tried to use the government to interfere on its behalf against the interest of the South.⁴³

⁴³ The forty-bale theory became one of the main arguments against the so-called Tariff of Abominations. Congressman George McDuffie, chairman of the Ways and Means committee, while debating legislation to repeal the tariff in the Congress of 1830 introduced the forty-bale theory. The forty-bale theory argued that for every one hundred bales of cotton that the planters had forty were taken away by the protective tariff and the planter had only sixty left to sell. This was because of the role of the Northern middlemen merchants. These middlemen did not sell raw

CULTURAL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE NORTH AND THE SOUTH

According to Frank W. Taussig, the Panic of 1819 caused the United States to "have a new arrangement of its productive forces".⁴⁴ The tariffs, he argued, were not what made the United States more productive. The differences between the North and the South after 1819 became more pronounced. The North and later the West's "free farmers", adapted to the changes in the market more effectively than the plantation South. Jay Mandle cites evidence that innovations in corn and wheat production (mainly in the North and the West) far exceeded innovations in cotton

cotton directly for cash to the British. They exchanged the raw cotton for a shipment of manufactured goods, then sold the manufactured goods in America and gave the planters their money. The argument continues that if the merchants had one hundred bales exchanged for one hundred pieces of cloth then sold it for one hundred dollars then had to pay forty dollars to customs and had only sixty dollars left. Reality was not so simple. Merchants involved with cotton were involved in a more complex barter system of exchange of simply raw cotton for manufactured goods. Merchants' funds were involved in many purchases and exchanges including many products with little or no tariff, the servicing of debt, the extension of credits to other merchants, and credits they received from other merchants. Supply and demand was also not the only factor in determining price since the tariffs themselves were often on necessities or luxury items that would then take away money that could be spent on other items. Despite these mistakes that exaggerated the impact of high tariffs on the planters the argument had great appeal. It became popularized in the public mind, much the way Coin Harvey's 'free silver' idea was to become several generation later in the Populist era. In fairness to McDuffie, the basic complaint behind the questionable economics remained essentially correct. The protective tariff hurt the South and the planters. The tariff did increase the cost of manufactured goods they purchased.

⁴⁴ Taussig, Frank W. 1931. The Tariff History of the United States. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons. p. 62-63.

production. Between 1837 and 1859 the number of patents awarded each year for grain was 10.3, for corn, 12.4, but only 1.2 for cotton.⁴⁵ Indices on modernization such as education levels, the number of libraries and urbanization show that the North was adapting to new circumstances where the South was not.⁴⁶ Before the Civil War, the South experienced "growth without development". The basis for this tremendous growth was the comparative advantage that the South enjoyed as the major supplier to the textile mills in Great Britain and the North. "Full advantage was not being taken of these fortuitous circumstances to lay more permanent foundations for prosperity - foundations that at a later date might have sustained a cumulative process of economic transformation and growth in the South itself."⁴⁷

I do not mean to suggest that Northern economic development was a Tocquevillian dream of "equal" small farmers, shopkeepers, mechanics and artisans, but only that the North was successfully modernizing. Industrialization between 1820 and 1860 did transform the United States work force. Work in industry increased from 21% to 47% of the nation's workers. In the antebellum period, income inequality also increased

⁴⁵ Mandle, Jay R. 1978. The Roots of Black Poverty: The Southern Plantation Economy after the Civil War. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press. p. 57.

⁴⁶ North, Douglass C. 1966. The Economic Growth of the United States, 1790-1860. New York: Norton. p. 133-134.

⁴⁷ Keohane, Robert O. 1983. "Associative American Development, 1776-1860: Economic Growth and Political Disintegration." in Antinomies of Interdependence: National Welfare and the International Division of Labor. ed. Ruggie, John Gerard. New York: Columbia University Press. p. 67.

dramatically. In 1774, the top 1% had 12.6% of assets the top decile had 50%. In 1860, the top 1% had 29% and the top decile 73%.⁴⁸ Jeffrey Williamson and Peter Lindert argue, "The American northeast was transformed from a 'Jeffersonian ideal' to a society more typical of developing economies with very wide pay differentials and, presumably, marked inequality in the distribution of wage income."⁴⁹ In the United States, this period did have class conflict but Northern workers, generally, were not organized. Opportunity to make it on your own with free labor was the dominant ideology in the North and the West. The West played an important role in the sectional conflict. By 1860, the Republican Party slogan, "Vote yourself a tariff, Vote yourself a farm", reflected the strong "liberal tradition" connecting the North and the emerging West. The West's support was critical to the South. The South was also brought into the spirit of expansion during this era. The desire for land was great. In fact, support for a slave empire that would include Mexico, Central America, the Caribbean and Brazil was part of the Manifest Destiny dreams of white Southerners. Besides the importance of voting power in Congress of the new Western states another reason why the South saw Lincoln's unwillingness to compromise on the extension of slavery was the desire for new land.

⁴⁸ *ibid.* p. 81.

⁴⁹ Williamson, Jeffrey G. and Lindert, Peter H. 1980. American Inequality: A Macroeconomic History. New York: Academic Press. p. 37.

NULLIFICATION AS ADAPTATION STRATEGY

Nullification, and later on secession, were attempts to adapt to changing economic and political circumstances that the South and South Carolina did not deal with successfully. If the Southern planters were going to have developed a successful development strategy it should have been started during the period from 1815-1833. Some Southerners talked about industrialization and diversification, but it never became a Southern economic strategy. The "strategy" was to remain "associated" with the British by exporting cotton and increasing investment in land and slaves. But changes in economic strategy may have been politically impossible. Some adaptation of the slave system to the free labor market system would have been key. Their values and beliefs were obstructing the region's development.

CHAPTER THREE

THE JACKSONIAN ERA: THE DOMESTIC CONTEXT FOR NULLIFICATION

A central argument in this dissertation is that the politics, culture and economic arrangements inside a nation or region play a significant role in its economic and political development. This "domestic context" interacts with forces from outside and new phenomena emerge from this relationship. To understand better the actions of James Hamilton, Jr. in mobilizing the white mechanics and artisans to the cause of Nullification we need to look at the dominant political movement of the time, the rise of white egalitarianism in the Jacksonian era. The mixing of the liberal tradition of Jacksonian politics with the aristocratic politics of South Carolina sets the stage for a detailed look at Hamilton's organizing of the Nullifiers in South Carolina.

DEMOCRACY AND LIBERALISM IN JACKSONIAN AMERICA

The classical view of democracy states that if rulers were left unchecked they could threaten society. That was why democracy was considered as benefitting society. But as democratic institutions emerged there developed a "democratic elitism", in which fear of the tyranny of the majority became prominent in the leadership's mind. Under what circumstances should people be allowed to participate in society's decision-making process? What decisions should be completely off limits? There were serious concerns about public participation among the founding fathers. Yet clearly the protection of liberty, the right to organize and

complain to the government to redress grievances were important to these men. The same tensions were also present during the era of Jackson and Nullification.

Implicit in the right to participate in decision-making was a confidence of the society at large (and the confidence of the rulers to extend the process) in the people's judgement. But in liberalism individuals are also in competition with each other and those that succeed should rightly rise to the top of the society. If the latter is true then why should every one participate in such crucial decisions? There was a contradiction between the ideology of increased participation and having the best rule. The egalitarianism that emerged in the Jackson era was a white male egalitarianism because white men were considered superior. Opportunity for white men to have social mobility became the ethos of Jacksonian Democracy. Liberalism's ideal of social mobility was attractive to the public because it promised the possibility of becoming higher in status and position. When democracy emerged in the United States it was because of a strong liberal tradition. As different groups come into the democratic order leadership must expect that these groups will accept the basic values of the system. The extension of voting rights in the United States was made easier because groups that were demanding to be included were making their arguments based on liberalism's core ideals. The disenfranchised groups were pointing out the

contradiction of claiming to represent the people without their participation. They were demanding more liberalism. From 1800 to about 1840 the rise of universal white male suffrage that brought Jackson to power typifies the development of this trust between the rulers and the white male mass. The acceptance of certain values made it possible for leaders to consent to their participation. Jackson's Bank Veto Message clearly gives the vision of the rise of white male egalitarianism of a society that viewed differences in classes as natural and therefore did not advocate a radical leveling. Jackson stated, "Distinctions in society will always exist under every just government. Equality of talents, of education, or of wealth cannot be produced by human institutions."⁵⁰

But Jackson also believed that the government should not work for the powerful against the interests of other classes. In a memo on his Bank Veto Message he explained his case against the bank, "The present Bank is dangerous to liberty... because... it embodies a fearful influence which may be wielded for the aggrandizement of... a particular interest... Because it concentrates in the hands of few men, a power over the money of the country, which may be perverted to the oppression of the people."⁵¹

The Bank of the United States symbolized an inequality of opportunity. But popular discontent did not threaten the system because the white male public had accepted the view

⁵⁰ Hofstadter, Richard. 1948. The American Political Tradition and the Men Who Made It. New York: Alfred Knopf. p. 77.

⁵¹ Jackson, Andrew. 1929. Correspondence of Andrew Jackson Vol. IV. ed. Bassett, John Spencer. Washington D. C.: Carnegie Institute. p. 113.

that equality of opportunity, and not equality of results, was fair. They saw government action as opposed to their interests. They believed that they could "make it" on their own.

The Panic of 1819 had set off the beginnings of more popular participation in politics. The West and the South were hit hard by the booms and busts, wild speculation and foreclosures. Jackson used public resentment against the banks and the "moneyed interests" to ride his way to new heights of popularity. But Jackson's Veto Message did not threaten the system's core values, in fact, it made them stronger.

THE NULLIFICATION MOVEMENT AND JACKSONIAN POLITICS

In the United States on the whole the inclusion of more white men in the franchise strengthened liberalism. But in South Carolina where the liberal tradition was tinged with a strong feudal fragment the increase in participation among white artisans and mechanics led to crisis, the Nullification crisis. Walter Dean Burnham argues "that center-periphery conflict has been a major part of every realignment in the United States. The realignments

"constituted attacks by groups who felt they were outsiders against an elite whom they frequently viewed in conspiratorial terms. These attacks were made in the name of democratic-humanistic universals against an established political structure which was perceived to be corrupt, undemocratic and manipulated by insiders for them and their supporters benefit... Moreover they all 'telegraphed' as it were, the basic issue-clusters which would dominate politics in the next electoral era: The completion of political democratization in the 1830's, slavery and sectionalism in

the late 1840's and early 1850's, the struggle between metropole and colonial regions in the 1890's,"⁵² The Nullification movement fits into this picture in some strange ways. It was as if the conflicts preceding the next two realignments, sectionalism and slavery, and metropole vs. colonial regions, were taking place in the middle of another realignment around the politics of Jackson. The Nullifiers certainly viewed Northern manufacturers and their allies as in a conspiracy against them. The Nullifiers were organizing middle and lower class whites using similar appeals that Jackson used, even using the same targets, but for a defense of slavery and minority rule.

Increases in voter turnout have historically occurred when important social conflicts spur potential voters to pay more attention. The way conflicts spread and who gets involved is critical to the outcome. The losers are usually the groups that want to extend the scope of conflict. They hope that by expanding their membership they will be able to win next time. Another way to get what you want is by changing the focus of political debate towards your agenda. This can involve either attempting to socialize or to privatize conflicts.⁵³ The strategy in a democracy is not only to get your agenda discussed but just as importantly to

⁵² Burnham, Walter Dean. 1970. Critical Elections and the Mainsprings of American Politics. New York: Norton. p. 30-31.

⁵³ Schattschneider, E. E. 1960. The Semisovereign People: A Realist's View of Democracy in America. Hinsdale, Ill.: The Dryden Press. passim.

get your opponents' program ignored. When viewing Nullification in this light we see some ironic twists involving the socializing and privatizing of conflict. In 1828 the South had lost in the United States Congress on the tariff issue. Hamilton became so frustrated that he decided not to go back to Washington D.C. as a member of Congress. Instead, he sought to localize the tariff issue, which was privatizing the conflict, attempting to make it only South Carolina's affair. A tariff debate in South Carolina, instead of the nation, limited the debate. Of course, he was doing this to win on the issue. But back home in South Carolina he wanted to expand the scope of the conflict to include more people because his party lost the Charleston elections of 1830 for City Intendant (mayor) and did not have enough votes in the state legislature to pass Nullification. He understood that he must socialize the conflict within South Carolina. But his appeal to open up the conflict in South Carolina was also an appeal to, in effect, privatize it on a national level. The scope of politics during the 1820's all across the United States was being extended by the expansion of voting rights to include white men regardless of property qualifications. Hamilton and the Nullifiers were attempting completely to privatize the conflict on slavery. They wanted to make it invisible. And this was the reason that they stated their tariff and Nullification arguments so loudly. Unionist James L. Petigru

pointed out, "It is clear that our Nullifiers mean to pick a quarrel with the North about negroes... Nullification has done its work; it has prepared the minds of men for a separation of the States, and when the question is mooted again it will be distinctly union or disunion."⁵⁴

The white egalitarianism of the era had an effect on the emergence of party competition in South Carolina. While South Carolina was the only state in the Old South that had eliminated property qualifications for white male voters by 1810, it was still the state legislature that into the 1850's elected the Governor, judges and the Presidential electors. The property qualifications for office holders were the highest in the nation. The intensity of the conflict, not the voter qualification rules were more significant. The intensity of the feelings that Nullification aroused among the people was strong. This was the beginning of a mobilization of Southern nationalism among the white working class. But the actual rule changes that allowed for an increase in voting had to have been in place for there to be such a mobilization. The new rules had an impact on the elite mobilization strategy and the nature of the party politics. The tariff question did bring the interests of the sectional elites in tune with working class interests. Whites received higher wages than "city slaves" and felt they gained respect from the planters because they were white and to a certain degree this was true. The

⁵⁴ Carson, James Petigru. 1920. Life, Letters and Speeches of James Louis Petigru. Washington D. C. p. 125. Letter from James. L. Petigru to Hugh S. Legare dated July 15th, 1833.

planters certainly respected any white more than a slave. All these various identifications of religion, class, race and section were interwoven into the politics of all sections. Northern workers knew that high tariffs were in their interest. The South Carolina white working men were frustrated by threats to their pride, dignity and economic standing from city slaves. But there was also a Southern identification with Jackson against the bankers from the Northeast. The fear of a slave revolt was always present. For the Nullifier leadership, the tariff did not only stop any discussion of slavery in South Carolina, but it also provided an issue to unify their interests with frustrated elements of the white population. The Unionist politicians, and even some of the Nullifiers, were nervous about the tactics that Hamilton used to mobilize this constituency. A Unionist complained, "The wild politics of the day have certainly reduced the character of man in the United States; and that respect for private opinion which every gentlemen once entertained, seems very much lost in the whirl of passion, vented in a coarseness of speech that has proper place only among the inmates of a cross-roads tavern."⁵⁵

Hayne cautioned, "It is extremely difficult to keep up the public feeling at a proper point, and prevent its boiling over. Men who are suffering, and who are justly indignant at a violation of their rights, can hardly be expected to speak and act with due moderation."⁵⁶

⁵⁵ "Labor in Vain." Niles' Register. October 8th, 1831 in James Hamilton Jr. Papers, # 1489 Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Library.

⁵⁶ "Letters on the Nullification Movement in South Carolina, 1830-1834." American Historical Review. July 1901. p. 737. Letter from Robert Y. Hayne to James H. Hammond dated February 25th, 1830.

The politics were not genteel. Hamilton's focus on arousing the mass was always prominent in his mind. He strategized, "What stand our Party ought to take next winter in the Legislature must depend on the state of public sentiment - Discussion should always be in advance of public opinion, action in the rear of it."⁵⁷

Mass participation in voting was new in South Carolina. Politics was still mainly a respectable affair in most places. The politics of the firebrand Nullifiers was different. This was a period of transition between an old and new style of politics and a shift towards a growing sectionalism. These conflicts and the active mobilization spurred by Hamilton increased public interest and increased voter turnout.

THE NEGRO SEAMEN'S ACT AND ITS IMPACT ON NULLIFICATION

South Carolina took action after the Vesey trials to try to prevent any such revolt from occurring again. It passed a series of restrictions on free blacks and slaves, including foreign nationals, in the state. The most controversial restriction was the Negro Seaman's Act passed in December 1822. Denmark Vesey had been a free black sailor. This law caused great problems for the ships that regularly carried free black sailors. British Captain Jared Bunce sued in the South Carolina courts to overturn the law or at least moderate its enforcement. Having failed in the

⁵⁷ Letter to Waddy Thompson from James Hamilton Jr. September 3rd, 1831 in James Hamilton Jr. Papers, # 1489 Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Library.

South Carolina courts he demanded action from the United States Congress. Meanwhile, several free black sailors on British ships had been imprisoned in Charleston. The British complained to then Secretary of State John Quincy Adams. Adams sought Hamilton's help in resolving this matter. Hamilton's response to Adams' letter foreshadowed the arguments and actions that would later occur at the time of the Nullification crisis. Hamilton implied that states had sovereign rights that may supersede Federal authority. But he agreed to help Adams and the matter was cleared up. South Carolina did stop its enforcement for several months. But an organization called the South Carolina Association was pushing for greater enforcement of the entire series of Negro Control Laws passed after the Denmark Vesey conspiracy. It was able, in August 1823, to get the local Charleston district sheriff, Francis G. Deliesseline, to imprison a free black British sailor, Henry Elkison. The British Consul in Charleston went to United States Circuit Court Judge William Johnson with the June 17th, 1823 letter from Adams and demanded Elkison's release. Johnson ruled that he did not have jurisdiction to enforce the laws. But he then proceeded with a blistering attack that in his opinion the Negro Seaman's Act was "unconstitutional" because it violated both the commerce clause of the United States Constitution and a treaty with Great Britain. South Carolina continued to enforce the Negro Seaman's Act,

although it did amend the law in December 1823.

When Adams became President in 1825 his Attorney General, William Wirt, agreed with Johnson's opinion that South Carolina's law violated both the commerce clause and the treaty with Great Britain. The South Carolina Senate in response passed a resolution 36-6 that the state's protection against insurrection overruled all other laws and constitutions. The arguments made in defending the Negro Seaman's Act were similar to ones used in Nullification. The South Carolina Association's attorneys argued that the state was simply using police powers to protect the community and the state against rebellion. But they quickly went beyond this assertion of the state's right of police power; they argued that since South Carolina was a sovereign state before it entered the federal compact, it had the right to regulate its slave population without federal interference.

South Carolina had, in effect, nullified federal law by its action in the Negro Seaman's Acts controversy. When Jackson became President, his Attorney General, Roger Berrien, a friend of Calhoun, changed the opinion of Wirt and ruled that the Negro Seaman's Act was a legitimate use of police power. It is ironic that Jackson was the President who later used the Force Bill against South Carolina because his actions may have seemed to Nullifiers to give them the right to nullify federal law. In 1832, the Supreme Court ruled in Worcester v. Georgia that Georgia had no authority

to interfere in Cherokee territory. This was after the Cherokee nation had declared itself independent and Georgia seized its land. It was over this case that Jackson was to have made his infamous remark "[Chief Justice John] Marshall has made his decision. Now let him enforce it". This eventually led to the more infamous Trail of Tears removal of the Cherokees to the Oklahoma Territory.

There was a big difference in Jackson's attitude towards the Georgia case, the Negro Seamen's case and the Nullifiers. Both the Georgia and the Negro Seamen's cases involved the Federal courts ruling against the white frontier's interest. Jackson had won a reputation as the hero of the frontier by his hostile attitudes towards the Indians. He was not going to support the Cherokees over the white settlers or foreign Negro seamen over white planters. But Nullification was different. Although he may have even sympathized with the South over high tariffs, this dispute involved the Union and in Jackson's mind, the Union meant the unity of the white nation. Nullification meant going against the nation. Disputes inside the nation must always be within the concepts of law and Union. The Cherokees and Negro seamen were really outside the nation as far as most whites and Jackson were concerned, so letting states nullify these Federal court rulings did not violate his idea of nation. The inconsistency of Jackson's positions were obvious to the Nullifiers. "Let any man read...his [Jackson's] doctrines in favor of Georgia... while the ink

is not yet dry... and let him read the ultra federal proclamation against South Carolina: and can he... utter one word of defence of the consistency of the President?"⁵⁸ The controversy over the Negro Seaman's Act and the periodic imprisonment of free black sailors emboldened future Nullifiers. Although South Carolina was ultimately alone on Nullification many elements of the Jackson coalition were reluctant to use force to stop South Carolina because of sympathy with the slaveholders' fear of a slave rebellion.

THE NAT TURNER REVOLT

The fear of slave revolts led to the passage of the Negro Seaman's Act and to the development of the Nullification movement. In 1831, the violence of the Nat Turner slave rebellion in Virginia's countryside terrified whites, particularly slaveholders, and it touched off a series of debates in the Virginia legislature about what should be done about slavery. A debate about slavery was exactly what the Nullifiers wanted to avoid. Hamilton warned, "I am not surprised at our South Country [Virginia] ...being infested with Missionaries [abolitionists and colonization advocates] of whom you speak. It is nothing to what we shall see if we do not stand manfully at the safety valve of Nullification."⁵⁹

Governor Hamilton toured Virginia in the spring of 1832 "for the ostensible purpose of reviewing the militia". He stated

⁵⁸ Charleston Mercury. December 30th, 1832.

⁵⁹ "Letters on the Nullification Movement in South Carolina, 1830-34." American Historical Review. July 1901. p. 749. Letter from James Hamilton Jr. to James H. Hammond dated January 16th, 1832.

that Virginia "does not have the nerve enough to govern its own slaves."⁶⁰ Nat Turner's rebellion and Virginia's reaction to it shocked and scared Hamilton because he viewed the discussion in Virginia as undermining a united Southern alliance against slavery.

CALHOUN - CAUGHT IN THE MIDDLE

An important part of the "domestic context" of Nullification was the prominent role that John C. Calhoun played at a national level. South Carolina's favorite national son was Vice-President under Adams when the Tariff of Abominations of 1828 was enacted. Throughout the entire period leading up to the Nullification Crisis and beyond, Calhoun was caught in the middle of the most radical pro-states' rights state in the nation and his own national ambitions. He needed both a solid South Carolina and some national interest behind his candidacy to win a Presidential election. Marcus Morton from Massachusetts told Calhoun, "There are two subjects permanently and unavoidable working against you.. slavery ... and the tariff".⁶¹ He had to win at home first. In 1828 he supported Jackson and was his Vice Presidential mate. By 1830 it became clear that Calhoun was not favored by Jackson as his successor.

⁶⁰ The Columbia Hive. May 5th, 1832. Vol. II, No. 14 in James Hamilton Jr. Papers, # 1489 Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Library.

⁶¹ Niven, John. 1988. John C. Calhoun and the Price of Union: A Biography. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press. p. 168.

As late as May 1831, Calhoun told Hammond about his strategy for a Presidential run in 1832. Calhoun thought that the party system was about to break up. He believed that Jackson was losing support among his core constituency and that Clay had gone too far with protection and was even about to lose most tariff supporters. Calhoun believed that with a mild nationalistic plan he could emerge as the choice. Clay would be out and the Clay faction hated Jackson so much that they would look for an alternative. He wanted to be that alternative. According to Hammond, Calhoun's plan was the following: "The members from Kentucky had gone home resolved to push the election against Clay tho' not in favor of Jackson. Should they succeed Mr. Clay was gone, and his [sic] partizans hating Gen. Jackson and Mr. Van Buren as they did, would unite upon any man to put him out. They would even take him (Mr. Calhoun) with Nullification upon his head. ... He [Calhoun] would gratify them [the West] with a system of internal improvements. ... The tariff at this point might be adjusted as to suit the Northern people... He would propose to single out some of the most important articles and giv[e] them a liberal protection...he thought the Northern people might be easily induced to lower the Tariff to the revenue and thus reconcile the interests of the North and South."⁶² To have this plan work Calhoun

wanted the firebrand Nullifiers to tone down their rhetoric.

Hamilton did the opposite. He expressed his disdain for such

a plot, "in no shape lot or scot would we be included in the arrangement [my note: Calhoun's Presidential plotting above]... Mr C. has too much sense to see the essential Weakness of his occupying a double position, Janus faced, with one expression of countenance for one side of the

⁶² "Letters on the Nullification Movement in South Carolina, 1830-34." American Historical Review. July 1901. p. 742-744. Memorandum by James H. Hammond dated March 18th, 1831.

Potomac and another expression for the other."⁶³ Calhoun eventually realized Hamilton's logic and became a public Nullifier, acknowledging his authorship of the South Carolina Exposition. In 1832 he decided to run for United States Senator rather than President.

Part of a national strategy of the Nullifiers was to create an alliance between the Southern and Western agrarians for lower tariffs. This alliance drew strength from resentment of the Northeastern financial establishment. The agrarian alliance was mixed with class resentments. The Charleston Mercury editorialized, "The people of the South are oppressed... for the benefit, not of the people, but the great capitalists of the East... the West is beginning to inquire for Whose benefit they have been taxed so many millions." and "It will not be surprising to see in this policy [tariff]... that taxes are laid on the poor for the benefit of the rich."⁶⁴ The Nullifiers' main concern was not cheap land or more credit for the West, but lower tariffs. But in attempting to keep and make an alliance with the Western states they called for cheap land in the West, and Westerners called for lower tariffs. Lower tariffs helped the West since it was not primarily an area of industry but of corn and wheat farming. Lower tariffs meant lower prices for manufactured goods. But the South would lose from the cheap land in the West. The speculation of

⁶³ "Letters on the Nullification Movement in South Carolina, 1830-34." American Historical Review. July 1901. p. 747. Letter from James Hamilton, Jr. to James H. Hammond dated June 11th, 1831.

⁶⁴ Charleston Mercury. July 30th, 1832. March 3rd, 1831.

land in the West and South fluctuated with the price of cotton and other staples. As land sales boomed it soon caused overproduction and the price of staples plummeted. As prices started to rise again the same cycle of boom and bust occurred. Cheap land in the West hurt South Carolina. But politically to get lower tariffs, which were also squeezing the South, they needed to make an alliance with the West. On a national level this meant bringing together the Calhoun and Jackson forces.

CALHOUN AND JACKSON

Calhoun and Jackson had a long standing professional relationship and personal animosity dating back to Jackson's role as General and Governor in the Seminole campaign in Florida when Calhoun was Secretary of War. It came to a boiling point when Jackson discovered that his Vice President had recommended that he be court martialed at that time. They exchanged a series of public letters attacking each other. This was viewed by the Nullifiers as undermining their position. Speaking of the rift the Charleston Mercury stated, "Can it produce any possible advantage to the country? No! Why then has it been done?... this affair has been got up entirely for the benefit of 'expectants near the throne' who... can only be promoted by the prostration of Calhoun."⁶⁵ Calhoun's relationship with Jackson was also tenuous because of both men's Presidential ambitions. But cultural differences also played a role. The Peggy Eaton Affair was a point of great personal enmity between them.

⁶⁵ Charleston Mercury. February 24th, 1831.

Peggy Eaton had been accused of being a loose and unscrupulous woman. It was alleged that she had an abortion and was living with Senator Eaton without being married.⁶⁶ Her husband, John Eaton, was nominated by Jackson to be Secretary of War. Jackson wanted her to be accepted within Washington's elite circle because there was a controversy surrounding his own marriage to his beloved Rachel. Her divorce was not final when she married Jackson. He empathized with Peggy Eaton and felt she was treated unfairly. Calhoun's wife, Floride Bonneau Calhoun, spurned Peggy Eaton. John C. Calhoun, in a reply to John Eaton's accusation that he had masterminded the public spurning of Peggy Eaton for political reasons, defended his wife and himself, "She [Mrs. Calhoun] knew nothing of Mrs. Eaton, or the truth, or falsehood of the imputation of her character; and that she conceived it to be the duty of Mrs. Eaton, if innocent, to open her intercourse who resided in the place,... I approved of her decision, though I foresaw the difficulties in which it would probably involve me..."⁶⁷ In a letter to Calhoun that was designed to be leaked to play to public sentiment Jackson wrote, "I repeat, I had a right to believe that you were my sincere friend, and, until now, never expected to have occasion to say to you, in the language of Caesar, Et tu Brute."⁶⁸ Privately Jackson wrote

⁶⁶ Niven, John. 1988. John C. Calhoun and the Price of Union: A Biography. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press. p. 167.

⁶⁷ Pendleton Messenger. October 19th, 1831

⁶⁸ Jackson, Andrew. 1929. Correspondence of Andrew Jackson Vol. IV. ed. Bassett, John Spencer. Washington D. C.: Carnegie Institute. p. 141. Letter from Andrew Jackson to John C. Calhoun dated May 30th, 1830.

of Calhoun, "Calhoun is still going with secret intrigues against me."⁶⁹ and "it is... that base man Calhoun who is secretly saying that Mrs. Eaton is president. I shall in due time give Calhoun his quietos, and shew his baseness naked to the world."⁷⁰ Although the Peggy Eaton Affair does show the personal hostility between Jackson and Calhoun it is only a small part of the background of Nullification. It is important to understand that Jackson had good personal relations with other Nullifiers, including Hamilton. The Nullifiers hoped that the public stir was "only a private affair between those distinguished individuals, with which the party at large has no concern".⁷¹ Calhoun, despite his protestations in the letter, was widely considered to have used the Eaton Affair to embarrass Jackson. A conflict over sexual values was probably Calhoun pandering to New England or Northern opinion rather than to South Carolina values. It was part of his strategy to split elements of the Jackson coalition in the Northeast and gain support for himself.

Some other personal and cultural differences were reflected in the Peggy Eaton affair. Jackson believed in a white egalitarianism while Calhoun believed that the white upper class should rule and was more distrustful of mass participation. Calhoun's values also contrasted with Hamilton's strategic use of Jacksonian politics. While

⁶⁹ *ibid.* p. 305. Letter from Andrew Jackson to John C. McLemore dated June 27th, 1831.

⁷⁰ Jackson, Andrew. 1929. Correspondence of Andrew Jackson Vol. IV. ed. Bassett, John Spencer. Washington D. C.: Carnegie Institute. p. 311. Letter from Andrew Jackson to Andrew J. Donelson dated July 10th, 1831.

⁷¹ Charleston Mercury. February 3rd, 1831.

Hamilton agitated in South Carolina organizing rallies and dinners and appealing to the "rabble", particularly the white mechanics who were the backbone of the Nullification support, Calhoun was nervous about these tactics. While Hamilton tied Jacksonian rhetoric against the Bank of the United States to the "Federal cabal" against the Nullifiers, Calhoun thought that the Bank War had gone too far. In a letter about the Bank War he wrote, "I think the agitation of the bank question is premature and unfortunate, and the propositions to increase the pensions and distribute the surplus funds dangerous."⁷² This shows the profound differences between not only Jackson and Calhoun but between the radical and moderate Nullifiers, like Calhoun. The radical Nullifiers were caught somewhere between Jackson and Calhoun. They were appealing to both the planter class with its aristocratic manners and pretensions and the more Jacksonian constituency of mechanics. The radicals forced Calhoun to make a decision. Calhoun had wanted to have it both ways. On the one hand, defending the right to Nullification and on the other, keeping his dreams of the Presidency alive.

Jackson's position on protectionism and the American system can not be ascertained by focusing on personalities. Because of the alleged "corrupt bargain" between John Quincy Adams and Clay which gave Adams the Presidency in 1824, if

⁷² Calhoun, John C. 1978. The Papers of John C. Calhoun. Vol. XI. ed. Clyde N. Wilson. p. 122. Letter to Tomlinson Fort from John C. Calhoun February 15th, 1830.

there was one person Jackson hated more than Calhoun it was Henry Clay.

Jackson's opinion about the tariff of 1828 was not unfavorable. He wrote, "When we see the politicians of England so sensitive upon the subject of the late Tariff law, it is conclusive evidence to my mind, that they foresee the benefits that must result to America from it, and the injury to Britain."⁷³ But Jackson was opposed to many internal improvements. He vetoed the Maysville Road internal improvements project. This helped keep him popular in the South. He wrote, "The veto, has become what my enemies neither wished, or expected, very popular."⁷⁴ The Nullifiers supported Jackson's veto but warned "the advocates of the internal improvements are neither conquered by his veto, nor do they intend to relinquish quietly the precious privilege of dividing amongst themselves the rich and valuable spoils of the South."⁷⁵

CONCLUSION

The Jacksonian era's growing white egalitarianism, the increasing sectional differences and the fear of slave revolts were all essential elements in the "domestic context" for understanding the growth and development of the Nullification movement. The actions of James Hamilton, Jr. as a mobilizer of mass discontent become clearer in a world where the liberal and feudal fragments of South Carolina both mix and clash.

⁷³ Jackson, Andrew. 1928. Correspondence of Andrew Jackson Vol. III. ed. Bassett, John Spencer. Washington D. C.: Carnegie Institute. p. 387.

⁷⁴ *ibid.* p. 161. Letter from Andrew Jackson to Martin Van Buren dated July 12th, 1830.

⁷⁵ Charleston Mercury. June 19th, 1830.

CHAPTER FOUR**JAMES HAMILTON, JR.: DEMOCRATIC MOBILIZER FOR MINORITY RULE**

JAMES HAMILTON, JR.: DEMOCRATIC MOBILIZER FOR MINORITY RULE

James Hamilton, Jr. was the primary leader of Nullification as a popular movement in South Carolina. Hamilton is important to understanding Nullification because he personified the movement. (His personal background is detailed later on.) The Denmark Vesey slave revolt conspiracy reflected the white community's fear that was essential to the development of the Nullifier's movement. Hamilton's role in the Vesey trial and report was critical. Even more importantly, Hamilton organized majoritarian democracy within South Carolina for minority rule in the nation as a whole, which reflected the unique combination of the liberal and feudal fragments in antebellum South Carolina. In examining Hamilton's actions the influences of the egalitarianism of the Jackson movement and the South Carolinian aristocratic fears of a loss of control become clear.

BRIEF BACKGROUND AND OVERVIEW OF HAMILTON'S CAREER

Some background on Hamilton's life will help us better understand the role that he played in Nullification. Hamilton was born in Charleston, South Carolina on May 8th, 1786. His father was a Major in the Second Regiment of the Pennsylvania Continental Line and for a time was an aide to George Washington. His mother was sister to Thomas Lynch, a signer of the Declaration of Independence. They lived on a South Carolinian rice plantation. As usual the family spent

only the winter in the plantations because of the mosquitoes which carried malaria. In the summer they went north to Newport, Rhode Island. In 1812, he and his father both enlisted to fight the British in the War of 1812. They were nationalist "War Hawks" "in spirit and in fact".⁷⁶ It was during the war that he started to develop a "keen interest in military matters"⁷⁷, a skill that he would later use during Nullification. He also was an expert duelist wounding fourteen men and not killing one while not being hurt himself. He wounded William Gracie of New York City when he thought Gracie was "too attentive to his fiancée"⁷⁸, Elizabeth Heyward, the wealthy granddaughter of Thomas Heyward, another signer of the Declaration of Independence. They married, had eleven children and became sea island cotton planters. He grew bored and decided to enter politics losing his first race for the State Assembly in 1819. But politics were now in his blood. He sold his plantation and became an attorney, ironically becoming a partner with future Unionist James L. Petigru. In 1820, Hamilton won election to the South Carolina State Assembly. In 1822, Hamilton was chosen to become City Intendant of Charleston,

⁷⁶ Unpublished article by J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton "Among the Present, James Hamilton, Jr." p. 3, Folder 35 in James Hamilton Jr. Papers, # 1489 Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Library.

⁷⁷ *ibid.* p. 4.

⁷⁸ *ibid.* p. 5.

which was similar to a mayor. It was his actions as City Intendant in dealing with the Denmark Vesey conspiracy case that advanced Hamilton's political career. He went on to the United States Congress in 1823 and eventually became South Carolina's Governor in 1830.⁷⁹

The Denmark Vesey case not only changed Hamilton's political fortunes, but ultimately his politics, from nationalist to sectionalist. (See below.) Hamilton states that when he entered Congress in January 1823 he was "thoroughly and enthusiastically national in politics."⁸⁰

In 1820, he opposed "the practice of arraying upon questions of national policy the states as distinct and independent sovereignties in opposition to, or with a view to exercise control over the general (national) government".⁸¹ But the lessons of the Denmark Vesey case for Hamilton started to challenge his nationalist sentiments. It seemed to him that other sections of the nation were not eager to protect South Carolina in its moment of insurrectionary crisis. The controversy surrounding the Negro Seaman's Act and later the protective Tariff of 1824 completely transformed him from nationalist into Nullifier. He attacked the tariff as unconstitutional because it helped one section of the nation at the expense of another.

⁷⁹ Unpublished article by J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton "Among the Present, James Hamilton, Jr." p. 6, Folder 35 in James Hamilton Jr. Papers, # 1489 Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Library.

⁸⁰ *ibid.* p. 7-8.

⁸¹ *ibid.* p. 8.

Hamilton's style was firebrand in spirit. "He was frequently unpleasantly frank in his speeches and was so consistently sharp and clever in retorts that he was dreaded by his opponents".⁸²

Starting in 1828 after the so-called Tariff of Abominations was passed, Hamilton began a campaign for Nullification in his famous speech at Walterborough.⁸³ The 1828 election of Jackson as President and the continuation of Calhoun as Vice President made 1829 a relatively calm year for Nullification. Jackson was expected to do better for the South on tariffs so there was not much agitation. But by 1830, South Carolina was stirred up again. Hamilton's opposition to Jackson and the protective tariff grew. Hamilton ran for the South Carolina governorship in 1830 and his organizational skills emerged. He had earned a reputation around the state and nation for his enthusiasm and dedication to organizing against the protective tariff. John Quincy Adams called him "the most furious of the Southern Nullifiers" and Joel Poinsett said he was "the most violent man among the Nullifiers."⁸⁴ Although Hamilton won the gubernatorial election of 1830 and the Nullifiers controlled the state legislature they did not have two-thirds needed to hold a convention on Nullification. The

⁸² Unpublished article by J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton "Among the Present, James Hamilton, Jr." p. 7, Folder 35 in James Hamilton Jr. Papers, # 1489 Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Library.

⁸³ *ibid.* p. 19.

⁸⁴ *ibid.* p. 20.

Nullifiers had also lost the local Charleston elections for City Intendant (mayor) in 1830. Hamilton used his position as Governor to further the Nullifier cause. In 1832, he was President of the States' Rights and Free Convention, which he was instrumental in organizing. He was taking his message to people who had not been involved in the political process before. Unionist Benjamin F. Perry said that Nullification without Hamilton "would have been still-born, or been crushed in its swaddling clothes."⁸⁵

In 1832 the United States Congress passed another tariff act that provided little relief for the South and South Carolina. Hamilton called for immediate action of the state to nullify the tariff since the national government was not listening to their concerns. The Nullifiers won the 1832 elections throughout the state. Hamilton pressed forward for Nullification now armed with a vote from the electorate to call for a convention. Hamilton chaired the convention, and as his former law partner and Unionist James Petigru said the convention was "in his palm".⁸⁶ The convention, which first met on November 19th, 1832, was dominated by the States Rights' and Free Trade Party (the Nullifiers) and immediately passed a Nullification Ordinance that stated that the tariffs of 1828 and 1832 were null and

⁸⁵ Unpublished article by J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton "Among the Present, James Hamilton, Jr." p. 21, Folder 35 in James Hamilton Jr. Papers, # 1489 Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Library.

⁸⁶ *ibid.* p. 22.

void in South Carolina. The reaction of the national government was dramatic. Jackson had been reported to want personally to supervise the hangings of Hamilton, Calhoun and the rest of the Nullifier leadership. He called for the passage of the Force Bill, which would authorize the use of any means necessary to enforce the tariff laws. The convention was barely over when Hamilton resigned as Governor to take on the even more important task of organizing a militia of volunteers to stop what he viewed as federal aggression on the part of Jackson. The legislature elected Hamilton Brigadier General. Robert Hayne, of the famous Hayne-Webster debates, took over as Governor, but Hamilton was still the Nullifier leader. Unionist Petigru believed that "The general opinion I believe of their own party (the Nullifiers) is that Hamilton is as much Governor except in name."⁸⁷ Hamilton's previous military experience and his extraordinary organizational and motivational skills seemed suited for this showdown with the national government.

HAMILTON'S SHIFT FROM NATIONALIST TO NULLIFIER

There was a shift from nationalist to sectionalist sentiments in South Carolina after 1815. The changes in the trade relationships among the North the South and the British helped make the protective tariff the most contentious sectional issue of the era. In 1821, before the

⁸⁷ Carson, James Petigru. 1920. Life, Letters and Speeches of James Louis Petigru. Washington D.C. p. 113. Letter from James L. Petigru to Hugh S. Legare dated December 21st, 1832.

Denmark Vesey conspiracy, Hamilton was "national" in his politics and was quite interested in having a South Carolinian for President. The first choice of many of the South Carolinian leadership was Lowndes. Calhoun was a favorite among some, but Lowndes had the support of the South Carolina State Legislature. On December 18th, 1821, a resolution calling on South Carolina to support William Lowndes for President easily passed. Hamilton wrote to Lowndes on January 1st, 1822, "Although there was a serious opposition to a caucus nomination, as far as you were personally concerned more than Three-fourths of the State are decidedly in your Favor in preference to any other individual whomsoever."⁸⁸

After the Panic of 1819, consideration of public opinion started to play a more prominent role, but in South Carolina politics was still a gentlemen's affair. A December 29th, 1821 letter to Hamilton from Lowndes shows us the gentlemanly quality of the democratic process among the South Carolinian leadership of the era. Lowndes wrote, "the Presidency of the United States is not in my opinion an office to be either solicited or declined."⁸⁹ Lowndes went on to state that he did not want to give the impression "out of Carolina" that he or South Carolina would not support

⁸⁸ Letter from James Hamilton Jr. to William Lowndes dated December 18th, 1821. Lowndes Papers p. 335-36, Southern Historical Collection. Copy of letter in James Hamilton Jr. Papers, # 1489 Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Library.

⁸⁹ Letter from William Lowndes to James Hamilton Jr. dated December 21st, 1821 Lowndes Papers p. 335-36, Southern Historical Collection. Copy of letter in James Hamilton Jr. Papers, # 1489 Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Library.

Calhoun for President. Lowndes must appear "disinterested" to be acting in an honorable manner.

What conclusions can we draw from this? One, the election of Presidents had a certain respectability among the aristocratic leadership and that too much public ambition was considered suspect. This respectability also implies that men of "quality" must control the process. Organizing a mass constituency was considered crass and improper. One had to gain the support of other "honorable" men to gain access to the club of Presidential hopefuls. Although Hamilton certainly agreed with Lowndes about the proper way to approach politics in 1821-22, by 1830, politics in South Carolina and United States had changed considerably. Hamilton was organizing Nullification clubs in every district in South Carolina and using the most violent of rhetoric to stir public sentiment in calling for Nullification.

At the beginning of 1822, Lowndes' passed away. Unionist Benjamin F. Perry fondly remembered him as a "great and good man".⁹⁰ Hamilton was in the right place at the right time. After having become a local hero for his prosecution of the Denmark Vesey conspiracy, there was now an open seat in the United States Congress that Lowndes had occupied. Hamilton was elected to Congress and his journey

⁹⁰ Perry, Benjamin F. 1980. The Writings of Benjamin F. Perry Vol. I. eds. Meats, Stephen and Arnold, Edwin T. Spartanburg, S.C.: The Reprint Company Publishers. p. 252.

from nationalist to Nullifier began.

Lowndes' death also brought Calhoun into the spotlight as the lone South Carolinian with Presidential ambitions. Calhoun remained tentative, caught between the radical Nullifiers back home and his national ambitions. Hamilton's politics had been completely transformed from nationalist to sectionalist over the years from 1822 to 1828.

THE DENMARK VESEY CONSPIRACY

The Denmark Vesey conspiracy was one of the most significant plots of slave rebellion in United States history. James Hamilton, Jr. played a significant role in investigating the affair. He was the "chief antagonist of Vesey"⁹¹, being the City Intendant of Charleston at the time. Hamilton was then elected to the United States Congress later in the same year. South Carolina's fear and anxiety from the conspiracy eventually promoted the cause of Nullification. Briefly here is a description of the conspiracy. On May 30th, 1822, Peter Prioleau, a domestic slave who had been approached about participating in the conspiracy, told his master about the revolt plot. William Paul, a city slave told authorities who else was involved. But originally this did not reveal much new information. The same day Denmark Vesey moved up the rebellion date from July 14th to June 16th. But George Wilson, a slave, reported that

⁹¹ Lofton, John. 1983. Denmark Vesey' Revolt: The Slave Plot that Lit the Fuse to Fort Sumner. Kent, Oh.: Kent State University Press. p. 197.

he had heard of the imminence of the insurrection plot for June 16th. Vesey and his conspirators called off their rebellion. Hamilton called out the militia and arrested many slaves. Hamilton wrote in a letter to William Lowndes that the public was overreacting. Hamilton was at that point in a state of denial about the nature of the conspiracy. Hamilton penned this letter on June 16th 1822, "Before I close this communication, I must observe to you, that the scene I have investigated (within the last twenty-four hours) the cause of the public alarm the more satisfied I am of the little reason we have for apprehension. In either alternative we are safe, as the measures to be adopted assure to us immediate security, and ample triumph.

I have taken it of course for granted that you must have heard of the rumor of a contemplated commotion among a certain part of our population."⁹²

But Hamilton quickly realized the extent of the plot and it consumed him the entire summer of 1822. Several slaves testified that they began plotting following the arrest of 'a large assemblage of slaves and free blacks' on charges of disorderly conduct after they successfully stopped city officials from building on a black burial ground belonging to the African Methodist Episcopal Church in June 1818. Others had been approached by Vesey's conspirators Monday Gell, and Gullah Jack Pritchard. The plot was elaborate. It was nothing less than a plan to take

⁹² Letter to William Lowndes from James Hamilton, Jr. June 16th, 1822 in James Hamilton Jr. Papers, # 1489 Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Library.

over Charleston.⁹³

White reaction was swift and intense and the nature of the participation in the revolt was even more disturbing to the masters. It was led by free blacks and city slaves, not plantation slaves. Just as men like Thomas Cooper were influenced by the ideas of Smith and Ricardo, the Charleston slaves were influenced by revolutionary and democratic ideals as well. Edward Pearson describes the Charleston's male slaves as having "an urban cosmopolitan sensibility".⁹⁴ The Charleston port not only imported and exported raw materials but ideas as well. The city slaves had an independence that the plantation slaves did not. City slaves were more influenced by the liberal tradition. They received a certain amount of dignity by the small discretionary income and had some control over their work lives. Of course, they did not have the rights of white men. Special rules applied to them that did not to whites. So free blacks and city slaves were caught psychologically between two worlds, part slave (feudal fragment), part free (liberal fragment). This simultaneously gave them a sense of power but there was a ceiling on the limited aspects of the

⁹³ Not everyone agrees about the plot. Richard Wade in "The Vesey Plot: A Reconsideration." Journal of Southern History XXX (May 1964) 143-61 argues that the plot "was probably nothing more than loose talk among aggrieved and embittered men."

⁹⁴ Pearson, Edward. 1993. "Culture and Conspiracy in Antebellum Charleston: The Trials and Transcripts of Denmark Vesey." Paper presented at Popular Culture Association in the South Annual Convention, 1993. p. 6.

liberal tradition that applied to them.⁹⁵ This created a powerful undercurrent of rage and hostility masked by the veneer of reliability. To whites, the fact that city slaves and free blacks were behind the conspiracy was very disturbing. These blacks were more like them, more tied to the liberal tradition than the plantation slaves. It seemed

⁹⁵ How the actions and aspirations of the African-American slaves influenced the white South Carolinian community is an important element in understanding the Nullification Crisis. The Denmark Vesey slave revolt in 1822 in Charleston and the Nat Turner revolt in 1831 created fear in the white community. The Denmark Vesey revolt was led by free blacks and educated slaves whom the whites trusted most. They were the blacks most influenced by the values of the liberal tradition. Although the South did not have feudal relations, the roles of master and slave parallel the roles of lord and peasant. Moore argues that even "Negro sharecroppers in the present-day South (1966) could be legitimately regarded as a class of peasants in American society." (Footnote. p. 111.) According to Moore, the peasants are crucial to the outcome of the modernization process. Moore argues that the transformation of peasants into some other kind of social formation is favorable to the development of democracy. Peasants, if not transformed into some other formation, often tried to stop modernization because it threatened their way of life. In the United States, slaves wanted modernization and democracy because it was going to undermine their way of life. They resisted slavery because it was the most degrading social position in a liberal society. In a liberal society where dignity is provided by social mobility, slaves have no dignity.

Into the Civil Rights era, as Moore argues, African-Americans still played the role that peasants played in the economies of other nations and again their liberal aspirations supported the modernization process. When African-Americans left the plantation in great numbers during and after WW II for the Southern and Northern cities because of mechanization of the plantation, it is analogous to the peasants being forced off the land by the enclosure movements in England. Many peasants in England resisted modernization (others became successful yeoman) but African-Americans in the United States were happy about the "chance of a better life" that modernization promised. Even through the 1960's this combination of the liberal dream in the feudal fragment existed in the African-American community.

to whites before Vesey that these blacks could be the most trusted. They were viewed by whites as being privileged, so they seemed least likely to revolt. Everyday life became more disturbing as whites feared that every black artisan and workman whom they personally knew really wanted to kill them. Action was needed to control this precarious social situation.

The first action taken was to find the conspirators and put them on trial. Hamilton was the chief prosecutor. 35 conspirators were executed, including Denmark Vesey and Gullah Jack Pritchard. White South Carolina universally commended him for his work against the plot. The following was a resolution passed unanimously by the Charleston City Council on August 17th, 1822,

"Resolved that the thanks of the Council be given to the Honourable James Hamilton, Jr. for his unremitting attention to the public interest during his term of service and more particularly for his vigilance during late period of uncommon peril and danger, at a season of extraordinary commotion and alarm the council feels happy when they reflect, that the efforts of the Chief Magistrate of the City were distinguished by an activity and energy suited to the public emergency."⁹⁶

In August 1822, the Charleston City Council passed a resolution asking that a report on the entire affair be published by the City Intendant, James Hamilton, Jr.. The report released reflects the musings of the white fears

⁹⁶ Charleston City Council Resolution, August 17th, 1822 in James Hamilton Jr. Papers, # 1489 Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Library.

about the incident.⁹⁷ It stated, "Of the motives of Vesey, they are only to be referred to a malignant hatred of the whites, and inordinate lust of power and booty... His followers were slaves,... they had no individual hardship to complain of, and were among the most humanely treated negroes in our city... by the extreme indulgence and kindness, which characterizes the domestic treatment of our slaves. Many slave owners among us... with a misguided benevolence, have not only permitted their instruction, but lent to such efforts their approbation and applause.

Religious fanaticism has not been without its effect... the secession of a large body of blacks from the white Methodist Church... formed a hot-bed... Among the conspirators a majority of them belonged to the African Church, and among those executed were several who had been Class Leaders."⁹⁸

In an era of white egalitarianism with changes in industrial production and an abolitionist movement internationally the Vesey conspiracy exacerbated white fears. It also created an opening for the aristocratic South Carolina to make a connection through white solidarity of the artisans and mechanics of the state.

SOUTH CAROLINA SUPPORTS JACKSON IN 1824 AND 1828

Hamilton, and most of South Carolina, supported Jackson for President in the elections of 1824 and 1828. The South Carolinians were in a strange position politically in this rise of white egalitarianism. On the one hand, white

⁹⁷ There was also a much lengthier report issued in October 1822 called the "An Official Report of the Trials of Sundry Negroes Charged with an Attempt to Raise an Insurrection in the State of South Carolina" also referred to as the Kennedy and Parker report named after its authors. The tone and motives cited are the same as in Hamilton's report but it goes into much greater detail about the conspiracy.

⁹⁸ Hamilton, James Jr. 1822. Negro Plot: An Account of the Late Intended Insurrection Among a Portion of the Blacks of The City Of Charleston, South Carolina. Boston: Joseph W. Ingraham. p. 30-31.

solidarity was essential because of the state's majority black population, including an unusually high number of free blacks. But to its aristocratic leadership the idea of mass participation in decision-making was scary. Whites could be trusted to be against blacks because white supremacy gave all whites dignity. But the idea of lower class white participation might threaten the planters' position. It undermined the feudal fragment ideal that was applied to blacks; the concept that each person should know their place and stay there. South Carolina's leaders wanted this to also apply to whites to a lesser degree. This aristocratic idea coexisted with the ideals of white supremacy and white egalitarianism.

NULLIFIER LEADERS MEET AT HAYNE'S LODGING

In 1828, after serving three terms in Congress, Hamilton resigned. Congress had just passed the so-called Tariff of Abominations, and he felt frustrated with national tariff policy. He believed that action on the state level might address South Carolina's concerns. There were a series of controversial meetings in the spring of 1828 about what South Carolina should do about the tariff. Hamilton was at the center of the controversy. John Carter described a meeting of the previous spring in which Hamilton had suggested that the entire South Carolina delegation resign and return home. "Major Hamilton said that if the rest of the members would unite with him, he would take that step [resign]. No one seemed to concur... and no more was said about it... I did not suppose that he intended it as a

formal secession of South Carolina from the Union."⁹⁹

Col. William Drayton and Hamilton also wrote letters to Hayne about the meetings. It had been publicly alleged that "treason" had been discussed at these meetings. Hamilton was accused of having talked about the secession of South Carolina from the Union. According to Drayton's account, strategy had been discussed. First, the participants agreed to "make no attempts to increase the excitement... and that they should endeavor to prevent public meetings, and every expression of public opinion connected with the tariff until after the result of the Presidential election...[but] the election of Mr. Adams or General Jackson was of little importance compared with the existence or abolition of the restrictive system."¹⁰⁰

Hamilton remembered this slightly differently. "We would endeavor to allay until the determination of the presidential question; as we believed that one of the principal objects of the coalition was to drive the South into some acts of violence which might subserve the election of Mr. Adams."¹⁰¹

They preferred Jackson's election, although he favored protection, because Adams was viewed as opposing the South.

Hayne wrote to candidate Jackson, "You are supported by the great body of the people not on account of your opinions on the Tariff, (which are known to be opposed to their own) but

⁹⁹ Letter dated October 22nd, 1828 from the Hon. John Carter to General Hayne in James Hamilton Jr. Papers, # 1489 Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Library.

¹⁰⁰ Col. William Drayton's Statement on meetings at General Hayne's Washington Lodging in James Hamilton Jr. Papers, # 1489 Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Library.

¹⁰¹ James Hamilton, Jr.'s Statement on meetings at General Hayne's Washington Lodging in James Hamilton Jr. Papers, # 1489 Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Library.

because they have entire confidence of your wisdom and integrity... Should Mr. Adams be re-elected and... continue to act on the policy of wholly disregarding the feelings and interests of the Southern States; should they push the manufacturing system, to the point of annihilating our foreign commerce, and above all, should they meddle with our Slave institutions, I would not be answerable for the consequences."¹⁰²

The Charleston Mercury proudly announced on Jackson's

election that, "this paper was the first to denounce the unprincipled coalition by which the popular will was audaciously disregarded at the last election."¹⁰³

Hayne also explained to Jackson that the stories circulating about the meetings at his lodgings were not true. "There is no party here who desire a dissolution of the union."¹⁰⁴ The Nullifier leadership was being cautious about the election in 1828, but caution was certainly not one of Hamilton's personal strong characteristics during Nullification. He admitted that "I certainly did say, that as to the federal government enforcing an unconstitutional law with the bayonet, it was an absurdity too monstrous to be entertained. But if they did recruit an army from the power-looms of the manufacturers, to force their infernal tariff down our throats... we would have to meet our invaders like men, and I have very little doubt we would react... But that these remarks were intended either to urge the necessity or even countenance the propriety, of a separation of the states, I positively deny."¹⁰⁵ It is

¹⁰² Jackson, Andrew. 1928. Correspondence of Andrew Jackson Vol. III. ed. Bassett, John Spencer. Washington D. C.: Carnegie Institute. p. 434. Letter from Robert Y. Hayne to Andrew Jackson dated September 3rd, 1828.

¹⁰³ Charleston Mercury. November 18th, 1828.

¹⁰⁴ *ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ James Hamilton, Jr.'s Statement on meetings at General Hayne's Washington Lodging in James Hamilton Jr. Papers, # 1489 Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Library.

clear from the tone of his language that he was far from apologetic about his remarks at the spring 1828 meeting at General Hayne's Washington lodging. But even the firebrand Nullifier leaders were ready to wait until after the election of 1828, hoping that Jackson would pass tariff relief. They also did not want to hurt Calhoun's chances of remaining Vice President. Jackson's coalition was made up of newly enfranchised whites and agrarian slaveholders working against the manufacturing interests, although Jackson downplayed this merchant-agrarian conflict. So as agrarians, the Nullifiers supported Jackson, but Hamilton stated in the same letter that after the election there was going to be reassessment of policy towards the tariff. "That after the election was over, we were perfectly satisfied that public sentiment should take its own direction, and if we found, that to our constituents, or to the members of the state legislature, it would be satisfactory that we should meet at Columbia at the commencement of its session, we would there assemble."¹⁰⁶

Hamilton's decision to resign from Congress to come back to South Carolina and run for Governor reveals what Hamilton saw as the next Nullifier strategy. In a Congressional speech addressed to his constituents back home explaining why he was leaving Congress he warned, "South Carolina... must not look to the Government of this Union, to have her interests fostered... her only hope of securing a prosperity... is founded on her own domestic resources;"¹⁰⁷ Hamilton was making the break from

¹⁰⁶ *ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ Speech delivered by Representative James Hamilton, Jr. of South Carolina, May 1st, 1828 to the House of Representatives.

nationalist to sectionalist, but was still "nationalist" enough to want to wait for Jackson's possible election. However, he expected that South Carolina was going to have to solve its own problems. He was already, in Thomas Cooper's infamous words, "calculating the value of the Union". He threatened the union, but only indirectly. His argument that a state must rely upon itself for its own interests was sufficiently vague, but hardly augured secession. However, the tone of his rhetoric revealed his sentiments.

The entire controversy over the meetings in General Hayne's Washington lodgings after the passage of the Tariff of Abominations reveals two important points about the thinking of the Nullifier leaders. First, they thought that the North had a plot against them to effect Adams' reelection. The charge of a "corrupt bargain" between Clay and Adams in the 1824 election lent credibility to such thinking whether it was actually true or not. Second, they agreed on not wanting to rile up the "public sentiment" in their districts even after their own bitter and agitating rhetoric against the tariff. They wanted to direct it themselves. Hamilton noted that after the 1828 election they would meet again if necessary and they were content "that public sentiment should take its own direction". Hamilton was implying that "public sentiment" was useful to suit the Nullifiers' purposes, but only after the Presidential

election of 1828. The implicit message here was that the power of "public sentiment" must be respected. Yet a fear of this power also existed. Hamilton became a master at using public opinion to make gains for the Nullifiers. The use of public sentiment was on Hamilton's mind when he resigned from Congress. He had plans to mobilize South Carolina about the tariff, but was not quite sure how best to proceed.

The Nullifier leadership may have thought it was best to not rile up the people before the 1828 election, but this ran counter to the rhetoric they used later that summer.

Hayne stated that Clay's "American System" "would grind our people to the dust." and McDuffie called it "an abominable scheme of legalized plunder".¹⁰⁸ Hamilton argued, "We [Nullifiers] consider you [the federal government] are coercing us to inquire, whether we can afford to belong to a confederacy in which severe restrictions, tending to an ultimate prohibition of foreign commerce, is its established policy!".¹⁰⁹ After Jackson's election, Hamilton was

certainly planning more of the same. In May 1829, Hamilton wrote to Calhoun, "I have written to Hayne and Pinckney to keep up the fire on the tariff and I shall not be idle for the Southern Review this summer at Northampton."¹¹⁰ The

fact that Hamilton did not run for Governor in 1828 was part of the wait and see attitude of the Nullifiers. Unionist

¹⁰⁸ Niles' Register. July 5th, 1828.

¹⁰⁹ *ibid.*

¹¹⁰ Letter from James Hamilton, Jr. to John C. Calhoun dated May 10th, 1829, American Historical Association Annual Report 1899, p. 807 in James Hamilton Jr. Papers, # 1489 Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Library.

David Williams took notice of this when he wrote to Governor Stephen D. Miller, "I believe he [Hamilton] waits for events... I do not in the least doubt they prevented Major Hamilton from opposing you."¹¹¹

THE ELECTION OF 1830 IN CHARLESTON - CONSPIRACY AND CONFLICT

In the election for the corporate officers of the city of Charleston on September 6th, 1830 the Nullifiers were defeated. Hamilton spoke to the Charleston States' Rights and Free Trade Party calling the loss a "temporary reverse". He then went on to explain that there were four reasons for the setback.

1) The newspapers charged that the Nullifiers' were calling for civil war and secession, which Hamilton claimed was false. He stated "this charge, kept up unceasingly for the last six weeks in five presses out of six in this city, was rendered infinitely more potent from its private dissemination by citizens occupying high public stations... or connected to the federal government...

2) A "Federal cabal" was being organized that included local bankers. "We had arrayed against us the influence of the President of the Bank of the South Carolina, the most zealous... against us... the President of the Bank of the United States was not less active... [he] was seen superintending... the polls at the election. To those we must likewise add... the federal judiciary and the Custom House, which must necessarily be felt when its chief officer is a candidate...

3) Large segments of the Charleston commercial interests connected to the North were opposed to Nullification. "We had... against us a large proportion of the commercial interests of this city, a fact which would

¹¹¹ Letters from David Williams to Governor Stephen D. Miller dated November 3rd, 1828 and January 5th, 1833. David Williams Papers at South Caroliniana Library.

indeed be inscrutable as our contest is for free trade, largely connected with the commerce of the North, and its manufacturers.

4) Adams and Clay partisans wanted to break up the Jackson party and cause disarray in the States' Rights party ranks. "A union of the old Adams and Clay parties of this city... attempt[ed] the overthrow of the original Jackson party, which comprises the great body of the States Rights' party."¹¹²

Hamilton railed against the federal government, "The effort of the federal cabal here [Charleston] to put the Collector of the Port at the head of the Government of our city will fail, I trust by such a rebuking majority on the side of the States Right's party, as will teach Uncle Sam's officers that it is as well for them to eat the bread he provides for them in quiet - and to let the rest of the community take care of the liberties and honor of the State."¹¹³

Hamilton's analysis is an example of what Richard Hofstadter called the paranoid style of American politics. The idea of a conspiracy added to the intensity of conflict. It was clear that since this attitude was both public and private the leadership really believed it. Besides providing a lens through which to view its role in the entire process, the leadership gave clues to the public about what it should believe and how it should react. The more conspiratorial,

¹¹² James Hamilton, Jr. to the Charleston Nullifiers. Proceedings and Resolutions and Addresses Adopted by the States' Rights' Party in Charleston at meeting held at the Carolina Coffee-House on September 9th, 1830 in James Hamilton Jr. Papers, # 1489 Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Library.

¹¹³ Letter to James H. Hammond from James Hamilton, Jr. dated August 24th, 1830. American Historical Review Annual Report, 1900-01, p. 378 in James Hamilton Jr. Papers, # 1489 Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Library.

the greater and more intense the reaction should be. This influenced the way the movement developed. The Nullifiers insisted that they were not for secession or civil war, but the paranoid style of their politics left them with few alternatives but to consider leaving the Union. According to the Nullifiers, nullification was going to save the Union. But if the "injustice" of the protective tariff continued, secession was an option, maybe even inevitable.

HAMILTON'S PLANS TO AROUSE "PUBLIC SENTIMENT"

Hamilton expressed his assessment of the result of the Nullifiers' loss and had a plan to change the results next time. "The majority of our opponents was... only eighty-four, and every one can name at least this number of the advocates of the tariff, may it not be said the agents of the manufacturers? If the suburbs of the city comprehended within the neck, which contains a fixed population, had been brought to the polls, no doubt is entertained that the majority would have been reversed."¹¹⁴ The message was clear. The election was close and the Nullifiers needed to mobilize new voters who would vote their way. They had won the election of 1830 statewide but did not obtain the necessary two-thirds to force a Nullification Convention. The election of 1830 in Charleston for corporate city officers was extremely close. The Unionists had defeated the Nullifiers by 50.3% to 49.7%. Those nonvoters in 1830 who

¹¹⁴ James Hamilton Jr. Report to Charleston Nullifiers. Proceedings and Resolutions and Addresses Adopted by the States' Rights' Party in Charleston at meeting held at the Carolina Coffee-House on September 9th, 1830 p. 5 in James Hamilton Jr. Papers, # 1489 Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Library.

voted in 1832 favored the Nullifiers 2-1. They won the election of 1832 in Charleston by 52.5% to 47.5%. The voter turnout increased by over 9% from 1830 to 1832. The

Nullifiers "had breathed new life into politics...There is little doubt the margin of the Nullifier victory lay in their new recruits."¹¹⁵ The Charleston election held about

a month before the state elections shocked the Unionists.

Petigru confessed, "I fear, .. the State elections... the public mind is poisoned."¹¹⁶ Although Hamilton was not

happy with Jackson he understood that the President was popular among potential voters for Nullification. The

"Federal cabal" included Adams and Clay, but not Jackson.

Jackson represented the white egalitarianism of the era, and Hamilton wanted to use this movement to further his ends. In very practical terms, he knew that the margin of victory would be in mobilization of these new voters. He wanted to mobilize democracy locally to stop it nationally reflecting the mix of the feudal and liberal fragments.

He included in his attack on the "Federal cabal", the Bank of the United States and its local leadership. This was playing to the idea that the Northeast bankers were taking advantage of "average people". Ironically, he argued that the business community that was connected to the North was

¹¹⁵ Pease, William H. and Jane H. 1981. "Economics and Politics of Charleston's Nullification Crisis." Journal Of Southern History. p. 358-359.

¹¹⁶ Carson, James Petigru. 1920. Life, Letters and Speeches of James Louis Petigru. Washington D. C. p. 91. Letter from James L. Petigru to William Elliot dated August 24th, 1832.

opposed to Nullification because it had personal economic reasons, claiming that "two-thirds at least of the trade of Charleston is directly or incidentally connected with the commerce of the North".¹¹⁷ In fact, the very business people who opposed Nullification were the ones who by Hamilton's definition were being exploited by the Northern tariffs because it raised their cost for manufactured goods. Yet they were also now part of the "cabal" against the Nullifiers. Those who probably would gain most directly by not paying the tariff were divided and somewhat opposed to Nullification as a solution. It was too radical for elements of the commercial class. The Nullifiers had to turn to the white artisans and mechanics for support. The appeal was made in terms of the Jacksonian agenda that government should not favor one group over another.

In his Bank Veto Message Jackson railed against the rich Northeast bankers who had come to symbolize this unfairness. Jackson's solution was more liberalism, and less government involvement. Every white man should be able to rise to his potential and the government only makes matters worse when it favors the powerful. The Nullifiers picked up on Jackson's exploitation theme, not class, but regional exploitation. Hamilton's genius was to connect the

¹¹⁷ James Hamilton Jr. Report to Charleston Nullifiers. Proceedings and Resolutions and Addresses Adopted by the States' Rights' Party in Charleston at meeting held at the Carolina Coffee-House on September 9th, 1830 p. 3 in James Hamilton Jr. Papers, # 1489 Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Library.

Jacksonian movement's logic and feeling to the Nullifiers in the popular mind. Of course, the rhetoric of Jackson was for a national majoritarian philosophy of national liberalism. The Nullifiers' philosophy combined the liberal and feudal fragment ideals. By mobilizing a local majority they were using the liberal democracy to defeat a national majority and to defend slavery and Nullification.

The Jacksonian white egalitarianism was national in scope. Slavery outside the South was all but eliminated. Whites in the North and the West believed that slavery was an ugly business, but also that blacks were genetically inferior. But slavery was not built into the everyday economic and social relations among these people. The Nullifiers were arguing for free trade, but not free labor. They focussed on Northern exploitation. If class were the predominant issue planters and most poor whites might have viewed slave labor as a detriment to their economic position. The settlers in the West opposed slave labor for that reason. But no debate about slavery could be permitted by the Nullifiers. The Nullifiers used the populist rhetoric of the Jackson national coalition in South Carolina to organize for a sectional defense of minority rights. This was ultimately the core of the crisis. They used the spirit of Jackson to win and then were defeated by him. The Nullifiers were attempting to rally support outside of South Carolina for Nullification. Georgia seemed most fertile for

them, but even there it never fully materialized. Unionist

Petigru wrote in 1831, "It is certain that Virginia will not patronize nullification and the signs from Georgia are very favorable. Our State now rocks and it depends on our neighbors whether the revolution shall proceed."¹¹⁸ Unionists feared that Nullification might be spreading, but

thought it made sense to deal with Nullification right away.

Petigru strategized, "The Nullifiers must unite and their opponents will unite of necessity... Things will come to a crisis and perhaps it is better that the question should be made in the other Southern states now."¹¹⁹

MEDIA AS ORGANIZING TOOL

Using the media was an important part of Hamilton's strategy after the Nullifiers' defeat in the September 1830 Charleston elections. Hamilton realized that media had to be coordinated for maximum benefit. He realized that "five of the six" papers were "distorting" the Nullifiers' positions. Media became an important element in the mobilization of "public sentiment" towards the Nullifiers. He wrote to

Hammond about the local media strategy, "The course that you have indicated of watching closely and exposing fully and boldly the proceedings of Congress in the Times appears to me to be eminently judicious..."

I hope you have made a final arrangement with Mr. McMonnis and that he agrees to contribute \$500 for your editorial compensation. The remaining \$500 shall be raised in a manner the most delicate and respectful to your own feelings. Your services are of the last importance to the cause and let nothing separate you from the Times. I hope the Telescope will be merged in it, by Mr. McMonnis buying the former in, which will be the best mode now of taking it

¹¹⁸ Carson, James Petigru. 1920. Life, Letters and Speeches of James Louis Petigru. Washington D. C. p. 86. Letter from James L. Petigru to William Elliot dated November 14th, 1831.

¹¹⁹ *ibid.* p. 89. Letter from James L. Petigru to William Elliot dated August 7th, 1832.

out of the hands of the enemy."¹²⁰

Two days later Hamilton wrote, "I forgot in my last letter to say that until the adjournment of Congress I think the publication of the Convention Debate may be in the Times for the reasons that you very properly indicate. I would by all means bring out at the end of the debate the names of the yeas and nays on every resolution, that we may know as Mr. Webster says 'Who is who.'"¹²¹

Over the next month he continued his correspondence with

Hammond, "After the adjournment of Congress we shall organize our States Rights' Association and I hope be able to do something for the press in the country.

The Mercury is still sluggish but when Congress wanes to its end we will put a little fire into its columns.

The tone of the Times is excellent and it is just where it should be. Keep at the helm, keep cool, and take deliberate aim.

My Charleston review [Southern Review] will not be out before the 1st of April."¹²²

Hamilton discussed with Hammond the best strategic moves regarding the media and its impact on the Nullifiers' success or failure. "I hope to meet McDuffie and after full consultation with our friends here, will write you precisely what tone it is deemed most advisable to give to the press. I am fully aware of the great peril of permitting public feeling to collapse because the inference made is that the cause is not worth supporting or the party unworthy of supporting it. We must have a rally on some firm ground and

¹²⁰ Letter to James H. Hammond from James Hamilton, Jr. dated January 8th, 1831, American Historical Review 1900-01, p. 740 in James Hamilton Jr. Papers, # 1489 Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Library.

¹²¹ Letter to James H. Hammond from James Hamilton, Jr. dated January 10th, 1831, American Historical Review 1900-01, p. 740 in James Hamilton Jr. Papers, # 1489 Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Library.

¹²² Letter to James H. Hammond from James Hamilton, Jr. dated February 5th, 1831, American Historical Review 1900-01, p. 741 in James Hamilton Jr. Papers, # 1489 Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Library.

then stand manfully to our arms."¹²³ Hamilton understood the importance of using the newspapers to mobilize "public sentiment".

On the campaign stump for Nullification Hamilton's speaking style either shunned or captivated audiences. Here is an excerpt from a report about a speech Hamilton gave at the Hamburg Dinner. "The Governor... was not prudent in his proselytizing policy. He should have known better how the pulse of his audience beat. They were not prepared for red hot nullification. He should have given it to them cooler, and not have stunned their senses, at once with all the thunders of a fiery mount. The great majority of his audience were not ready to march with him 'knee-deep in blood' rather than submit to the laws of their country."¹²⁴ From "A Voice from Georgia" a much different appraisal of

the same speech states, "His keen grey eye, would not ill-become a cataline, his air of nonchalance and portly grace gave him a military air, chivalrous appearance. He spoke eloquently for three hours. His manner was theatrical and captivating... His voice was clear but not loud. the effort was one of the finest we have ever witnessed on such an occasion. The speech was polished with the hand of a master rhetorician which dazzled in the very renunciation of his arts... he stood forth, the bold and undaunted champion of Nullification."¹²⁵

One of the most important elements in mobilizing the public and creating greater participation and increasing voter turnout is to increase conflict. Hamilton's rhetoric successfully did this. Hamilton always attempted to give his letters to the press and with the associations' publications

¹²³ Letter to James H. Hammond from James Hamilton, Jr. dated May 3rd, 1831, American Historical Review 1900-01, p. 745 in James Hamilton Jr. Papers, # 1489 Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Library.

¹²⁴ Columbia Hive. June 2nd, 1832.

¹²⁵ ibid. June 16th, 1832.

make an appeal to the artisans and mechanics. He encouraged this in the Nullifiers' public campaign. He spoke glowingly of McDuffie, "In the excellence of the tact which he displayed in adapting his speech to the crisis and the community in which it was delivered, he was almost seemingly inspired. In the course of a fortnight we shall move on our State rights associations and not only attempt to make 'Nullification easy' but successful too."¹²⁶

The Unionists became concerned about mobilizing the public but were largely ineffective. Unionist David Williams bemoaned, "The failures I have seen, [Unionists' failures] result from procrastination alone."¹²⁷ He also complained about the favorable treatment that the Nullifiers received in the press. "It [the Telescope] has favored Major Hamilton... a speech [at Walterborough] which in my opinion there are two or three ascertains utterly untenable, if not directly false."¹²⁸

CALHOUN AND HAMILTON

Calhoun's relationship with Hamilton was one of respect and cordiality. They served in Washington together, Calhoun as Vice President and Hamilton as a member of the House of Representatives. In a letter to William Haile, Calhoun refers to Hamilton in a collegial way, sounding like planters talking shop. "I have taken measures through our

¹²⁶ "Letters on the Nullification Movement in South Carolina, 1830-1834." American Historical Review. July 1901. p. 746. Letter from James Hamilton, Jr. to James H. Hammond dated May 21st, 1831.

¹²⁷ Letter from David Williams to Stephen D. Miller dated September 7th, 1828. David Williams Papers at South Caroliniana Library.

¹²⁸ Letter from David Williams to Stephen D. Miller dated November 9th, 1828. David Williams Papers at South Caroliniana Library.

friend Hamilton, who is with us, to forward the Sea Island cotton seed, as you requested. He represents the district, where it is cultivated in perfection, and promised to send the best that can be obtained."¹²⁹ Calhoun supported

Hamilton and explained the "real" meaning of Hamilton's famous speech at Walterborough where he called for a state campaign against the tariff and for Nullification. Calhoun defended Hamilton. "The Southern people still remain devotedly attached to the Union. I do not think they look to revolution for redress, but to the Constitution; and I am of the impression, that any other interpretation of Hamilton's speech, to which you refer would do his motives great injustice."¹³⁰ In a letter to Calhoun, Hamilton was as collegial as Calhoun was to him. Hamilton talked about his plans for the summer, inquired about Calhoun's wife, revealed some gossip about a colleague and asked Calhoun not to reveal any information about it. Then changed the subject to the appointments of Jackson and what it meant to the South Carolina.¹³¹ Calhoun's role until his "coming out party" in the Fort Hill Address in 1831 was that of a reluctant Nullifier. He had written about Nullification in 1828, but hid his authorship. Calhoun still expected a new national majority against the tariff would emerge and that

¹²⁹ Calhoun, John C. 1977. The Papers of John C. Calhoun Vol. X. eds. Edwin Hemphill and Clyde N. Wilson. p. 424. Letter from John C. Calhoun to William Haile, a former member of Congress from Mississippi dated September 28th, 1828.

¹³⁰ *ibid.* p. 541. Letter from John C. Calhoun to Major Dix dated January 2nd, 1829.

¹³¹ Letter from James Hamilton Jr. to John C. Calhoun dated May 10th, 1829 in James Hamilton Jr. Papers, # 1489 Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Library.

he could ride its crest to the White House. Hamilton played a mediating role between Calhoun and the radical Nullifiers.

Calhoun's Fort Hill Address was critical to the Nullification movement. It appeared in the Pendleton Messenger on July 26th, 1831 and gave the Nullification movement the public backing of South Carolina's most renowned son.¹³² Even before it appeared, the Pendleton Messenger announced that Calhoun was going to make his views on Nullification more explicit. The Greenville Mountaineer reported, "We learn from the Pendleton Messenger, that Mr. Calhoun is going to give publicly to his opinions and sentiments on the subject of Nullification."¹³³ Hamilton's campaign, which made Calhoun nervous, was probably the key factor in Calhoun coming out publicly for Nullification. Hamilton wanted to use Calhoun's pronouncements as part of his campaign to get the newspapers to continue to publish Nullification ideas. Calhoun responded with a long article-length letter which reiterated the ideas in the Fort Hill Address as a reply to Hamilton's request. Hamilton wrote to Calhoun a month before the 1832 election of the state legislature asking him, "Permit me... on my own responsibility to make our correspondence public, in such a mode as I shall deem best."¹³⁴ Calhoun responded with an

¹³² Niven, John. 1988. John C. Calhoun and the Price of Union: A Biography. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press. p. 182.

¹³³ Greenville Mountaineer. July 9th, 1831.

¹³⁴ Calhoun, John C. 1978. The Papers of John C. Calhoun. Vol. XI. ed. Clyde N. Wilson. p. 653. Letter from James Hamilton, Jr. to John C. Calhoun dated September 11th, 1832.

unequivocal "Yes".¹³⁵ Hamilton wasted no time in finding a place for Calhoun's letter. The Pendleton Messenger became

"the medium of communicating to the good people of South Carolina the opinions of one of her most distinguished of her sons, on a question of deep and vital interest."¹³⁶

Although the Unionists respected Calhoun, Petigru doubted the article's impact, "Of course you have seen Calhoun's last piece. I think it requires answering and that he is entitled to some credit for the skill with which he has put together his materials. But it is a paltry affair. Disconnected from the excitement of the day, the reasoning would be little attended to."¹³⁷

HAMILTON THE KEY TO THE ORGANIZING DRIVE

James Hamilton, Jr.'s prominence in the Denmark Vesey case, for which he received the respect and admiration of nearly the entire white community, and his military background gave him unimpeachable credentials of a gentlemen. This put him in the unique position among the white mechanics and artisans. Though his politics were firebrand, Hamilton had the personality of seasoned politician who was able to deal with the established leadership. This was central in getting moderates to join the Nullifier cause. His organizing from below and having the respect of the gentlemen of South Carolina was a winning combination. He pressured Calhoun to make his private

¹³⁵ *ibid.* p. 654. Letter from John C. Calhoun to James Hamilton, Jr. dated September 11th, 1832.

¹³⁶ *ibid.* Footnote on p. 654-655.

¹³⁷ Carson, James Petigru. 1920. Life, Letters and Speeches of James Louis Petigru. Washington D. C. p. 97. Letter from James L. Petigru to William Elliot dated September 28th, 1832

opinions public and organized the States Rights and Free Trade Association, the state's first political mobilization of people beyond the gentry. Besides the monthly meetings of the Association around the state, Hamilton organized large events that caught the public's imagination and created a sense of unity and excitement for the Nullifiers. He organized two statewide conventions in the winter of 1831-32 that attracted thousands of followers. Throughout 1831 and 1832 Governor Hamilton used his position to mobilize for Nullification. He was constantly on tour. From the States Rights' Ball in Charleston to public dinners in Hamburg, Sumter, Marion, St. Luke's, Augusta, GA, St. George's and St. Peter's, Hamilton combed the state.¹³⁸ After the Nullifiers won the local Charleston election in 1832 Hamilton toured the state leaving Charleston to travel to Kershaw and Marion and not being able to attend all the numerous Nullifier meetings.¹³⁹

WHITE ARTISANS AND MECHANICS SUPPORT

NULLIFICATION FOR DIGNITY

For the poorer farmers and the Charleston mechanics membership in the association and attending these monthly meetings were a way of gaining the dignity they sought. The Charleston white mechanics, in particular, were in

¹³⁸ Charleston Mercury. March 5th, 1831, April 4th, 1832, May 23rd, 1832, July 19th, 1832, August 6th, 15th, 20th, 1832. Sumter Gazette. June 2nd, 1832.

¹³⁹ Charleston Mercury. September 6th, 8th, 14th, 15th, 1832.

increasing competition with city slaves in a tight labor market. They felt degraded by this situation. The idea of losing work to slaves was unbearable to them. They were looking for ways to restore their dignity. The Nullifiers provided them with a sense of power. Their feeling of powerlessness resulted from the feudal fragments of the slave society conflicting with the liberal fragment represented by the white egalitarianism of the era. These Charleston whites did not think that not having slavery would help their economic circumstances. The strategy was to unite the feeling of the Jacksonian movement to

Nullification. The Charleston Mercury urged "Brother Mechanics - Hoist the State Rights and Jackson Flag, and never yield to your enemies and the enemies of our beloved state."¹⁴⁰ Unionist Petigru also believed that many

middling planters joined Nullification for dignity. "In every strife we find them against the established order... The planter is necessarily proud and his want of education condemns all but the small class, that stand at the head, to witness with great heartburning the consideration paid to polite education and talents."¹⁴¹ The Unionists by and

large did not support the protective tariff. The Greenville

Mountaineer summed up its position "In opposition to the Tariff... we are not... disposed... to adopt the 'ultima ratio'... We are of opinion that it is yet too soon to act."¹⁴² David Williams told Stephen D. Miller, "You are not more opposed to the tariff than I am; the only

¹⁴⁰ Charleston Mercury. October 12th, 1830.

¹⁴¹ Carson, James Petigru. 1920. Life, Letters and Speeches of James Louis Petigru. Washington D. C. p. 84. Letter from James L. Petigru to William Elliot dated August 25th, 1831.

¹⁴² Greenville Mountaineer. January 16th, 1830, May 21st, 1830.

difference between us is how we shall restrict it."¹⁴³
Williams stated the Unionist position on Nullification,

"While we belong to the Union, we must obey the Constitution with all its parts, not the requirements to only which we approve, but also those we dislike it is our duty to obey."¹⁴⁴

In the West, the predominant attitude was to become antislavery (as opposed to abolitionist). The original state constitutions of Iowa in 1846 and Oregon in 1859 had provisions against both slavery and black residency. But to the Charleston white mechanics a campaign against the Northern "oppressors" was more to their liking. Being white had a different meaning in Charleston than in the North and West. The racism of the North and West was more consistent with liberal white egalitarianism and ideas of free labor. The racism of Charleston, even among the mechanics was tinged with a combination of the liberal and feudal fragments. To the frontier Westerner, the solutions to tight labor markets were no slavery and no blacks, even free. To the Charleston mechanics, white aristocratic pretensions had to be extended to them as well as the planters. Here is the combination of the liberal white egalitarianism mixed with aristocratic pretentions. The dignity of being white meant that there was the possibility to be a master, not just a

¹⁴³ Letter from David Williams to Stephen D. Miller dated October 17th, 1830. David Williams Papers at the South Caroliniana Library.

¹⁴⁴ Letter from David Williams to Stephen D. Miller dated October 25th, 1828. David Williams Papers at the South Caroliniana Library.

highly paid mechanic. The role of master was accepted as being the highest status position by white society. The top status in the North and West was to be a rich self-made man through the free labor and free enterprise system. A

Unionist wrote in the Greenville Mountaineer "Men, who, in quiet times, are scarcely seen when the sun shines... are parading our streets arm in arm with the great and the wealthy... Nullifiers take care to make support of their cause itself, a substitute for every other title to respect and confidence."¹⁴⁵

EFFECT OF HAMILTON'S ORGANIZING ON SOUTH CAROLINA POLITICS

The year 1832 was one of intense partisanship and hostility in South Carolina. The niceties of political discourse among the elites were dealt a severe blow by the Nullification movement. In attempting to win elections the Nullifiers needed to rally public support to win. They mobilized mass support through organization and radical rhetoric. After his election in 1830 as Governor, Hamilton organized Nullification clubs in every district in the state. He also organized large public dinners that upset the Unionists. David Williams wrote, "I sincerely hope that the States Rights' dinner to be called in Sumter will manifest much life of downright [missing] than that of Charleston. If it shall indicate half the sort of violence and insanity, it will probably put every moderate man in the state on his legs electioneering."¹⁴⁶

Participation levels increased among lower and middling whites. This was the margin of victory in 1832. This victory

¹⁴⁵ Greenville Mountaineer December 3rd, 1831.

¹⁴⁶ Letter from David Williams to Stephen D. Miller dated August 11th, 1830. David Williams Papers at the South Caroliniana Library

and the increase in voting and organizing among previously non-voting whites were part of the rise of Jackson and the white egalitarianism of the era. This was part of the crisis of modernization. Hamilton's mobilization campaign was intense from the election loss in 1830 until the 1833 compromise. The Unionist did little of the organizing that the Nullifiers had done. Benjamin F. Perry spoke enviously of the Nullifiers, "If the Union party had pursued the same course they would not have been beaten so easily... The Nullifiers were the agitators, active and indefatigable, whilst the Union party was wholly inactive. In every district there was a meeting of these agitators once a month... and the doctrine of nullification explained."¹⁴⁷ That would have violated their sense of what was proper in politics. But as the election of 1832 neared the Nullifiers' intensity stirred the Unionists. But Petigru was discouraged by the attitude of the Unionists. "The idea that we are the weaker party has great influence in making us still weaker. If we had missionaries to traverse the country as they do, I believe firmly we could dispute the ground with them successfully. But we have none."¹⁴⁸

There was tremendous conflict during the campaign.

There were charges of voter fraud. After the Nullifiers were attacked they charged "that thirty thousand dollars was sent to Charleston... to buy votes with and that as high as twenty five and thirty dollars was often given for a single vote."¹⁴⁹ Several weeks before the election, the editor of

¹⁴⁷ Perry, Benjamin F. 1980. The Writings of Benjamin F. Perry Vol. I. eds. Meats, Stephen and Arnold, Edwin T. Spartanburg, S.C.: The Reprint Company Publishers. p. 258-259.

¹⁴⁸ Carson, James Petigru. 1920. Life, Letters and Speeches of James Louis Petigru. Washington D. C. p. 96. Letter from James L. Petigru to William Elliot dated September 20th, 1832.

¹⁴⁹ Sumter Gazette. September 1st, 1832.

the Unionist Greenville Mountaineer, Benjamin F. Perry, shot and killed Turner Bynum, the editor of the Nullifier The Sentinel in a duel. Petigru described the election campaign to his friend Hugh S. Legare who was in Brussels, "The turbulence of the late election far outdid anything you ever saw here. We were beset... by a disorderly mob and obliged to arm ourselves with bludgeons and march out in file... Their leaders entreated us to retire, as their men were perfectly disorderly and would listen to nothing... Many blows were aimed at me; Drayton and Poinsett were both struck."¹⁵⁰

HAMILTON FEARED "PUBLIC SENTIMENT",
BUT CRISIS CALLED FOR DRAMATIC TACTICS

The tariff of 1832 was meant to be a way to calm South Carolina down by reducing the protective tariff. But that was not how Hamilton viewed it. "The tariff of 1832 is, in point of fact, a law by which the consumption of the manufacturing states is nearly relieved of all sort of burden on those articles which they consume and do not produce... whilst it taxes our consumption."¹⁵¹ Hamilton wanted to organize the public to stop any tariff adjustment. He told Hammond, "We must... have the people prepared not only detect the fraud of a deceptive adjustment of the tariff but to resist it too."¹⁵² Hamilton proceeded to organize the white "rabble" to defend the feudal ideals of the planters. But most of the planters in South Carolina were nervous about the Pandora's Box of mass political

¹⁵⁰ Carson, James Petigru. 1920. Life, Letters and Speeches of James Louis Petigru. Washington D. C. p. 103-104. Letter from James L. Petigru to Hugh S. Legare dated October 29th, 1832.

¹⁵¹ Niles' Register. November 10th, 1832.

¹⁵² "Letters on the Nullification Movement in South Carolina, 1830-1834." American Historical Review. July 1901. p. 748-749. Letter from James Hamilton, Jr. to James H. Hammond dated January 16th, 1832.

participation that Hamilton opened. Even Hamilton's own view of the association clubs was not that of a democrat, but of an aristocratic planter who used the democratic forms to organize for his interest. During the campaign he saw the Nullification as an extraordinary crisis for the state and the nation and that was why it called for such drastic measures as stirring up "public sentiment". The Charleston Mercury urged its readers to support Nullification to fight South Carolina's "condition of colonial suffering, dependence and disgrace."¹⁵³ It was the more aristocratic politics of the state's political culture that was now suddenly infused with mass politics. The result was that politics in South Carolina changed. After the Nullification crisis, the association clubs shrank. The Nullifier leaders had mixed feelings about an awakened mass politics on a permanent organized basis. They wanted the clubs to agitate if needed. Hayne warned, "paralyzing the energies of the party... must be avoided by public meetings and addresses, a revival of the Associations and all means heretofore found so successful... P.S. Calhoun, Preston, Hamilton, McDuffie and most of our leading friends with whom I have consulted concur generally in these views."¹⁵⁴

THE ELECTION OF 1832

The Nullifiers won the state elections of 1832 in dramatic style. Hammond wrote to his brother at West Point,

¹⁵³ Charleston Mercury. October 9th, 1832.

¹⁵⁴ "Letters on the Nullification Movement in South Carolina, 1830-1834." American Historical Review. October 1901. p. 119. Letter from Robert Y. Hayne to Francis W. Pickens dated June 10th, 1834.

"Nullification is triumphing. In Barnwell, the Nullifiers have had 500 votes in Edgefield 900, 2 or 3 to one in Charleston, Columbia and Abbeville we have heard of their success."¹⁵⁵ The mobilization and propaganda campaign

organized by Hamilton as Governor was incredibly successful.

The fear and indignities in the hearts of many South Carolinians helped the Nullifiers. Incidents of slave revolts and individual acts of slave violence before the election also helped the Nullifiers. On July 4th, 1832, a slave poisoned the food at an Independence Day celebration, killing several people and getting over two hundred sick.¹⁵⁶ The Nat Turner revolt the year before and the debates of the Virginia legislature about abolition and colonization were also prominent in the minds of many South Carolinians.

The election of 1832 was a great victory for the Nullifiers. The total vote was 25,918 to 17,159 but the Nullifiers controlled more than two-thirds of both houses of the state legislature and could call a convention on nullification.¹⁵⁷ Hammond stated matter-of-factly, "There was an extra session of the Legislature and Convention has been called... It... will surely nullify."¹⁵⁸ The election

¹⁵⁵ Letter from James H. Hammond to Marcus C. M. Hammond dated October 13th, 1832. James H. Hammond Papers at South Caroliniana Library.

¹⁵⁶ Charleston Courier July 16th, 1832

¹⁵⁷ Sumter Gazette. October 27th, 1832.

¹⁵⁸ Letter from James H. Hammond to Marcus C. M. Hammond dated November 1st, 1832. James H. Hammond Papers at South Caroliniana Library.

results also reflected some of the changes that started to occur after the Crisis of 1819 when popular participation increased. Voting was becoming less connected to the local patron of the area and more with group identification involving economic and social concerns. This change shows up in the state and local elections of 1832. Areas with the most blacks voted for Nullification more heavily than areas with the least number of blacks.

DISTRICTS WITH 42% OR MORE BLACKS IN POPULATION

District	% of Blacks	% Nullifier Vote
Abbeville	47%	64%
Barnwell	46%	65%
Beaufort	85%	84%
Charleston (rural)	90%	61%
Charleston (urban)	61%	52%
Chester	42%	59%
Colleton	80%	67%
Darlington	51%	42%
Edgefield	51%	73%
Fairfield	55%	94%
Georgetown	90%	61%
Kershaw	63%	39%
Lexington	42%	100%
Marlborough	51%	100%
Newberry	49%	89%
Orangeburg	59%	90%
Richland	65%	75%
Sumter	68%	53%

Williamburg	69%	50%
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DISTRICTS WITH 35% TO 41% OF BLACKS IN POPULATION

District	% of Blacks	% Nullifier Vote
Chesterfield	37%	38%
Lancaster	41%	41%
Laurens	35%	60%
Marion	35%	61%
Union	41%	71%
York	37%	51%

DISTRICTS WITH 33% OR LESS OF BLACKS IN POPULATION

District	% of Blacks	% Nullifier Vote
Greenville	30%	28%
Horry	33%	14%
Pendleton	23%	67%
Spartanburg	23%	31%

Only the Pendleton, Kershaw and Darlington districts run against the trend. That is probably due to local loyalty to the dominant patron in those areas. Calhoun was from Pendleton and Unionists Blair and David Williams were from Kershaw and Darlington.¹⁶⁰

An occupational breakdown of Charleston and each groups voting patterns shows that an alliance of small shopkeepers, mechanics and town planters supported Nullification against

¹⁵⁹ Freehling, William W. 1966. Prelude to Civil War: The Nullification Controversy in South Carolina, 1816-1836. New York: Harper and Row. p. 364-365.

¹⁶⁰ *ibid.* p. 254-255.

the merchants of the East Bay.

Occupation	% of Population
Mechanics	21%
Planters	10%
Shopkeepers	30%
White-collar workers	14%
Lawyers	6%
Merchants	16%
Doctors	3%

Occupation	% Support for Nullifiers
Mechanics	75%
Planters	69%
Shopkeepers	65%
White-collar workers	55%
Lawyers	52%
Merchants	40%
Doctors	39%

The planters ability to attract the mechanics to their cause and to be able to increase the turnout by 9% from 1830 to 1832 was the key to victory. In the upcountry, the yeoman farmers away from slavery did not support Nullification. All this is strong evidence to support the idea that slavery was the real issue behind the tariff. Hamilton revealed, "I have always looked to the present contest with the government, on the part of the Southern states, as a battle at the outposts, by which if we succeed in repulsing the enemy, The citadel would be safe."¹⁶²

¹⁶¹ *ibid.* p. 368.

¹⁶² Charleston Mercury September 29th, 1830.

NULLIFICATION PROCLAMATION UNTIL THE COMPROMISE TARIFF

October, 1832 to March, 1833 was the crisis period. Nullification had won in South Carolina and the State Convention had declared the Tariff of Abominations in 1828 and the Tariff of 1832 null and void in South Carolina. Hamilton was aware that the Proclamation and its implementation could be thwarted by federal troops. In his address to the South Carolina legislature on November 27th, 1832, he urged a willing legislature to pass any laws and take any appropriate actions that were necessary to the carrying out Nullification. Petigru complained that, "the convention was... the plain tool of McDuffie and Hamilton. They passed without debate an ordinance which has gone far beyond what they had promised."¹⁶³ The Unionists were organizing a militia. Unionist Benjamin F. Perry recalled, "Colonel Memminger submitted a plan for organizing... 'Washington Societies'. In case of emergency, these societies were to become military companies."¹⁶⁴ Jackson helped in their preparations. Jackson informed Unionist Joel R. Poinsett, "My great desire is that the union men may put down nullification and secession down in So. Carolina themselves... You can rely on every aid that I can give"¹⁶⁵ Eight days later Jackson wrote, "I repeat to the union men again, fear not, the union will be preserved... you may rest

¹⁶³ Carson, James Petigru. 1920. Life, Letters and Speeches of James Louis Petigru. Washington D. C. p. 112. Letter from James L. Petigru to Hugh S. Legare dated December 21st, 1832.

¹⁶⁴ Perry, Benjamin F. 1980. The Writings of Benjamin F. Perry Vol. I. eds. Meats, Stephen and Arnold, Edwin T. Spartanburg, S.C.: The Reprint Company Publishers. p. 173.

¹⁶⁵ Jackson, Andrew. 1931. The Correspondence of Andrew Jackson. Vol. V. Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Institute. p. 5. Letter from Andrew Jackson to Joel R. Poinsett dated January 16th, 1833.

assure that the nullies of Carolina will receive no aid from any quarter."¹⁶⁶

This touched off a debate about the legitimacy of which government prevailed, South Carolina or the United States.

Nullification had created a legitimacy crisis. Hammond

lectured his brother Marcus at West Point, "Remember that you are a Southerner and a Carolinian and when you form opinions how they will affect the state from which you claim... [damaged] not only your best affections but your best blood. You should return home and take your stand among your countrymen [South Carolinians]".¹⁶⁷ The preparations

for a showdown were on. One of the ordinances passed by the Convention was a loyalty oath to South Carolina and to Nullification. The Convention did pass a series of loopholes to this law that those already in state positions did not have to take such an oath. Their ability to enforce Nullification or the loyalty oath was remote. What would happen to Federal officials who collected the tariff? Would they be arrested? If they were arrested would not that give Jackson a reason to invade? The Nullifiers were caught in a terrible bind. They also passed rules that would make non-cooperation with the tariff protected by state law. But even non-cooperation was voluntary. This policy of voluntary cooperation was fraught with dangers and loopholes which, in effect, nullified Nullification. Hamilton stated to the

¹⁶⁶ *ibid.* p. 11. Letter from Andrew Jackson to Joel R. Poinsett dated January 24th, 1833.

¹⁶⁷ Letters from James H. Hammond to Marcus C. M. Hammond dated November 30th, 1832 and December 22nd, 1832. James H. Hammond Papers at South Caroliniana Library.

legislature, "You should arm every citizen with a civil process, by which he may claim, if he chooses, a restitution of his goods, seized under the existing impost, on his giving security to abide the issue of a suit at law, and at the same time define what shall constitute treason against the state, and by a bill of pains and penalties compel obedience, and punish disobedience to your own laws... In one word, you must convey the whole ground."¹⁶⁸

Unfortunately, "the whole ground" was uncertain and this made effective action for the Nullifiers difficult. If they were serious about defying the tariff laws secession had to be considered. Many Nullifiers were for it. After Jackson's Force Bill message, Hamilton uttered his secessionist feelings aloud, but still did not want to provoke violence. He saw a strategic advantage in having Jackson strike the first blow. When the Nullifiers ultimately discovered that the other Southern states would not come to their rescue they knew they had lost. The Nullifiers had hoped that the use of force by Jackson would help unite the South against Jackson.

Hamilton was a military and political strategist. He had been a major, a general and the Chair of the Military Appropriations Committee in the House of Representatives during his last two terms in Washington from 1825-1828. He considered the possibility of South Carolina having to defend itself against Federal troops. Speaking to the Nullification Convention he said "I... recommend... That the executive be authorized to accept for the defence of

¹⁶⁸ James Hamilton, Jr. Message to the South Carolina State Legislature, November 27th, 1832 p. 7 in James Hamilton Jr. Papers, # 1489 Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Library.

Charleston... the services of two thousand volunteers... In addition... I... recommend that the executive be authorized to accept the services of ten thousand volunteers, and that this whole force be called the State guard."¹⁶⁹ The South

Carolina legislature authorized the new Governor, Robert Hayne, to use up to \$400,000 for military preparations to call for volunteers and to draft men 18 to 45. Hayne

proposed, "to secure the services of a Volunteer force, which I hope will not fall short of 10,000 men".¹⁷⁰ The

response for volunteers was overwhelming - over 25,000 men volunteered to fight for the Nullifiers if Federal troops

marched into South Carolina. Hammond reported to Hayne, "I made exertion in my power to stimulate the military spirit of the people and found but little difficulty in succeeding to an extent beyond my expectations."¹⁷¹ There were more

volunteers than guns. The army was ill-equipped. Hayne

responded to a request from Col. Pickens, "I am truly sorry to say that the demand for Arms exceeds five times over the number in possession of the State... we have no manufactories... the finances of the State would be exhausted in procuring half the number of arms that have been called for."¹⁷² Hamilton noted in his November 27th, 1832

address that there was only \$41,625.08 worth of arms and the

¹⁶⁹ *ibid.* p. 8-9.

¹⁷⁰ "Letters on the Nullification Movement in South Carolina, 1830-1834." American Historical Review. July 1901. p. 753. Letter from Robert Y. Hayne to Francis W. Pickens dated December 26th, 1832.

¹⁷¹ *ibid.* p. 755-766. Letter from James H. Hammond to Robert Y. Hayne dated January 8th, 1833.

¹⁷² "Letters on the Nullification Movement in South Carolina, 1830-1834." American Historical Review. October 1901. p. 97. Letter from Robert Y. Hayne to Francis W. Pickens dated February 12th, 1833.

militias were poorly trained around the state.¹⁷³ Hammond confided to his brother at West Point about the quality of the troops, "they possess the courage, but not the skills."¹⁷⁴ Although these preparations might have been viewed as acts of aggression the Nullifiers argued "that not a single measure has been adopted beyond preparation for defense if violence be attempted against the good people of this State."¹⁷⁵ In spite of being on the brink of war with each other the Nullifiers and Unionists treated each other with gentlemanly respect at the convention. Unionist Benjamin F. Perry remembered, "The State Convention was ... a most dignified assembly, containing most of the great men of both parties... They... showed the greatest respect for each other."¹⁷⁶

When Jackson issued his Force Bill message, (which the Nullifiers called the "Bill of Blood")¹⁷⁷ Hamilton called one of his celebrated public meetings in Charleston. Over 3,000 people attended to hear Hamilton call for secession if the Force Bill passed.¹⁷⁸ The Sumter Gazette asked "Gen. Jackson can make himself as absolute as ever was Zenghis[sic] Khan?" and "Who does not know the anxious

¹⁷³ James Hamilton, Jr. Message to the South Carolina State Legislature, November 27th, 1832 p. 2 in James Hamilton Jr. Papers, # 1489 Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Library.

¹⁷⁴ Letter from James H. Hammond to Marcus C. M. Hammond dated February 9th, 1833. James H. Hammond Papers at South Caroliniana Library.

¹⁷⁵ Charleston Mercury. February 9th, 1833.

¹⁷⁶ Perry, Benjamin F. 1980. The Writings of Benjamin F. Perry Vol. I. eds. Meats, Stephen and Arnold, Edwin T. Spartanburg, S.C.: The Reprint Company, Publishers. p. 170.

¹⁷⁷ Charleston Mercury. March 9th, 1833

¹⁷⁸ Greenville Mountaineer. February 2nd, 1833.

solitude of the Despot for some act of rashness on the part of the State?"¹⁷⁹ Petigru complained that "like spoiled children the Nullifiers wailed aloud and screamed that the President was coming to butcher us".¹⁸⁰

Calhoun wanted restraint. He eventually went ahead and worked out a compromise with Clay. Unionist Perry agreed with the more radical Nullifiers that it was "an abandonment of principle, on the part of Mr. Calhoun and his party, as the compromise fixed the Tariff on the country for ten years."¹⁸¹ Petigru was not sure what the compromise meant, "I can not for my soul tell whether it does or does not give up the principle of protection; and it seems to me it does not."¹⁸² Although they had backed down, the Nullifiers acted as if they had won. The Columbia Telescope declared, "Nullification is victorious. The Nullifiers have achieved their great purpose."¹⁸³ The Sumter Gazette proudly stated, "What would not have yielded to our petitions, has been granted to our resistance."¹⁸⁴ Hamilton supported the Compromise. When the Nullifiers suspended nullification Hamilton "acted with considerable moderation."¹⁸⁵ Only a

¹⁷⁹ Sumter Gazette. February 9th, March 2nd, 1833.

¹⁸⁰ Carson, James Petigru. 1920. Life, Letters and Speeches of James Louis Petigru. Washington D. C. p. 117. Letter from James L. Petigru to Hugh S. Legare dated February 6th, 1833.

¹⁸¹ Perry, Benjamin F. 1980. The Writings of Benjamin F. Perry Vol. I. eds. Meats, Stephen and Arnold, Edwin T. Spartanburg, S.C.: The Reprint Company, Publishers. p. 261.

¹⁸² Carson, James Petigru. 1920. Life, Letters and Speeches of James Louis Petigru. Washington D. C. p. 121. Letter from James L. Petigru to Hugh S. Legare dated March 5th, 1833.

¹⁸³ Columbia Telescope. March 5th, 1833.

¹⁸⁴ Sumter Gazette. March 2nd, 1833.

¹⁸⁵ Perry, Benjamin F. 1980. The Writings of Benjamin F. Perry Vol. I. eds. Meats, Stephen and Arnold, Edwin T. Spartanburg, S.C.: The Reprint Company, Publishers. p. 182.

few months earlier, when he left office as Governor he was still as firebrand as ever. These were his thoughts from his final address to the South Carolina Legislature "Insulated as we are... I say that a large majority of our people would rather every house on the fair surface of our territory razed to the ground, and every blade of grass burnt, than surrender to the despotism and injustice of that system of government against which we have unalterably taken our stand."¹⁸⁶

THE COMPROMISE - NULLIFIERS BACKDOWN

In January 1833, after Jackson had issued his ultimatum on Nullification, Calhoun explained the gravity of the situation to Hamilton but seemed optimistic about the eventual outcome of the crisis. "the impression on my mind is that Jackson is anxious for force... I have no doubt that the message will do more for us than the Proclamation... in less than six months, the South will be united... Everything depends on you and Hayne... No pretext for force and all will end as we desire. I never felt more confident."¹⁸⁷

Hammond was not so certain about the impact of Jackson's position on Nullification. He counseled, "It is impossible to estimate the effect of Gen. Jackson's proclamation. Upon the timid and ignorant of our party I fear it will have great influence, which will require much caution to counteract."¹⁸⁸ Within a few weeks South Carolina was alone, although it had gained some sympathy in the South after the threats of force by Jackson.

From October 1832 to March 1833 the nation was on the

¹⁸⁶ Niles' Register. December 22nd, 1832.

¹⁸⁷ Calhoun, John C. 1979. The Papers of John C. Calhoun. Vol. XII. ed. Clyde N. Wilson. p. 16. Letter from John C. Calhoun to James Hamilton, Jr. dated January 15th, 1833.

¹⁸⁸ "Letters on the Nullification Movement in South Carolina, 1830-1834." American Historical Review. July 1901. p. 751. Letter from James H. Hammond to Robert Y. Hayne dated December 20th, 1832.

brink of civil war. After the South Carolina Convention passed the Nullification Ordinance, Jackson issued his Force Bill message which combined conciliatory and tough talk, but with no compromise on Nullification. The Compromise Tariff bill was part of strange compromise together with the Force Bill. Jackson supported both. The Force Bill was a critical part of this "compromise" because Jackson insisted on it.

Jackson wrote to Poinsett, "This Bill gives the death blow to Nullification or Secession."¹⁸⁹ Most of the members of House of Representatives voted overwhelmingly for it as a message against any form of Nullification. But this was an unusual compromise because a breakdown of votes in different sections of the nation shows that there was no consensus on passing both of the measures. Less than half voted for both. It was an uneasy combination of votes that worked out the eventual compromise.

After the crisis was over Jackson writing on Nullification and secession, which he considered the same stated, "In my opinion, the admission of the right of secession is a virtual dissolution of the Union. If it were established principle... that laws are only to have such obligation as each individual might choose... such society... would be without laws or government."¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁹ Jackson, Andrew. 1931. The Correspondence of Andrew Jackson Vol. V. Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Institute. p. 28. Letter from Andrew Jackson to Joel R. Poinsett dated March 6th, 1833.

¹⁹⁰ "Letters on the Nullification Movement in South Carolina, 1830-1834." American Historical Review. October 1901. p. 113. Letter from Andrew Jackson to Nathaniel Macon dated September 2nd, 1833.

The eventual dying down of passions and reconciliation after the crisis took several years. Calhoun, Hamilton and his old law partner Petigru played important roles in this process. After Nullification, the rank and file Nullifiers wanted to institute a test oath, which would have had Unionists taking an oath of loyalty to South Carolina. But some of the leaders had started to want to compromise.

Petigru wrote, "no man but Hamilton could possibly bring them to bear the dose which they were now to swallow... I have no doubt that Calhoun was the adviser of pacification."¹⁹¹

TORN BETWEEN THE LIBERAL AND FEUDAL FRAGMENT:

THE CASE OF THE NULLIFIER TAILOR

The heartfelt convictions of the Nullifiers are difficult to ascertain. Looking back at what occurred it is hard understand the intense rhetoric of the Nullifiers and then the backing down so abruptly. The following letter in Niles' Register tells a story that points out the mix of allegiances in Nullifier thought and ultimately about their commitment to the cause of Nullification. It reflects the liberal and feudal fragments in antebellum South Carolina's political culture.

"I am informed that certain gentlemen in Charleston, South Carolina, who are leaders of the Nullifiers, at one of their meetings a short time since, resolved that they would not wear American cloth, nor employ any one but a nullifying tailor to make their clothes for them. On inquiry, they found that there was only one tailor, in Charleston, by the

¹⁹¹ Carson, James Petigru. 1920. Life, Letters and Speeches of James Louis Petigru. Washington D. C. p. 170-171. Letter from James L. Petigru to Hugh S. Legare dated December 15th, 1834.

name of R. who stood with them as to politics, and him they resolved to employ. Sundry pieces of English cloth were bought and carried to R. and he took measure for each one of his friends, and set himself at work in cutting out and making up their garments. As American gilt buttons would not answer, R. was directed to send out to England for the best kind he could get, and to have the figure of the "palmetto tree" stamped on them, which he promised to do, and said he could get them in three months. The coats, as they were finished, from time to time, were to be marked and laid up until the buttons arrived. R. believing that Yankee buttons would answer just as well as English, called on Mr. F. (formerly from New Haven), and requested him to send on to Connecticut and get him the kind he wanted, but enjoined him to keep the matter secret. the order was sent and executed, and the buttons were received and sent to R. with the bill. They are said to have cost only \$3 a groce[sic] (but were charged by R. to his friends, at \$21), and were soon used up, and the garments sent home and several bills paid. In the meantime F. repeatedly called on R. for his money, but he, by way of excuse for delay, pleaded non-payment; at length F. threatened to expose R. if he did not pay, and someone who heard the threat, went and named the circumstances to General H. (Hamilton)

The General's goons called on F. and asked whether it was true, as reported, that he got the buttons for R. which were for himself and his friends, from Connecticut? F. replied that he did. The General said 'He could not believe it.' F. Observed he could show him the bill, which, at the General's request, he did. The General on looking it over, pulled out of his pocket book and paid F. his bill, and said 'for God's sake, don't say a word about it.'

I think, Mr. Editor, if the above story, as related to me by a gentlemen of the South, is true, and I have no doubt of it, that Charleston must be a good place to sell Yankee buttons.¹⁹²

This letter reflects a variety of different attitudes.

The Nullifier leaders were so opposed to the tariff that they publicly declared they would not buy American Cloth, reflecting the intense sectional feelings that had developed. This showed a public commitment from the leadership. But the tailor's role is instructive as well.

R. (the tailor) was committed enough to participate in

¹⁹² Niles' Register. November 3rd, 1832.

this process. The fact that they only found one to do the work in all of Charleston may reflect the small businessmen's attitude towards politics. They were not likely to get publicly involved because they feared they might lose business. R. probably lost business among committed Unionists. Publicly, he wanted to be identified with the Nullifiers. But privately, he bought buttons from the North. Several lessons can be learned. One, his commitment was not very strong. It would hardly seem likely that he would really be willing to, as Hamilton stated, "be knee-deep in blood" to defend the state if he could not follow through this suit commitment. It also reflects the attitude that even firebrand Nullifiers had towards Northern products. They were of good quality. Connecticut was competitive with the British when it came to buttons. A similar point is made by Taussig, that the irony of the tariff protection controversy was that the North, in general, was competitive without protective tariffs.

Even more revealing was the "political" reaction of the General (Hamilton) to the story. He decided not to tell anyone, which meant that it would have been embarrassing. What does that say about "public sentiment"? The author obviously thinks it was funny because he was a Unionist but also because he probably believed that what R. did was "common sense" and that he thought others would react the same way. H.'s (Hamilton) reaction to the story tends to

confirm this. Let me elaborate, if H. (Hamilton) had thought that the public would be aroused by such deception amongst the Nullifier ranks and been outraged, it may have been politically smart to expose the incident, expel the tailor, and point to this as another traitorous incident caused by the "Federal cabal". That would only have been politically smart if the "common sense" of the population would have supported this type of commitment. Obviously H. (Hamilton) did not think so or at least was not sure. This reflects the tailor being caught between the feudal and liberal fragments. On the one hand, the feudal fragment thinking believed that the honor and parochialism of the state with its peculiar institutions of slavery needed to be defended, at least publicly, to the death. But the liberal fragment part of the tailor said to his business-self, "a good deal is a good deal", so he went ahead and bought the buttons. And Hamilton's reaction to the incident shows that he understood this.

CONCLUSION

James Hamilton, Jr.'s role was central in creating Nullification as a popular movement in South Carolina. The report he produced on the Denmark Vesey slave revolt conspiracy reflected the fear that was crucial to the development of Nullification. Even more important was Hamilton's role in organizing and mobilizing popular support for Nullification as Governor of South Carolina. Hamilton

mobilized a majority in South Carolina by appealing to middling and lower class whites. He was able to do this by using the fears that were created by the strange combination of the liberal and feudal fragments and the values that it created in white South Carolinians. The liberal fragment represented by the growing white egalitarianism of the era that emerged after the Panic of 1819. The feudal fragment represented by the aristocratic relations between masters and slaves. The call for white solidarity to protect slavery appealed to the white artisans and mechanics. To white Southerners the liberal dream of social mobility meant the opportunity to own slaves. Hamilton stirred up mass democracy locally to support minority rule in the nation as a whole. In effect, he used the liberal fragment to defend the feudal fragment.

CHAPTER FIVE

NULLIFICATION IN THE INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT

Chapters Three and Four emphasized the development of Nullification by focusing on the domestic politics within the United States. Chapter Three explored the impact of the growth of democratic institutions, slave rebellions and Jacksonian politics provided part of the overall framework for Nullification. Chapter Four chronicled James Hamilton, Jr.'s contribution as a mobilizer of public opinion using the populist sentiment of the era to defend slavery and minority rule. But economic and ideological changes, particularly the growth of the British textile industry, were critical influences on the development of American sectionalism and the Nullification movement. Understanding how these international economic and ideological transformations became incorporated into Nullifier thought is central to my thesis. This chapter focusses on the how the new Transatlantic world shaped antebellum American politics.

In explaining the actions of James Hamilton, Jr. it was necessary to explain the political context of the Jacksonian era in the United States as a whole. To understand the thought of Thomas Cooper, particularly his progressive defense of the Southern slave system, the international economic and ideological influences of the era and its impact on Nullification must be explored. The impact of the growth of the British industrialization, the transformations in economic thought in England, the growth of the

abolitionist movement all can be seen in the thought of Thomas Cooper. He weaves the liberal and feudal fragments together to create a new defense of slavery.

THE TRANSATLANTIC ECONOMY AND NULLIFICATION

Between 1815 and 1830 tremendous economic and cultural changes transformed the Transatlantic world. South Carolina and the American South were central to this transformation, yet, paradoxically were also resistant to change. The textile industry in Britain was the engine of industrialization and the United States' cotton states provided the overwhelming amount of raw material. The invention of the cotton gin in 1793 made cotton production more efficient, but its full impact was not felt until after 1815 because of the Napoleonic Wars. By late in the second term of Jefferson administration the United States became ensnared in this European conflict. The impressment of United States' nationals by the British eventually drew the United States into the War of 1812.

At the same time, political economy and its free trade ideology become the rage in England. The mercantilist policies of the previous era were under attack. Mercantilist policies were designed to create economic expansion at home and to deny it other countries. Even before British political economists, there were previous examples of state approval for free trade policies. Charles P. Kindleberger credits Grand Duke Francis of Tuscany with the first free

trade policy in 1737 by permitting free export of the corn.¹⁹³ Before Smith wrote The Wealth of Nations there were the free trade ideas of the French physiocrats. Thomas Cooper was well aware of this literature.¹⁹⁴ The Nullifiers incorporated this free trade ideology to back their anti-tariff arguments that the government should get out of the way of business and not help some groups at the expense of others.

INDUSTRIALIZATION AND SOUTH CAROLINA'S SHIFT FROM NATIONALISM TO SECTIONALISM

During the War of 1812, John Calhoun of South Carolina and Henry Clay of Kentucky were ardent nationalist "War Hawks", who clamored against the British. Several New England states were opposed to the war and even threatened secession. Even though many New England states were opposed to the conflict, after it was over there was a surge of nationalism as news of Jackson's victory over the British at the Battle of New Orleans spread. This brief period began to dissolve as changes in the Transatlantic economy transformed the relations among the British, the North, the South and the West. The impact of the growth of the British textile

¹⁹³ Kindleberger, Charles P. 1991. "The Rise of Free Trade in Western Europe." in International Political Economy: Perspectives on Global Power and Wealth. eds. Frieden, Jeffrey A. and Lake, David A. New York: St. Martin's Press. p. 72.

¹⁹⁴ Cooper, Thomas. 1826. 1971. Lectures on the Elements of Political Economy. New York: Augustus M. Kelley Publishers. p. 13.

manufacturing and its need for Southern cotton changed American politics. The development of protectionist policies during this period increased a growing sectionalism. By the time of the Nullification Crisis in 1832-33, Calhoun had turned into a sectionalist Nullifier. Clay remained a nationalist, promoting his "American System" based on protective tariffs and internal improvements. Daniel Webster became an ardent nationalist, protectionist, and spokesperson for Northern manufacturing interests. The productive capacity that was unleashed by the end of the war was staggering. It spurred on many technological and business advances. But when the war ended the transformation became more intense. The period from 1815 to Nullification was the blooming of industrialization. The intensity of the busts and the booms in the business cycle transformed life in the Transatlantic world and South Carolina. It was a crisis of modernization.

BRITISH CAPITAL IN THE UNITED STATES' DEVELOPMENT

The flow of capital from Britain to the United States played a key role in the United States' expansion of this period. "Our international economic relations provide the final, and in this period decisive, (1790-1860) link in the pattern of economic expansion."¹⁹⁵ The expansion of available capital in Britain had grown tremendously. Britons were looking for investment opportunities abroad. The United

¹⁹⁵ North, Douglass C. 1966. The Economic Growth of the United States, 1790-1860. New York: Norton. p. 197.

States seemed like a wonderful place. Many speculated on land west of the Alleghenies. The United States was considered exotic to the investor because of its distance from Europe, but a common language, culture and trade relations had existed for a long time. This was an ideal combination. United States-British trade grew. 36% of U.S. domestic exports between 1820 and 1830 were to the British. 16% of British exports came to the United States. 80% of the cotton in Lancashire came from the American South.¹⁹⁶

British capital helped finance key infrastructure projects like the Erie Canal. The Erie Canal "solidified New York's preeminence among ports of the Northeast".¹⁹⁷ The canal was significant in several ways to economic development in the Northeast. First, New York State sold bonds that British investors purchased. This later became a common practice of many states because the Erie Canal turned out to be so profitable. Second, the Erie Canal opened up the development of western New York and therefore, New York City became the conduit for trade to western New York and eventually the West.¹⁹⁸ The development of New York City as the main port in the United States played a crucial part in the United

¹⁹⁶ Jenks, Leland H. 1927. The Migration of British Capital to 1875. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. p. 67.

¹⁹⁷ North, Douglass C. 1966. The Economic Growth of the United States, 1790-1860. New York: Norton. p. 194.

¹⁹⁸ Jenks, Leland H. 1927. The Migration of British Capital to 1875. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. p. 67.

States' economic development. New York City's rise played a role in Southern dependency because it contributed to the relative decline of Charleston as a seaport. New York was the site of delivery of manufactured goods from England because it was the go-between to the West. Charleston was often bypassed. The heavy trade brought many people to New York and this helped New York City (and the region) develop a strong internal market. In the 1830's economic expansion of the North and Mid-atlantic states' industry was coming "to the forefront of economic life".¹⁹⁹ The development of the New Orleans port was also part of the story of the relative decline of Charleston as a seaport. The expansion of cotton growing in the Gulf States made it more important than Charleston.²⁰⁰

The Southern states also sought British capital by issuing state bonds, which were used to create a series of Southern banks. These banks lent capital primarily for the purchasing of slaves and land for cotton production. This capital investment did not create the same type of sustained economic development that occurred in the Northeast. The expansion in slaves and land for cotton production was for an export market. This focus of investment created a rather stagnant internal market compared to the North and Mid-Atlantic states. Furthermore, not having enough industry

¹⁹⁹ *ibid.* p. 76.

²⁰⁰ *ibid.* p. 74.

created a Southern need for British and Northern manufactured goods. This lack of industrialization played a central role in the South's relative lack of development.

The Southern planters' mix of the liberal and aristocratic thinking comes to light in their pattern of investments. They desired and needed profit like any capitalist enterprise. They decided to make investments connected to the international export market. For them that meant investment in land and slaves. Locally, this venture reinforced the master-slave relationship and dried up capital for manufacturing and industry together they increased the aristocratic characteristics of the region, furthered its dependence and limited the development of a strong internal market. Cooper's thought runs parallel to this pattern. A dynamic, forward-looking, laissez-faire attitude linked to a defense of an unfree labor market.

British money in the form of state-issued bonds played a major role in the United States' industrial expansion. United States' protectionist policies did not stop British investors from seeking markets in the United States. The United States was content to build up its own internal market with a combination of British capital, protectionist policies, and a reorganization of its production.²⁰¹ "The expenditure of British capital upon public works stirred the

²⁰¹ Taussig, Frank W. 1931. The Tariff History of the United States. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons. p. 16-17.

internal trade of the United States."²⁰² "The attitude of the typical British merchant towards the United States in the second quarter of the century (19th) was a compound of fear, desire and an anticipation. The fear was of the New England merchant fleet in the carrying trade, a competition that began during the Napoleonic Wars and not to be ended until the Civil War. The desire was for free access to American markets unhampered by protective tariffs. The anticipation was of a populous Mississippi Valley, exporting grain in sufficient surplus to supply the subsistence for a more industrialized Great Britain. The fulfillment of these aims depended upon one event - the development of the West - a West united with the South in the rejection of high tariffs".²⁰³ This did not happen. British capital by

building the internal market in the Northeast eventually created the process where the West had stronger business ties to the Northeast than the South and a strong commitment to the tariff. The period between 1830 and 1836 saw the doubling of United States-British trade.²⁰⁴ Nullification occurred at a time when British export trade was becoming more critical to the continued expansion of the British industrialism.

COTTON PRICES: 1815-NULIFICATION

The period of 1815 to 1832 saw a period of booms and busts in the price of cotton. As prices rose until 1818 speculation in potential cotton growing areas in five southern states, Arkansas, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana and Florida, boomed, raising public land sales from 332 in 1815 to 9,063 in 1818. But then came the bust with the Panic

²⁰² Jenks, Leland H. 1927. The Migration of British Capital to 1875. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. p. 84.

²⁰³ *ibid.* p. 80-81.

²⁰⁴ *ibid.* p. 84.

of 1819 and land sales fell to a low of 228 in 1823. When cotton prices went higher, plantation sales increased, when prices went lower, sales went down.²⁰⁵ These fluctuations devastated the South. The relative decline of Charleston was a reflection of these price changes. "Once the South's leading cotton port, in this era it was bypassed in the import trade and was a shipping point only for cotton from the tributary area. Its shipments increasingly went to New York for reshipment to England rather than enjoying direct trade."²⁰⁶ The deflation in the price of cotton over this period and the general pattern of deflation in the United States was "decisively influenced" by its international economic relations.²⁰⁷ The inflation and deflation rates were more extreme because of the speculative and expansionist nature of the United States culture. "The monetary structure of the economy, which was the proximate cause of inflation and deflation of the years from 1815 to 1823 was shaped by the political forces of the period. Given the expansionist spirit of Americans of the time and the boundless opportunities associated with the opening of the new South and the West, it is hard to visualize the emergence of any other pattern."²⁰⁸ The linking of the liberal and feudal fragments comes together in the South. The liberal ideal of expanding market opportunities became connected to aristocratic restrictions on labor's mobility.

The period between 1818 and 1839 was crucial in America's economic growth. North states "If one were to date

²⁰⁵ North, Douglass C. 1966. The Economic Growth of the United States, 1790-1860. New York: Norton. p. 257.

²⁰⁶ *ibid.* p. 186.

²⁰⁷ *ibid.* p. 187.

²⁰⁸ North, Douglass C. 1966. The Economic Growth of the United States, 1790-1860. New York: Norton. p. 188.

the beginning of acceleration of the economy's growth and the years when industrialization began it was during this period. It was also a period of tremendous westward expansion. Underlying both of these developments was the cotton trade. During this period cotton played its greatest role in inducing growth in the size of the market for manufactures and in influencing the pace of westward expansion."²⁰⁹ The price of cotton during the 1820's

declined (except for the speculative year of 1825). Starting in 1831 cotton prices steadily rose until 1836. From 1831 to 1836 the value of cotton exports rose from \$25 to \$71 million.²¹⁰ This context is important for understanding the mind of the Nullifier. Charleston during this period of growth was experiencing a relative decline, and South Carolina was experiencing a major exodus of population, both whites (65,031) and black slaves (56,683).²¹¹

CULTURAL DIFFERENCES IN APPLICATION OF RESOURCES

I agree with North that the engine of economic expansion begins with the development of a robust export sector in the beginning phases of rapid economic growth. This is because of the predominately small, scattered, rural and self-sufficient nature of these economies. An "expanding external market has provided the means for an increase in the size of the domestic market, growth in money income and the spread of specialization and division of labor."²¹² But

²⁰⁹ *ibid.* p. 189.

²¹⁰ Smith, Alfred. G. 1958. Economic Readjustment of an Old Cotton State: South Carolina, 1820-1860. Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press. p. 221.

²¹¹ *ibid.* p. 22.

²¹² North, Douglass C. 1966. The Economic Growth of the United States, 1790-1860. New York: Norton. p. 2.

what happens to a region's development after the use of a successful export strategy is critical to its development. There were key differences between the Northern and the Southern strategy towards the use of foreign capital in the antebellum period. Since the Southern economy was based primarily on cotton harvested by slave labor, most new investment went into speculation in land and slaves with lesser amounts going into transportation that was designed to get cotton to ports for international export. Northern and Western capital designed projects for exports to Europe, but also for the creation of manufactured goods to sell to the South and a growing internal market. Increases in industrial output paralleled urban growth which in turn attracted more capital and further increased the growth an internal market.

Urbanization in the cotton belt states of South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama and Mississippi remained stagnant from 1820 to 1840. In these states the urban population was 3.2% in 1820, 3.5% in 1830 and 3.4% in 1840. The Northern states of Rhode Island, Pennsylvania, New York, Connecticut and Massachusetts had tremendous growth in urbanization.; 13.8% in 1820, 17.3% in 1830 and 21.2% in 1840.²¹³ The total urbanization in the United States grew from 5.2% in

²¹³ Historical Statistics of the United States from Colonial Times to 1970.

1820 to 7.5% in 1830 to 10.4% in 1840.²¹⁴ The Northern states accounted for most of this growth. Likewise the percentage of workers in textile, iron and steel industries rose from 0.7% in 1820 to 2.5% in 1830.²¹⁵ New England and Pennsylvania provided this increase.

The ability to apply a percentage of the surplus (profits) to activities like education which increases the long run productive capacity of the general population is a key to further economic development. The Northeast outspent the South dramatically in education. In the Census of 1850 (unfortunately this is the earliest information available) comparing the same cotton states above to the same Northern states above the cotton states had only 0.9% of the libraries and 3.9% of the volumes whereas the Northern states had 80.4% of the libraries and 67.6% of the volumes.²¹⁶ In comparing the literacy of the slave and non-slave states; only one in four hundred in New England was illiterate and one in forty in all non-slaveholding states; in the slave states it was one in twelve who were illiterate and this figure is only for whites.²¹⁷ The education of slaves was considered subversive. Whitemarsh B. Seabrook

²¹⁴ A Century of Population Growth, 1790-1900. 1901. Washington D. C.: United States Census. p. 15.

²¹⁵ Historical Statistics of the United States from Colonial Times to 1970.

²¹⁶ DeBow, J. B. 1850 Seventh Census Compendium. p. 159.

²¹⁷ *ibid.* p. 153.

lectured, "Our history has verified the melancholy truth that one educated slave, or coloured freeman, with an insinuating address, is capable of infusing the poison of insubordination into the whole of the black population."²¹⁸

The investment in education in the South was lower than that of the West and the Northeast. "The ratio of pupils to the white population in slaveholding compared to nonslaveholding states was 5.72% to 18.41%."²¹⁹

Even in Charleston where higher education was admired, it was not generally considered important for poorer whites.

Education was designed to train Southern gentlemen. Southern leadership put little effort into including more of the

population in the market economy. "The structure of the Southern economy played a critical role in the South's policy towards education... Even more significant were the attitudes of the dominant planter class... Expenditures to educate the large percentage of white Southerners who were outside the plantation system was something they vigorously opposed."²²⁰ This contrasted sharply with the Northeast and

the West. "Westerners and residents of the Northeast set a high value on such investments compared to the Southern planter."²²¹ The planters' primary-product, agro-export

strategy left out many poorer whites on the margins of the market economy, where there developed an entire class of

"hill" people. "A large percentage of the population made very little cash income and cannot be thought of as a

²¹⁸ Seabrook, Whitmarsh B. 1825. A Concise View of the Critical Situation and Future Prospects of the Slaveholding States in Relation to Their Coloured Population. Charleston: A.E. Miller. p. 13.

²¹⁹ North, Douglass C. 1966. The Economic Growth of the United States, 1790-1860. New York: Norton. p. 133.

²²⁰ *ibid.* p. 133-134.

²²¹ *ibid.* p. 8.

regular part of the market economy."²²²

Because many people were out of the market economy urbanization lagged behind the rest of the nation and this hindered the development of a strong internal market. In fact, the only dynamically growing Southern city after 1815 was New Orleans which was developing an important role as an entrepot for entree into the Western and West Indian market.²²³

The economic structure of the Northeast after 1815 had conditions that were beneficial to industrial economic growth relative to the South.²²⁴ Industrial revolution occurs when the first industries can easily lead to growth of secondary, complementary or related industries.²²⁵ Specialized companies need to grow. The engine of economic development in the period from 1815-1833 was cotton, not just for the South but the Northeast and the West. The Northeast had these types of secondary firms. Cotton manufacturing in the Northeast was modest but between 1815 and 1831 the number of spindles trebled per

²²² North, Douglass C. 1966. The Economic Growth of the United States, 1790-1860. New York: Norton. p. 130.

²²³ *ibid.* p. 130.

²²⁴ *ibid.* p. 159.

²²⁵ Hirschman, Albert O. 1958. The Strategy of Economic Development. New Haven: Yale University Press. Chapter IV.

establishment.²²⁶ Northeast manufacturing had declined between 1810 and 1820 mainly because of British "dumping" of manufactured goods and the Panic of 1819. But by 1830 the Northeast manufacturing had increased substantially and Massachusetts had grown spectacularly.²²⁷ This tremendous growth accounted for Daniel Webster's shift from opposition to the Tariff of 1824 to protection in the so-called Tariff of Abominations in 1828.²²⁸ The Northeast had other advantages, the growth of financial savings institutions helped finance manufacturing in the Northeast. The textile industry was financed by a shift of capital from shipping to textiles.²²⁹

The Southern economy reflected the mix of liberal and aristocratic traditions while the Northern and Western economies mirrored their dominate liberal tradition.

THE TRANSPORTATION REVOLUTION

The transportation revolution was also a major stimulant to economic growth for the Northeast and the West. Costs dropped dramatically, eventually falling to 1/50th of the cost from the late 18th to the middle of the 19th

²²⁶ Clark, Victor S. 1916. 1929. History of Manufactures in the United States. New York: McGraw-Hill. p. 453.

²²⁷ North, Douglass C. 1966. The Economic Growth of the United States, 1790-1860. New York: Norton. p. 165.

²²⁸ *ibid.* p. 156.

²²⁹ Clark, Victor S. 1916. 1929. History of Manufactures in the United States. New York: McGraw-Hill. p. 368.

century.²³⁰ The North and West had more railroad mileage per capita than any place on earth.²³¹ In this early period the South was the only region that did not develop this transportation revolution. But by 1860 the South was close behind the North and West in railroads. Textile manufacturing grew at an annual rate of 16% during this period.²³² Sidney Ratner agrees with Taussig that American firms would have been competitive even without the tariff protection.²³³ Both lower transportation costs and an expanding internal market in the Northeast and the West indirectly helped manufacturing growth by providing an incentive for more foreign investment.²³⁴

THE CHANGE IN THE WESTERN ECONOMY

The West played a crucial role in the relations between the North and the South during the antebellum period. The

²³⁰ Ratner, Sidney and Scylla, Richard and Soltow, James H. 1979. Evolution of the American Economy: Growth, Welfare and Decision-Making. New York: Basic Books. p. 121-22.

²³¹ Fogel, Robert William and Engerman, Stanley L. 1974. Time on the Cross: The Economics of American Negro Slavery. Boston: Little Brown. p. 256.

²³² Ratner, Sidney. Scylla, Richard and Soltow, James H. 1979. Evolution of the American Economy: Growth, Welfare and Decision-Making. New York: Basic Books. p. 198.

²³³ Keohane, Robert O. 1983. "Associative American Development, 1776-1860: Economic Growth and Political Disintegration." in Antinomies of Interdependence: National Welfare and the International Division of Labor. ed. Ruggie, John Gerard. New York: Columbia University Press. p. 63.

²³⁴ North, Douglass C. 1966. The Economic Growth of the United States, 1790-1860. New York: Norton. p. 169.

struggle between the North and South over the future of the Western states was fought over the issue of whether new states should be admitted as free or slave states. The expansion into new territories was critical to controlling national policies. The South finally seceded when Lincoln won the election of 1860.

From 1815 to the early 1840's, the expansion of the Southwest increased the demand for Western foodstuffs and created generous markets for wheat and corn (the West's most important economic crops), hogs, flour, etc.²³⁵ Starting in the 1840's, the West moves away from an economy of agricultural self-sufficiency and towards a still largely agrarian market oriented economy with some manufacturing. This "free farmer" character of the Western economy, the West's acceptance of the Northern version of the American dream and the increasing trade to the Northeast cities was critical in the eventual outcome of the sectional struggle. Europe had also become a major market for the Western farmers because of the Irish potato famine in the 1840's and the Crimean War in the 1850's which disrupted European food supplies and production.²³⁶

THE LIBERAL DREAM IN THE FEUDAL FRAGMENT:

WHITES SOUTHERNERS WANT SLAVE OWNERSHIP

In the North and West, the work ethic was viewed as the

²³⁵ *ibid.* p. 141.

²³⁶ *ibid.*

most important value in developing the ideals of the self-made man and the American dream. The American dream to the white Southerner was somewhat different. Owning slaves and becoming a gentleman, living a life of leisure and seeking "higher" pursuits were highly valued. The number of white Southerners who owned most of the slaves was a minority, but higher than is generally perceived. It is true that a small number of families owned the majority of slaves, but a large percent of the white families were connected to the institution. In 1790, 36.6% of the Southern states' white families owned slaves, in 1850 it was 32.1%. In South Carolina it was 34.3% in 1790 and 53.1% in 1850.²³⁷ The fact that a significant number of whites could have slaves made slave ownership the Southern version of the liberal tradition American dream. This was important to the creation of the cultural and political hegemony of the Southern planter class. This openness of slave ownership legitimized slavery to the white population that did not own slaves because they believed that maybe someday they could be slaveholders. This was part of the white egalitarian influence in the entire nation mixed with the feudal fragment of the Southern antebellum slave economy. The white Southern dream of owning slaves gave whites dignity in a world that did not provide them much. Physical labor, in

²³⁷ A Century of Population Growth, 1790-1900. 1901. Washington D. C.: United States Census. p. 139.

particular, was degraded as slaves's work.

Part of Cooper's defense of slavery, common in the 1820's, was that only Africans forced to work could have developed the land in such a hot climate as the South. This fits in with the utilitarian and progressive defense of the system which argues for "the greatest good for the greatest number." Since slavery was the only possible system to develop the Southern cotton industry then slavery met the criteria of "the greatest good for the greatest number".

ABOLITION AND CAPITALISM

The influences of the Transatlantic world after 1815 on the United States were not merely economic. They were cultural and ideological as well. Economic, cultural and ideological changes are interrelated phenomena. The development of a strong abolitionist movement in England and the beginnings of industrial capitalism coincided. There is controversy over why a strong abolitionist movement developed at the same time as the growth of industrial capitalism. Eric Williams, in his seminal work Capitalism and Slavery, states, "The commercial capitalism of the eighteenth century developed the wealth of Europe by means of slavery and monopoly. But in doing so helped create the industrial capitalism of the nineteenth century which... destroyed the powers of commercial capitalism, slavery and all its works."²³⁸

He argues that the British slave system was in decline in the late 18th century. Soil exhaustion, competition from the

²³⁸ Williams, Eric. 1944. Capitalism and Slavery. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press. p. 210.

French and the interruption of staple production because of the independence of most of their North American colonies, and the growth of importance of British manufacturing industry relative to agriculture all contributed to its decline.²³⁹ David Eltis disagrees. He believes that the British slave trade was at its height in the early 19th century, referring to the British policy to eliminate it as economically "wrongheaded".

"From the broadest perspective of British development, abolition coupled with the continuation of the protective system until midcentury slowed down the shift to an international division of labor in which the British became the workshop of the world."²⁴⁰

The protective system could have slowed down the British in this shift, but any "slow down", (which is strange phrase to use in describing the first half of the 19th century British economic growth) was probably due to other competitive factors.²⁴¹ As for Eltis' point on abolition, it probably had the opposite impact. As the British got out of the plantation business they had to invest their capital in something other than slaves and land. This forced them to find other enterprises. This probably quickened British development into the workshop of the world. The abolition of

²³⁹ Eltis, David. 1987. Economic Growth and the Ending of the Transatlantic Slave Trade. New York: Oxford University Press. p. 4.

²⁴⁰ *ibid.* p. 12.

²⁴¹ Taussig, Frank W. 1931. The Tariff History of the United States. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons. *passim*.

slavery also meant more than just a shift in investment. It involved a different cultural attitude toward capital growth. The cultural differences between the antebellum North and the South in the United States shows the impact Southern slavery had on economic changes in both regions.

DEPENDENCY AND PROFITS:

WHY SLAVERY IMPACTED REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Slavery and free labor markets existed quite profitably together. Slavery was not only not an economic drain on the industrial free labor capitalism, but was crucial to its economic growth. Seymour Drescher argues that "the real economic paradox of abolition is that... political power had to intervene to constrict or to abolish major slave systems"²⁴² even though they were a key and profitable part of the economic system. But this is too narrow a context in which to view slavery. Slavery existed primarily, but by no means exclusively, in the primary-product, agro-export part of the world economic system. This was certainly the case for the antebellum American South. This had tremendous impact both on the more industrial manufacturing sector and within the exporting regions themselves. So while it was profitable for the planters and manufacturers alike, the exporting regions as a whole suffered and experienced a lack of development beyond the primary-product export industries. This is not a minor point that can be overlooked or

²⁴² Drescher, Seymour. 1987. Capitalism and Antislavery: British Mobilization in Comparative Perspective. London, New York: Oxford University Press. p. 15.

considered less significant than slavery's profitability to the entire system. The primary-products regions did have economic growth and development but it was not as great as the industrial manufacturing areas. This is the proper context to look at 19th century economic growth and slavery. From this perspective, slavery was an impediment to its own region's ability to create self-sustained economic development. This obstacle came from both its dependent relationship with the manufacturing areas and from the different logic of being a master instead of merely being a capitalist. Drescher argues that planters acted "normally" in economic terms and that Henry Jeremy and Jan Hogendorn's designation of the slave trade as an "uncommon market" was not true, except in that its commodities were human beings.²⁴³ This seems like an awfully important exception. And I do not mean this from a moral viewpoint, but from an economic one. The planters were capitalists who had to act "normally" in the logic of the market place to make a profit. But when it came to its own labor force it was hardly "normal" in terms of ideological underpinnings of the capitalist ideas of social mobility and freedom. Significantly, the planters did not have the same range of "normal", rational, economic choices of mere capitalists. They could not fire their labor force, they could only sell them. But in a time of market downturn the logic would be

²⁴³ *ibid.* p. 13.

that every capitalist would want to sell and then buy the labor back at the next economic upturn. Unless some rules changed, masters could not do this. This created not only economic problems, but was also associated with the cultural value of "paternalism", which is not "normally" found in the Transatlantic world of 19th century industrial capitalism.

ABOLITION AND LEGITIMACY

The British abolitionist movement was about to make its final successful push in 1833. In a strictly economic sense the abolitionist movement could have caused massive disruption to the plantation system. But the rise of an industrial leadership over the landed gentry created the need for new hegemonic thought. The ideological basis for the new industrial groups was that they rose to power based on talent and that the system was open to others with skill. They encouraged the idea that anyone could rise up to power and wealth if they had the right combination of values, talent and luck. A system of open elite circulation created a new sense of fairness. This was the basis for further development and legitimacy of the entire system. Slavery because of its more rigid master-slave structure (although whites could move up within the system) was a barrier to this type of legitimacy, not merely a barrier to economic growth per se. In the United States slavery was a threat to legitimacy not only in the South, but even more in the North and West because the feudal fragment contradicted the

dominant liberal tradition in the North and the West.

The Northern and Western leadership needed to continue to perpetrate the notion of a relatively equal and "classless" society. Northern society was becoming a highly class stratified society as industrialization increased before the Civil War. As I stated earlier, income inequality between 1816 and 1856 increased "the American Northeast was transformed from the 'Jeffersonian ideal' to a society more typical of developing economies with very wide pay differentials and presumably marked inequality in the distribution of wage income."²⁴ In the West, the "free farmer" ideal helped legitimize the liberal tradition. The rise of white egalitarianism associated with the rise of Jackson, the extension of voting to white men regardless of class, also ignored the deep racial fault lines in American society and obscured class relations. This is critical to understanding why the North and West felt threatened by the extension of slavery. It had to do with an entire series of beliefs about the nature of a liberal society. The maintenance of legitimacy was built, in part, on the contradictions of a white egalitarian free labor ideology. The South needed to defend its society from liberal attacks and the British abolitionist movement was an important part of this assault.

THE BRITISH ANTI-SLAVERY MOVEMENT

The British anti-slavery movement was viewed by many in

²⁴ Williamson, Jeffrey G. and Lindert, Peter H. 1980. American Inequality: A Macroeconomic History. New York: Academic Press. p. 37.

the British working-class as dominated by middle-class, "do-gooders" who cared more about people in some far off land than workers suffering at home. Many of the advocates of political economy and the Malthusians were abolitionists. Malthusians were viewed negatively by the poor and the working-class. Arguments emerged between the Chartist movement and abolitionists about which was worse, black slavery or white wage slavery.²⁴⁵ But this started to change during the 1820's. After British emancipation was passed in 1833, Chartists also worked for the abolition of American slavery. The British anti-slavery movement was unique because it was not merely a middle-class movement. It developed strong roots in the Chartist and working-class communities throughout England.²⁴⁶ "By the mid-1820's three convergent lines of argument came to dominate the campaigns against slavery: slavery was decried as an affront to Christian feelings, as a denial of human rights and increasingly as an economic irrelevance."²⁴⁷ Religion had become a more progressive force in England by the 1820's than the 1780's, especially in congregations of the working class. Missionary activities of the Methodists and Baptists sought to help the oppressed. This brought the anti-slavery and working-class communities together. The arguments of the

²⁴⁵ Fladeland, Betty. 1982. "Our Cause being One and the Same: Abolitionists and Chartism." in Slavery and British Society, 1776-1846. ed. Walvin, James. p. 70.

²⁴⁶ Walvin, James. 1982. "The Propaganda of Anti-Slavery." in Slavery and British Society, 1776-1846. ed. Walvin, James. p. 64.

²⁴⁷ *ibid.*

Rights of Man crept into the 1820's argument against slavery. Slavery was a violation of natural rights of which the right to a family was particularly stressed.²⁴⁸ The influence of the laissez-faire attitudes of the political economists can also be seen. Anti-slavery activists argued that slavery was an inefficient economic system and that "the slave colonies were monuments to an age of mercantilist protection which by the early 19th century was contrary to the nations's changing economic values."²⁴⁹ James Walvin argues that the economic argument was minor compared to the others in its use and frequency.²⁵⁰ This is true, but the economic argument is not completely separate from natural rights and religious arguments. In laissez-faire ideology, the individual is the focus of analysis. Individual freedom to work for one's own benefit is a human right as well as an economic one. There is a laissez-faire morality, slavery is immoral because it violates these laissez-faire moral tenets, not just because it is inefficient. This makes Cooper's defense of slavery even more fascinating since he links laissez-faire ideology to the defense of the slave system.

CONCLUSION

Between 1815 and the Nullification Crisis in 1832-33 there was a tremendous transformation in industrial

²⁴⁸ Walvin, James. 1982. "The Propaganda of Anti-Slavery." in Slavery and British Society, 1776-1846. ed. Walvin, James. p. 66.

²⁴⁹ *ibid.*

²⁵⁰ *ibid.*

production and political and economic thought in the Transatlantic world. South Carolina was at the center of these changes and the turmoil created a crisis of modernization, the Nullification Crisis. The relations among the American North, West, the South and Britain changed during this period. Sectionalism in the United States became more pronounced. Ideas about new and differing economic policies for the nation developed. The North's industrial base, its dominant liberal and white egalitarianism grew. It became more nationalistic and supported protectionist policies. The South became more agro-export oriented, sectionalist and connected to British industrialism and supported free trade policies.

A truly international industrial system emerged during this period. It had enormous political, economic and social consequences for the United States. South Carolinians alternately embraced and feared these transformative changes. It was in the context of this new world that Thomas Cooper created his progressive defense of Southern slave system.

CHAPTER SIX
THOMAS COOPER AND THE CREATION OF A
PROGRESSIVE DEFENSE OF SLAVERY

Thomas Cooper, the President of South Carolina College, was the most important Nullifier intellectual. Cooper is significant because he helped develop a progressive defense of the slave system in the context of modernity. Cooper used the classical theory of Adam Smith to defend slavery in a fascinating, seemingly contradictory synthesis of political thought. He viewed the Southern slave system as the highest form of civilization because he believed it provided more freedom to the most people and this would bring progress for the community. Daniel Kilbride points out that for Cooper "Southern slaveholding easily passed the test of utility - the greatest good for the greatest number".²⁵¹ After 1815, "political economy" was emerging as the dominant school of thought over the older mercantilist school. The ideas of political economists, like Smith and Ricardo, came to be widely accepted by political leaders and intellectuals in England, Europe and the United States. Its adherents had close connections to "influential and active political leaders" and an atmosphere was created where science became a "fetish", "reasonings dressed in scientific trappings were given an irrational preference" over less ostentatious scientific reasonings.²⁵² Cooper's use of Smith's ideas

²⁵¹ Kilbride, Daniel. 1993. "Slavery and Utilitarianism: Thomas Cooper and the Mind of the Old South." The Journal of Southern History. Vol. LIX, No. 3, August. p. 469.

²⁵² Langer, Gary F. 1987. The Coming of Age of Political Economy, 1815-1825. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press. p. 2.

reflects the Nullifiers' embracing of different strains of thought.

BACKGROUND ON COOPER'S LIFE

Understanding the dramatic changes from Cooper's early thought to his Nullifier views we need to trace some key points of transformation in his life. Thomas Cooper was born in Westminster, England in 1759. At the age of twenty he became interested in science, and soon developed views about the "science" of politics. Later while in Manchester, Cooper became interested in the "science" of political economy. In the late 1780's this meant having been influenced by the "bible" of political economy, Adam Smith's The Wealth of Nations. Cooper became well respected in the United States for his work on political economy.

Cooper's Radical Beginnings

Cooper's public life began as a member of the Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society. In the relative calm of the early to mid-1780's England, his intellectual manner and radicalism were considered charming to the conservative members of the Society. They even elected him one of their Vice Presidents. Manchester, in the late 1780's, was a hotbed of abolitionist activity. There was a tremendous campaign to end the Transatlantic slave trade. It united reformers and many local conservatives in Manchester. Cooper was a vocal advocate against the slave trade. By 1791, in the more radical days of the French

Revolution, Cooper had resigned because the Society would not come to the defense of his mentor, utilitarian scientist and the discoverer of oxygen, Dr. Joseph Priestley.

Priestley's views on religion were considered blasphemous by the religious zealots who burned down his Birmingham home and church. Cooper had already helped form a more radical group in October 1790 called the Manchester Constitutional Society.

Cooper and the French Revolution

While Cooper was in France in the spring of 1792, the Manchester Constitutional Society asked that he and his traveling companion, James Watt, communicate with the Jacobins. The Jacobins, who were looking for any sign of international solidarity, gladly brought Cooper and Watt into a public display of common goodwill. On April 14, 1792, Cooper or Watt, depending on who is telling the story, carried the British flag during a Jacobin ceremony. This caused quite a stir in England among conservatives. Edmund Burke attacked this act as bordering on treason. Cooper responded with his "Reply to Burke's Invective" which went way beyond explaining his actions while in France. He expressed international solidarity with the Jacobins, support for the radical democratic ideals of Thomas Paine, railed against "privileged orders" and loved the fact that

the French Revolution had freed so many slaves.²⁵³ Besides his comments it was his style and tone that stirred controversy. Here is a segment of his "Reply to Burke."

"But what must be the complexion of that man's mind, who can be irritated to a degree of political insanity at these expressions of friendship and benevolence towards our neighbors and fellow creatures? Who sickens at the thought of perpetual peace and fraternal Union between nations. Who entertains no sentiments of compassion, but for the rich and the great, the kings, and the nobles of the earth! who can contemplate without emotion, the prospect of bloodshed and devastation among the millions of the devoted victims of pride and despotism and who bewails with a feminine lamentation... the broken play things of a puerile nobility! who seems to regard the people as fit only for the goad, and the whip, and the spur: for labour without intermission, in peace; for slaughter without commiseration, in war - And who, blaspheming against human nature itself, impiously terms the great mass of mankind, the 'swinish multitude'."²⁵⁴

This diatribe against Burke, in the highly charged atmosphere in Britain touched off by the radical and violent drift of the French Revolution, started a series of repressive acts against Jacobin sympathizers in England. By August of 1793, Cooper had left for America, disillusioned by that time by both the Reign of Terror in France and the repression of dissent in England. In coming to the United States he hoped to find a fertile ground for his ideas and aspirations.

Cooper Comes to The United States

²⁵³ Malone, Dumas. 1926. The Public Life Of Thomas Cooper, 1783-1839. New Haven: Yale University Press. p. 44.

²⁵⁴ Cooper, Thomas. 1792. Reply to Burke's Invective against Mr. Cooper and Mr. Watt in the House of Commons on April 30th, 1792. Manchester. p. 12-13.

Cooper particularly liked the United States because of the absence of lords and in general the small number of rich proprietors. Cooper, an English reformer with revolutionary sympathies, fit in quite well with the American liberal tradition. But Cooper's liberalism was born out of the struggles against English country gentlemen who were steeped in aristocratic ways. Cooper's early radicalism and later reactionary ideas rejected the "easy" liberal Lockean way of life that seemed "natural" to America. When he came to America, and then South Carolina, his lines of thought developed liberal and feudal fragments.

Cooper soon found prosperity and contentment. He settled in Pennsylvania in Northumberland County. Ironically, he chose the North over the South because he found slavery abhorrent. In 1794, in describing the United States he wrote "There is little fault to find with the government of America, either in principles or in practice: we have very few taxes to pay, and these are of acknowledged necessity, and moderate in amount: we have no animosities about religion: it is a subject about which no questions are asked."²⁵⁵ Cooper spent his first years in America avoiding political controversy, although he did support Jefferson in the 1796 Presidential election. He was developing a life where he could follow his other intellectual pursuits, like chemistry and anatomy. That changed in 1798. He became involved in the struggle against the Alien and Sedition Acts believing they were against human freedom. Late in the Adams

²⁵⁵ Cooper, Thomas. 1794. Some Information Respecting America. Dublin, London. p. 53-54.

administration, Cooper through his mentor Joseph Priestley, (who had also left England to avoid repression and was a friend of Adams) tried to get a government judicial appointment, even though he had endorsed Jefferson. After not receiving a reply, Cooper wrote to Adams a series of letters that would later get him indicted and convicted under the Sedition Act.

The year 1800 is one of great significance in the history of democracy and the liberal tradition in America. For the first time one group took over governmental power from another with no violence and little repression. Thomas Cooper always seemed to find himself in the middle of world shaking events. Cooper was on trial for violating the Sedition Act which outlawed "'false, scandalous and malicious writing" against the President."²⁵⁶ His trial became an important issue during the Presidential election of 1800. The Federalists attacked him as an agent of the Jacobins and a "fugitive Englishman". They attempted to make the Jeffersonians seem un-American. Cooper was convicted and sentenced to six months in prison. Upon his release in October of 1800 he immediately became embroiled in another political controversy. Cooper learned of a vicious personal and political attack on President Adams by Federalist Alexander Hamilton. Hamilton attacked Adams personally

²⁵⁶ Cooper, Thomas. 1800. An Account of the Trial of Thomas Cooper of Northumberland on a Charge of Libel against the President of the United States. p. 6-7.

noting the "disgusting egotism, the distempered jealousy and the ungovernable indiscretion of Mr. Adams' temper."²⁵⁷

Cooper demanded publicly the arrest and trial of Alexander Hamilton under the Sedition Act. Just as Burke chose not reply to Cooper's rhetoric, Hamilton declined to answer these charges. Cooper's point about the selective use of the Sedition Act and the inconsistency of the Federalist position right before the election was quite an effective message.

Through his expertise and connections with President Jefferson, Cooper became a Pennsylvania state judge in 1804 and served until 1811. A change in Cooper's attitude can be detected in this period. In the Jefferson party there were demands that the judiciary be open to greater public control. Cooper became a vehement defender of an independent judiciary. He was pressured from the bench after a series of unpopular decisions and allegations of official misconduct that were never established.

Cooper took a brief respite from politics after his judgeship and focussed on more scholarly pursuits. But his interest in "political economy", his outspoken religious beliefs, and his need to at the center of controversy drew him back to politics. In 1819, Cooper was elected Professor of Chemistry, Mineralogy and Natural Philosophy at the University of Virginia with the help of his friend Thomas

²⁵⁷ Malone, Dumas. 1926. The Public Life Of Thomas Cooper, 1783-1839. New Haven: Yale University Press. p. 138.

Jefferson. His position was to begin within a year, but his reputation as unaccommodating, rigid and even blasphemous haunted him. He never worked at the University of Virginia after the Presbyterians organized a campaign against his appointment. Instead he took a position at South Carolina College (today the University of South Carolina at Columbia).²⁵⁸

When Cooper arrived in South Carolina in the early 1820's he became an ally of the pro-States' Rights faction of Senator William Smith. Some of the most important Nullifier leaders were to come from the more nationalist Calhoun faction, including James Hamilton, Jr.. Cooper did not trust these future Nullifiers as late as 1825 after the passage of the Tariff of 1824. Cooper wrote, "In the House of Representatives, I can not trust from our State Hamilton and Poinsett, who are of the Calhoun and Adams politics."²⁵⁹

The Smith faction was close to taking over the politics of the state. This helped moved the Calhoun nationalists towards the states' rights, anti-tariff positions. Cooper and Calhoun did not personally like each other. Cooper wrote to Van Buren that he could easily be the successor to Jackson because "Calhoun is too pretending, too fond of the brilliant, the magnificent, too calculating, how his sayings

²⁵⁸ This section on Cooper's activities in the years before he reached South Carolina is based largely on Dumas Malone's The Public Life Of Thomas Cooper, 1783-1839.

²⁵⁹ "Letters of Dr. Thomas Cooper, 1825-1832". American Historical Review. July 1901. p. 727. Letter to Mahlon Dickerson dated January 18th, 1825.

and doings will work with respect to his own honor and glory."²⁶⁰

In 1824, Cooper wrote a tract called "Consolidation" which attacked Calhoun, Jackson and Adams for the constitutional principle of consolidation that was the basis for the support of both the protective tariff and internal improvements. As late as 1827, the local states' rights groups considered Calhoun an enemy. Unionist Petigru noted as Nullification neared, "It would be just like Calhoun if he were to come forward to save the Constitution at its last gasp. I should not be surprised if he were to astonish the natives with another somersault."²⁶¹

In the following letter to Rep. Samuel Ingham of Pennsylvania, Calhoun was attempting to maintain support for his Vice-Presidency that he needed from Pennsylvania and was attempting to reassure Ingham that he and South Carolina were not for disunion. To make his point he distanced himself from Cooper. He wrote, "The imprudent declaration of such men as Dr. Cooper, and others of similar character gives no indication of public opinion in this quarter. Yet I trust the friends of manufactures will not be so imprudent as to press for further protection at this highly unpropitious period."²⁶²

Again he informed Virgil Maxcy about the letter he sent to

²⁶⁰ Letter from Thomas Cooper to Martin Van Buren dated April 11th, 1828. Van Buren Papers VII.

²⁶¹ Carson, James Petigru. 1920. Life, Letters and Speeches of James Louis Petigru. Washington D. C. p. 89. Letter from James L. Petigru to William Elliot dated August 7th, 1832.

²⁶² Calhoun, John C. 1977. The Papers of John C. Calhoun Vol. X. eds. Edwin Hemphill and Clyde N. Wilson. p. 312. Letter from John C. Calhoun to Rep. Samuel Ingham of Pennsylvania dated October 28th, 1827.

Ingham. It seems that Ingham believed that the change of heart that Calhoun seemed to have had about the tariff was because of the politics back home and not sincere. Calhoun again responded by singling out Cooper for his attack, "That our friend [Ingham] could suppose that the enmity of Dr. Cooper to myself and friends... is in any sensible degree the cause of the alarm and excitement in this State is really surprising."²⁶³

Cooper was singled out for attack because of his infamous statement in 1827 that it was time for South Carolina and the South to "calculate the value of the union". This declaration caused quite a stir, locally and nationally. In fact Cooper is more well known for this assertion than anything else he did or said in his entire life. Cooper believed that the protective tariff system was so oppressive to the South that the time was "fast approaching to the alternative of submission or separation."²⁶⁴ He was attacked in the New York American as "an insolent and audacious foreigner".²⁶⁵ When the compromise tariff was worked out by Calhoun and Clay, Cooper had been reported to be going ahead with plans for secession. An English traveler, G.W. Featherstonhaugh, went to talk with Cooper several years after the crisis had ended. Here is an excerpt from his encounter. "Doctor

²⁶³ Calhoun, John C. 1978. The Papers of John C. Calhoun Vol. XI. ed. Clyde N. Wilson. p. 258. Letter from John C. Calhoun to Virgil Maxcy dated November 3rd, 1830.

²⁶⁴ Charleston Mercury. August 15th, 1827.

²⁶⁵ ibid. September 3rd, 1827.

Cooper... began to talk with wonderful energy and vivacity upon a variety of subjects. The Compromise Act, however, was uppermost in the Doctor's mind, and I soon saw that he did not like it at all, for it had extinguished all the eloquence, patriotism, and achievement which Nullification might have brought forth a future day. Upon my congratulating him upon that measure, and the happy consequences which would flow from it, he rose from his easy chair, and although almost bent double like a hook, he seized the hearth brush and with his eyes full of fire, and wielding the brush as if it were a broadsword, denounced the Compromise Act as an ignoble measure which he could never approve of; declared that the Nullifiers were quite in the wrong to make peace with the Union men (their opponents in South Carolina), and that it would have been a much better course for them to have taken the field against General Jackson, and fought all the power that he could have brought against them. 'We have lost a fine opportunity, sir, of carrying this State to the highest renown,'²⁶⁶

COOPER AND ORIGINALITY

Most of the literature on Thomas Cooper emphasizes the same points: he was not an original thinker, did not intellectually contribute anything new to American or Southern economic thought, and was more important as a political figure than thinker. Yet Cooper was crucial in developing a laissez-faire defense of the Southern slave system. Like James Hamilton, Jr., his contradictions reflect the mix of the liberal and feudal fragments in the Nullifier belief system.

The most comprehensive secondary source on Cooper remains Dumas Malone's The Public Life of Thomas Cooper published in 1926 which chronicles his public career from his early days as Jacobin sympathizer to his later years as

²⁶⁶ Featherstonhaugh G.W. 1844. Excursion Through the Slave States.

defender of slavery and firebrand Nullifier. But the focus of my concern, Cooper's importance in the development of a new defense of slavery, is mentioned, literally, as only a footnote. Malone states that Cooper's role as a "pioneer" in the creation of new defense of slavery is "indubitable".²⁶⁷

Joseph J. Persky sees two broad schools of thought on Southern dependency emerging. One, a laissez-faire classical political economy view of how the South was exploited by government policy (mainly tariffs) controlled by the Northern mercantilists who manipulated the government to the South's disadvantage. The second school argued that the South's own "unbridled pursuit of short-run self-interest left the region open to exploitation from outside." Both schools of thought focussed on the dependent nature of the Southern economy. Cooper was in the laissez-faire classical school of political economists. Cooper admitted that the South was behind the North in economic improvement, but believed, "the commerce and prosperity of the Northern states depend mainly on the productive industry of the South."²⁶⁸ The North were the exploiters. Persky argued that Thomas Cooper "added little of analytical significance... Accepting the framework of classical laissez-faire economics Cooper saw little need to innovate. Adam Smith had just about said

²⁶⁷ Malone, Dumas. 1926. 1961. The Public Life of Thomas Cooper. London: Oxford University Press. p. 289.

²⁶⁸ Cooper, Thomas. 1826. 1970. On the Constitution of the United States. New York: Da Capo Press. p. 45-46.

it all."²⁶⁹

Paul K. Conkin elaborates in a similar vein, "He (Cooper) explored no new theoretical paths, made no original contribution to political economy." His Lectures on the Elements of Political Economy "was tortured, confusing and inconsistent. It revealed the mind of a troubled, disillusioned, volatile old radical who could no longer order his world or confront the future with any confidence."²⁷⁰ Conkin is correct that Cooper was a

disillusioned old radical who could no longer face the future with confidence. But for me that is a central element of his originality. He was an intellectual living in a society undergoing a crisis of modernization and he created a synthesis of the liberal and feudal fragments to create a new defense of slavery.

Joseph Dorfman said of Cooper that "His generation thought that he knew everything", but that he had nothing original to add.²⁷¹

Kilbride although acknowledging that "the vitality and innovation that marked Cooper's writings undermine the myth of Southern anti-intellectualism" argues that "the South Carolinian revealed no particular critical originality."²⁷²

This idea of Cooper's lack of originality seems to be

²⁶⁹ Persky, Joseph J. 1992. The Burden of Dependency: Colonial Themes in Southern Economic Thought. Johns Hopkins University Press. p. 56.

²⁷⁰ Conkin, Paul K. 1980. Prophets of Prosperity: America's First Political Economists. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. p. 142-143.

²⁷¹ Dorfman, Joseph. 1961. The Economic Mind in American Civilization. Vol. 2. New York: Viking Press. p. 527.

²⁷² Kilbride, Daniel. 1993. "Slavery and Utilitarianism: Thomas Cooper and the Mind of the Old South." The Journal of Southern History. Vol. LIX, No. 3, August. p. 485-486.

accepted wisdom, but certainly does not fit with the idea that Cooper "knew everything" or Jefferson calling Cooper a "national treasure". Where does this lack of originality idea come from if he was so respected as an intellectual during his day? It is important to keep in mind that Cooper was a enormously controversial figure during his life and his death as well. A statue erected in his honor at his gravesite in Columbia, S.C. states that it was placed there by only a "portion" of the citizens of South Carolina. Although his intellectual skills were respected, he was loved and hated as a political figure. Even more moderate Nullifiers, like Calhoun, could not stand Cooper. His "calculate the value of the Union" statement, even today, exemplifies the spirit of the radical Nullifiers and Southern nationalists. It was in this context that a critique of his originality must be placed.

The earliest references that I have found that criticize Cooper's intellectual prowess come from a contemporary and professor at South Carolina College, Dr. Maximillian LaBorde. LaBorde prefaced his critical remarks on Cooper's originality by saying that he knew his opinions would be of great surprise to almost everyone, presumably because his generation thought he (Cooper) knew everything. LaBorde thought that Cooper, "had no very high original powers... if we were to examine... those views expressed by Dr. Cooper... which might be claimed original, it would result in the conclusion that there is nothing of value in

them."²⁷³ His book on political economy, Lectures on the Elements of Political Economy, LaBorde argued, had "no merit whatsoever". Cooper, according to LaBorde, "was a man of information, rather than of learning."²⁷⁴ The tone of LaBorde's "critique" seems to represent more than just an intellectual assessment of Cooper. Knowing how much Cooper stirred passions, it seems that LaBorde was also riled by him. Unfortunately, I believe it clouded his judgement of Cooper because some of his assessment was clearly wrong. LaBorde argued that Cooper's opinions were unshakable and formed in his early adult life. He believed Cooper's "character was fully formed. And his prejudices and opinions, his sympathies and antipathies were invincible. This was true of him more than most men... He had already reached conclusions on every possible question of politics, morals, and religion. No man was more tenacious, dogmatic or had a bold and more uncompromising spirit."²⁷⁵

If LaBorde was talking about Cooper's views on religion the above statement has merit. But Cooper completely changed his opinions on slavery and the protective tariff. LaBorde generalized from Cooper's religious opinions to all of Cooper's ideas. In fairness to LaBorde, who was writing about South Carolina College, it is easy to understand his obsession with Cooper and religion. Cooper had a running feud with the Presbyterians in the state. As a Unitarian he

²⁷³ LaBorde, Maximillian. 1859. History of South Carolina College. Columbia, SC: Peter B. Glass. p. 165.

²⁷⁴ *ibid.* p. 168.

²⁷⁵ *ibid.* p. 173.

certainly did not attempt to hide or soft-pedal his views. In fact, he was investigated for his conduct as President of South Carolina College by a resolution of the South Carolina House of Representatives, passed December 7th, 1831. The trial kept being delayed. In December 1831 because the chief witness was absent it was delayed until May 1832.²⁷⁶ Again in May 1832 because so few members of the Board of Trustees were present they postponed it until December 1832.²⁷⁷ Finally they met in December 1832 which was to Cooper's advantage because this was just after the great Nullifier victory. Petigru wrote, "Cooper at Columbia is in great trouble. We must move his expulsion and nothing but a party vote can save him."²⁷⁸ The central allegation against Cooper was that he was improperly using his position to influence the South Carolina College students against Christianity. One student testified "Dr. Cooper did... instill notions into the minds of his students prejudicial to the Christian Religion, and such doctrines as were militant against the Bible... He recommended the Bible as a good book of history, and fine morals, saying that was all... I came out of College almost... an infidel to Bible doctrines and requisitions."²⁷⁹

Petigru was correct; it took a party vote to save Cooper's job. Petigru lamented, "fanaticism of all kinds

²⁷⁶ Columbia Telescope. December 20th, 1831.

²⁷⁷ Greenville Mountaineer. May 26th, 1832.

²⁷⁸ Carson, James Petigru. 1920. Life, Letters and Speeches of James Louis Petigru. Washington D. C. p. 86. Letter from James L. Petigru to William Elliot dated November 14th, 1831.

²⁷⁹ Charleston Mercury. December 8th, 1832.

spreads. Cooper is acquitted and extolled".²⁸⁰ But within a year some elements in the Nullifier party were seeking some common ground with the Unionists. Cooper was expendable.

Petigru noticed, "Some... wish to purify their party of old Cooper... they had conversed fully and freely about the necessity of removing him... Another set are bent on maintaining him."²⁸¹ Cooper was forced to resign as

President of South Carolina College at Columbia (now the University of South Carolina at Columbia) in 1834.

Cooper counseled President Jefferson in 1808 on the subject of protection for infant manufacturing industries,

"I take for granted that a non-intercourse act will pass, as it ought. If it should, I hope Congress will take measures of permanent protection in favour of our infant manufactures. It will be horrible fraud to entice our citizens to embark in the troublesome and hazardous speculation of new manufactures and then on a sudden peace leave them to all the malignancy of british competition, in our own market. I well know that Adam Smith's general doctrine is true that bounties and protecting duties to encourage the raising at home at a dear rate, what can be purchased abroad at a cheap one, is neither more nor less than picking the pockets of one class of the Community to support the monopoly of another. But there may be cases where necessity may call for this. With us, it will be, not a measure of economy, so much as a measure of protection and defence. Our markets ought to be more at home; more under our command: and this will call for permanent not temporary regulations."²⁸² This is exactly the opposite of Cooper's

position in the 1820's, although this quote clearly shows

²⁸⁰ Carson, James Petigru. 1920. Life, Letters and Speeches of James Louis Petigru. Washington D. C. p. 114. Letter from James L. Petigru to Hugh S. Legare dated December 21st, 1832.

²⁸¹ *ibid.* p. 128. Letter from James L. Petigru to Hugh S. Legare dated November 20th, 1833.

²⁸² Letter to Thomas Jefferson from Thomas Cooper. Northumberland. December 4th, 1808. Thomas Cooper collection at the South Caroliniana Library.

that he was already influenced and aware of the political economists.

Cooper opposed slavery in his early public life. He said of the institution in 1787, "If we claim Freedom as our birth-right, and glory that the 'very air of our country [Britain] is too free for a slave to respire;' we are in honour bound to assist in exterminating the most diabolical exertion of political tyranny, which the annals of oppression can exhibit an instance of."²⁸³

Why Cooper had a change of heart about slavery is not clear. Dumas Malone conjectures, "Presumably he became less of a theorist and more of a realist as he had grown older, and with rejection of democracy as a solution of human problems had surrendered also his former theories about human equality."²⁸⁴

Years later it was alleged that Cooper, like Francis Lieber, was a secret abolitionist but his daughter disputed it. There is no evidence from any of his actions and writings that he had any abolitionist sentiment while in South Carolina. The most reliable information on this subject remains the testimony of his daughter.²⁸⁵

As far as LaBorde's charge that Cooper was rigid and had an uncompromising spirit the tone of Cooper's letters to Senator Mahlon Dickerson, a protective tariff advocate, seem to show a different side of Cooper.

"I am content to leave you and Hayne to carry on the contest

²⁸³ Cooper, Thomas. 1787. "Letters on the Slave Trade". Manchester Chronicle. p. 4.

²⁸⁴ Malone, Dumas. 1926. 1961. The Public Life of Thomas Cooper. New Haven: Yale University Press. London: Oxford University Press. p. 285.

²⁸⁵ *ibid.* p. 284.

[tariff debate]. Where people cannot honestly agree, they must be contented to differ with mutual toleration."²⁸⁶ "I am neither surprised, nor do I blame your adherence to the Tariff, and if any body is to gain from by that measure it will give me great satisfaction to find it at any rate of service to you."²⁸⁷

By 1830 Cooper had been mellowing and the other Nullifiers had also commented on it. Robert Hayne wrote to James H.

Hammond, "Dr. Cooper's letter has been well received here. Its tone of moderation has secured its favorable reception. I hope and trust he will be equally temperate in all his writings."²⁸⁸

These letters clearly show that Cooper was willing to change his mind on important issues. LaBorde was wrong about Cooper, his opinions were not completely formed in his early adult life. In fact, they changed dramatically. As far as his intellectual prowess was concerned, Thomas Jefferson upon receiving an unaddressed package penned this letter to

Cooper, "I received a day or two ago, a small pamphlet on Materialism without any indication from what quarter it came. [sic] but I knew there was but one person in the United States capable of writing it and therefore am at no loss to whom to address my thanks for it and assurances of high esteem and respect."²⁸⁹ Jefferson once stated, "Cooper is acknowledged by every enlightened man who knows him, to

²⁸⁶ "Letters of Dr. Thomas Cooper, 1825-1832". American Historical Review. July 1901. p. 734. Letter to Mahlon Dickerson dated February 22nd, 1832.

²⁸⁷ "Letters of Dr. Thomas Cooper, 1825-1832". American Historical Review. July 1901. p. 732. Letter to Mahlon Dickerson dated February 8th, 1830.

²⁸⁸ "Letters on the Nullification Movement in South Carolina, 1830-1834". American Historical Review. July 1901. p. 738. Letter to James H. Hammond from Robert Y. Hayne dated March 29th, 1830.

²⁸⁹ Letter from Thomas Jefferson to Dr. Thomas Cooper dated March 29th, 1824. Thomas Cooper Collection at the South Carolina Library.

be greatest man in America, in powers of mind and in acquired information."²⁹⁰

Cooper was a controversial figure his entire life but the criticism of Cooper for lack of originality in his thought or intellectual rigidity is not correct. Cooper's integration of political economy with a defense of slavery was his original intellectual contribution.

COOPER'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE MODERN DEFENSE OF SLAVERY

According to Genovese, Thomas Dew's "Review of the Debate in the Virginia Legislature of 1831 and 1832" was the origin of a new coherent, modern defense of the slave system. Genovese sums up Dew's argument, "Dew had an elegant formula: progress through a widening freedom based upon slavery."²⁹¹ William E. Dodd in his The Cotton Kingdom: A Chronicle of the Old South describes Dew's work as "the ablest of all the works treating slavery from a historical and social point of view."²⁹² Jenkins states that Dew's "Review..." "led opinion in Virginia to the position already arrived at in the lower South. From now on the South as a whole became united in the active defense of its institution."²⁹³ Dew's work was a turning point in the creation of a progressive pro-slavery argument. But Cooper's

²⁹⁰ Letter from Thomas Jefferson to Joseph Correa de Serra dated March 2nd, 1819. Jefferson Papers, CCXV.

²⁹¹ Genovese, Eugene D. 1992. The Slaveholder's Dilemma: Freedom and Progress in Southern Conservative Thought, 1820-1860. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press. p. 19.

²⁹² Dodd, William E. 1921. The Cotton Kingdom: A Chronicle of the Old South. New Haven: Yale University Press. p. 149.

²⁹³ Jenkins, William Sumner. 1960. Pro-Slavery Thought in the Old South Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith. p. 88.

earlier work integrated political economy and a defense of slavery, just as Dew was to do, to create new defense of the institution. Jenkins argues that Cooper's "arguments were not original". He cites the earlier "positive good" defense of Senator William Smith from South Carolina, Richard Furman, Whitemarsh B. Seabrook. But Cooper defended the institution with arguments from the utilitarians and the political economists in 1826. Elaborating on integrating the political economist's ideas with a defense of slavery that was to be a cornerstone of pro-slavery thought in the South for the next generation. Cooper argued that slavery was

"practically universal, not forbidden in the Bible, and that American slaves lived in better economic conditions than most Africans and even the industrial workers of Great Britain."²⁹⁴ Cooper alluded to this new slavery defense at

first, merely implying that there was no natural equality

among humanity. "That as to the natural equality of all mankind, and of the black and white population, it was a point that admitted of such variety of opinion, without admitting of clear and indisputable evidence to determine it, that it not be made on this occasion."²⁹⁵ Cooper must

have felt that it was impolitic. But Cooper soon declared that the central ideas of the Declaration of Independence written by his close friend Thomas Jefferson were

"mischievous".²⁹⁶ Writing about the concept that people are

²⁹⁴ Cooper, Thomas. 1826. 1970. On the Constitution of the United States. New York: Da Capo Press. p. 45.

²⁹⁵ *ibid.* p. 47.

²⁹⁶ Cooper, Thomas. 1826. 1971. Lectures on the Elements of Political Economy. New York: Augustus M. Kelley Publishers. p. 359.

"born free, equal and independent" Cooper argued, "I know of no sense in which this ever was, or is, or can, or will be true."²⁹⁷ To the concepts of "unalienable and indefeasible

rights" Cooper states, "the law of nature, is the law that pervades all nature; the law of the strongest. No man has any rights but such that as depend on the relative force of his body or mind. The universal law of nature is, the law of force."²⁹⁸ For Cooper, force was what created community and

eventually political rights. "When the inconvenience of these perpetual struggles of force against force come to be felt, then and not till [sic] then are communities formed".²⁹⁹ Out of these struggles people found it

necessary to form rules of behavior protecting property and then political rights developed. Gone was the Lockean notion of his younger days about the basis for community being the "inalienable and natural rights". Hobbes' world of power and force became "natural". But Cooper's shift to this new

position emerged from the utilitarianism of the "science of political economy". Cooper stated, "The only sound rule of public conduct, is public expedience, public utility, the greatest good for the greatest number."³⁰⁰ But his

definition about who could and should provide for the common good for the greatest number mixes utilitarian arguments

about the benefits of the division of labor with a defense

of slavery. Cooper states, "A country consists of the land, and the landowners. The soil of the country belongs to the land proprietors; those who are not of this description are sojourners; they are there are on sufferance: on those

²⁹⁷ *ibid.* p. 360.

²⁹⁸ *ibid.*

²⁹⁹ Cooper, Thomas. 1826. 1971. Lectures on the Elements of Political Economy. New York: Augustus M. Kelley Publishers. p. 361.

³⁰⁰ *ibid.* p. 362.

conditions which are imposed for the common good".³⁰¹

Although not explicitly stated here Cooper's world view emerges. Landowners using their superior force of body and mind impose work upon the slaves to create community. Notice that his logic was not based on some ancient concept about traditional roles but on the utilitarianism of the greatest good for the greatest number. The common good was to be promoted by an increase in production that would produce the greatest surplus for the community. Slaves would create the surplus necessary to give the dominant groups more time to pursue other interests that would in turn promote even greater production for the common good. In Hartzian terms, this was a liberal argument in defense of the feudal fragment. Cooper was clearly a leader in the development of this new defense of slavery. His line of thought emerged within the most progressive elaborations of political economy.

Cooper's progressive defense of slavery was critical in the development of pro-slavery thought for the next generation until the Civil War. Genovese explains, "From self-proclaimed reactionaries... to... self-proclaimed progressives... pro-slavery southerners of every ideological hue invoked the rhetoric of human progress... In a world of aggressive nation-states and rival social and political systems, each participant had to keep abreast of the spiraling revolution in technology and economic performance or risk its life... For slaveholders, as for the rest of

³⁰¹ *ibid.*

humanity, the message was clear: Keep pace or die."³⁰²

Yet Dew and Cooper realized that their own acceptance of political economy had created new intellectual problems for the justification of slavery. They understood that slave labor would become more expensive over time relative to free labor and that this could undermine slavery.

Cooper's ideas on slavery and labor attempted to reconcile seemingly contradictory notions into a broader view of freedom and progress. For example, political economists generally sided with British labor in the 1824 repeal of the Law against Combinations. Labor's argument was that if businesses and companies were allowed to combine why should labor not be allowed the same rights. This way wages could reach their "natural" level. How can this view be reconciled with the arguments for a slave labor system? Smith's idea that labor should be free and wages should be able to find their "natural" level was accepted thought in England by the 1820's. Cooper's arguments for slavery used the idea that wages reached their "natural" level. Since blacks, according to Cooper, were naturally, genetically inferior, slavery helped blacks reach their natural level of wages. Cooper also argued that free blacks have been shown to be "The most idle, debauched, thievish and insolent that

³⁰² Genovese, Eugene D. 1992. The Slaveholder's Dilemma: Freedom and Progress in Southern Conservative Thought, 1820-1860. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press. p. 20-21.

we have ever witnessed in the United States."³⁰³ "Slave labour is the undoubtedly the dearest kind of labour... from a class of human beings, who of all others, have the least propensity to voluntary labour, even when it is to benefit themselves alone... an overseer is necessary to a negro, but not to a white labourer."³⁰⁴

Cooper calculated that the cost of black slave labor compared to white labor and concluded "Nothing will justify slave labour in point of economy." But Cooper argued that "the nature of the soil and climate... incapacitates a white man from labouring in the summer time... on the rich lands in Carolina and Georgia... In South Carolina and Georgia, I doubt if the rich lands could be cultivated without slave labour."³⁰⁵ Cooper calculated the cost of white to black

slave labour in South Carolina and Georgia and argued that slave labor made economic sense there. This was probably true, especially along the coast. White labor in the Sea Islands was extremely costly, particularly in the summer. Whites would get malaria and die, whereas blacks would either not be effected by the mosquitoes or just get sick, but not die.

What is important is that Cooper was calculating the viability of slave labor based on the principles of political economy. Following the laissez-faire thought of Adam Smith, Cooper expounded on the benefits of the division of labour, "The greatest improvement in Europe, by means of which comforts of every kind have been brought within the reach of so large a portion of people, is division of

³⁰³ Cooper, Thomas 1826. 1970. On The Constitution of the United States. New York: Da Capo Press. p. 45.

³⁰⁴ Cooper, Thomas. 1826. 1971. Lectures on the Elements of Political Economy. New York: Augustus M. Kelley Publishers. p. 106.

³⁰⁵ *ibid.* p. 107.

labour...³⁰⁶ This division of labor... tends to convert man into a machine, by the uniformity of his employment, and the absence of all mental labour in performing it. But if he can read and write, he has the means of profitably improving his leisure time... and if the mechanical labour... produces sustenance and comfort for himself and a moderate family, his lot cannot be considered as a hard one."³⁰⁷

Cooper was also influenced by Thomas Malthus. Malthus argued that if public policy towards the workers encouraged hard work, then productivity would increase because workers would develop the correct values towards work. Malthus was against the English Poor Laws because it gave the unemployed a way to exist without having to work. He said this created a slothful and idle working class. According to Malthus the aim of any economy was to create more production. To accomplish that you need a thrifty, prudent and industrious working class. This would create the "greatest good for the greatest number". Cooper wanted to create this type of worker for the same reasons. But slavery provided subsistence for slaves without the problem of having to cope with the problem of fluctuations of employment and unemployment. Why then did slavery make sense from an economic point of view? Because, he believed, blacks were naturally inferior and needed to be forced laborers. Would not slavery encourage slothfulness among the slaves because it provided subsistence? Genovese argues that slavery did

³⁰⁶ Cooper, Thomas. 1826. 1971. Lectures on the Elements of Political Economy. New York: Augustus M. Kelley Publishers. p. 107.

³⁰⁷ *ibid.* p. 109.

create poor work habits and that was why overseers were critical to production. But to Cooper the racial inferiority of Africans would not permit them to respond to market forces the same way that white workers would. Here again we see the liberal arguments of the political economists mixed with feudal fragment logic in the defense of slavery.

COOPER ON MAJORITY RULE, UNIVERSAL SUFFRAGE,
STATES' RIGHTS AND SLAVERY

In criticizing Jeffersonian ideals of natural rights, Cooper goes beyond the idea that slavery was a positive good for reasons of production. He eventually attacked the notion of universal suffrage (meaning at that time universal white male suffrage) and majority rule itself. In determining what society ought to do about universal suffrage, Cooper again used the utilitarian maxim of the "greatest good to the society itself".³⁰⁸ Cooper mixed the natural rights viewpoint of utilitarians, like Bentham, with anti-Enlightenment arguments against greater public participation. Cooper gave four reasons for his objection to universal suffrage: 1) Since "society was instituted for the protection of property. What reasonable claim can they have, who have no property of their own, to legislate on the property of others?"³⁰⁹ 2) Votes would be controlled by employers. This would add to the power of the rich and

³⁰⁸ Cooper, Thomas. 1826. 1971. Lectures on the Elements of Political Economy. New York: Augustus M. Kelley Publishers. p. 363.

³⁰⁹ *ibid.*

powerful over the middling classes. 3) The masses were uneducated and ill-informed. 4) And lastly, "the political power of the country will be sooner or later, (and within no long period) thrown irrevocably into the hands of those who represent... the laboring classes, the men of no property, to the exclusion of the men who possess property."³¹⁰

Reasons two and four contradict each other. How can the propertyless masses take control to the detriment of those with property if as he feared that this same mass would only be controlled by its employers? Although these do contradict each other the fear he has of both are reasonable when understood in the context of the immediate struggle of South Carolina against the rest of the nation. In fearing the masses taking control Cooper was scared of all the laboring classes, particularly the slaves. The idea that employers would control the votes of their employees was based on the fear that the Northern workers would be manipulated by those in manufacturing who wanted to impose, from his point of view, the dreaded protective tariff. His arguments against universal suffrage led to the next logical conclusion which was opposition to majority rule. Cooper wrote, "I do not believe in the mischief of that tyrannical and absurd maxim, 'The will of the Majority ought to govern', is yet sufficiently understood among us... Let but the majority determine uncontrolled, what is for their own good, and decree it, then are the minority, in the strictest sense of the word, slaves. This has been successfully practiced in these United States, under the Administration of Messrs, Adams and Clay, and is even now (1830) insisted upon."³¹¹

³¹⁰ *ibid.* p. 364.

³¹¹ Cooper, Thomas. 1826. 1971. Lectures on the Elements of Political Economy. New York: Augustus M. Kelley Publishers. p. 365.

According to Cooper, majority rule and universal white male suffrage led to the Tariff of 1824 and the Tariff of Abominations of 1828 which made South Carolina "slaves" of the North. In 1827, Cooper made his infamous statement that the circumstances existed for South Carolina "to calculate the value of the Union." This sentiment was shocking in 1827, but as Unionist Benjamin F. Perry noted, "This expression excited great indignation, and was denounced by many, who soon afterwards adopted the sentiment."³¹² In the same speech Cooper asked the crowd, "Is it worth our while to continue this union of states, where the north demand to be our masters, and we are required to be their tributaries?"³¹³ The idea of the South being a slave to the Northern masters came up again.

Cooper's views on majority rule and states' rights were intimately connected. "Consolidation" was the term that Cooper used to mean the loss of power of the states to the national government, and also to "the people". He wrote to New Jersey United States Senator Mahlon Dickerson, "I am persuaded that the present attempts to throw the election of President exclusively into the hands of the people is a Consolidation-measure. The election of President according to the principles of our constitution is a State affair, and ought to be managed by the States, and not the people."³¹⁴

Cooper's view of what relationship a state had to the national government was expressed in his "Consolidation"

³¹² Perry, Benjamin F. 1980. The Writings of Benjamin F. Perry Vol. I. eds. Meats, Stephen and Arnold, Edwin T. Spartanburg, S. C.: The Reprint Company, Publishers. p. 249.

³¹³ New York Evening Post. July 27th, 1827.

³¹⁴ "Letters of Dr. Thomas Cooper, 1825-1832". American Historical Review. July 1901. p. 728-729. Letter to Mahlon Dickerson dated March 16th, 1826.

pamphlet. "A State, is a nation: a distinct political community; wherein the people inhabiting a given territory, have united for the purpose of living under a government of their own choice... The very expression United States is conclusive to show that they were before they convened, when they convened, and now are, distinct, independent States... The people of the United States are therefore the united people of each separate independent State."³¹⁵

COOPER'S DIFFERENT MEANINGS OF SLAVERY

Cooper's use of the word "slave" above was one of the most intriguing uses of a liberal argument in the defense of the feudal fragment. Cooper argued that the South was the slave of the North. Although he defended the institution of slavery as moral and beneficial he did not want the Southern planters to be slaves, because in a liberal society, like the United States, a slave was degraded. Slaves had no dignity because dignity cannot exist without freedom, in a liberal world. But South Carolina was the state least connected to the liberal tradition and had the strongest "feudal fragment." Cooper's thought reflected this feudal-liberal amalgamation. Even though Cooper was attacked for his agnostic beliefs³¹⁶ he cited the Bible in slavery's defense using the "feudal" logic with its emphasis on order and tradition, "There is not one passage in the Bible from the first verse of Genesis to the last of Revelations, in which it is blamed or forbidden... that 'thy man servant and

³¹⁵ Cooper, Thomas. 1824. "Consolidation: An Account of the Parties in the United States, from the Convention of 1787 to the Present Period." Columbia, S.C. p. 29.

³¹⁶ Cooper was a Unitarian. He believed that Unitarianism by attempting to marry reason with religion was the most logical theological position. Even as a reactionary Nullifier later in life, he remained a religious dissenter.

thy maid servant' in the tenth commandment, are literally and accurately, thy male slave and thy female slave."³¹⁷

The "liberal" political economist in Cooper admitted that

"the prevalence of slavery, depressed the industry, the growth and the improvement of the Southern States... and this was illustrated by the comparative prosperity and more manifest improvement of the Northern States."³¹⁸ Then why

not get rid of slavery? Because to give in to the North would be to lose honor, a feudal fragment answer. But the reason honor was lost was based on the liberal society's idea that being a slave was the ultimate degradation. This mix of feudal and liberal logic argues that Southern slavery must continue so that the Southern planters can escape being slaves of the North. The liberal fragment question would be "Why should Africans be singled out for slavery?" The answer again combines liberal and feudal fragments. The feudal fragment part of the answer was that Africans were "naturally" inferior, which meant they could not change.

Cooper believed, "I do not say the blacks are a different species: but I have not the slightest doubt of their being an inferior variety of the human species; and not capable of the same improvements as the whites".³¹⁹ They were stuck to

their lot in life, not by tradition as in feudal society, but by genetic inferiority. Racialism was part of the feudal fragment since it was a hereditary argument. "Inferior" also

³¹⁷ Cooper, Thomas. 1826. 1970. On the Constitution of the United States. New York: Da Capo Press. p. 45.

³¹⁸ *ibid.* p. 45-46.

³¹⁹ "Letters of Dr. Thomas Cooper, 1825-1832". American Historical Review. July 1901. p. 729. Letter to Mahlon Dickerson dated March 16th, 1826.

meant that slaves were incapable of living civilly in a liberal society of free people. Cooper stated "that a population of free blacks, is the most idle, debauched, thievish and insolent that we have ever witnessed in the United States."³²⁰

CONCLUSION

Cooper's importance was that he wove utilitarianism and political economy into a new proslavery ideology adopting his own brand of Smith, Bentham and Malthus. Cooper's worldly knowledge is important to understanding the complex contradictions of antebellum South Carolina. The common focus on antebellum South Carolina is on its "peculiarities". South Carolina comes across as narrow and parochial. The paradox of antebellum South Carolina was that while it was parochial, it adapted some of the newly accepted ideas from England, Europe and the North and created its own world view. The fact that Thomas Cooper's ideas were accepted and he became an intellectual leader of the Nullifiers reflects the paradox of the state.

Although Cooper was active as an agitator on Nullification, his greatest contribution to Nullification (and ultimately to the South) was as a firebrand intellectual who created the beginnings of a modern pro-slavery defense. Thomas Cooper was the most important Nullifier intellectual. Cooper created a progressive defense of the slave system in the context of modernity by using

³²⁰ Cooper, Thomas. 1826. 1970. On the Constitution of the United States. New York: Da Capo Press. p. 45.

classical political economy and utilitarianism. Cooper's ideas reflected all the Nullifiers' contradictions that arose from the mix of the liberal and feudal fragments in using liberal ideas to embrace and defend aristocratic ways.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION

The Nullification Crisis was a crisis of modernization. The Nullifiers' helped create a new Southern world view in the context of modernity. Their arguments for slavery and sectionalism increasingly integrated the beliefs of the utilitarians and political economists even as they sought to defend slavery and tradition. The Nullification movement was psychologically connected to slave agrarianism but needed to adapt to modernization. The Nullifiers alternately embraced modernity and defended tradition and reaction and ended with a unique synthesis. Two Nullification leaders, James Hamilton, Jr. and Thomas Cooper reflected the ambivalence and turmoil that South Carolina faced.

Hamilton organized the Nullifiers electorally. Ironically, he mobilized mass support for minority rule by taking advantage of the newly emerging white egalitarianism of the Jacksonian era. He used modern techniques of liberal democracy in mobilizing mass support, yet dreaded the effect democracy would have on slavery. His organizing shows the influence of the dominant liberal tradition of the nation within South Carolina, and how the Nullifiers internalized this liberal fragment to help create its own unique world view.

Thomas Cooper created a progressive defense of the slave system integrating the ideas of the political economists and utilitarians about progress. The influences of the political and economic changes in the Transatlantic

world on Nullifier beliefs were tremendous. The new trading relations among the British, the North, the South and the West helped transform American antebellum life. The changes in the Transatlantic world contributed significantly to the modernization crisis in South Carolina that created the Nullification movement. Cooper's work blended the elements of the feudal and liberal fragments into a progressive defense of the Southern slave system.

The Nullifiers felt besieged. The British were nearing abolition. The North was hostile to their interests. Slave revolts and white male egalitarianism could have threatened their hegemony. They were also caught in an ideological paradox. As advocates of free trade, they did not want a protective tariff. Free trade meant that British textile industries would have open access to Southern cotton, but the British also needed free labor. The Nullifiers' argument could threaten the institutions they defended. The Nullifiers had to resolve an argument that worked for them in the short-term, but had long-term contradictions. This was a difficult position to be in because their allies, the British, were becoming more powerful relative to the South.

THE NULLIFICATION CRISIS: A MODIFIED DEVELOPMENTAL APPROACH:

CULTURE AND IDEOLOGY CONNECTED TO

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL STRUCTURE

The Southern nationalists, as exemplified by the Nullifiers, did not adapt well to the coming of

modernization. They participated in their own economic and political dependence. This was not a dependence necessarily created by themselves, but worsened by their inability to develop a successful adaptation strategy to industrialization and modernization.

Indices of modernization, like the amount of industry, libraries and urbanization, point out that the South remained far behind the North. The Nullifier leadership feared "internal improvements" projects which could have helped their local economy. Although more dependent on the British, they admired them while despising the less exploitative North. Slavery perpetrated "growth without development" in the region. Working class whites identified with the planters, hated the slaves, and were recruited to the Nullification movement by the promise of dignity, which came from being white. This was to the detriment of the region's development because their goal was to be upwardly mobile within the slave system, rather than to create a more dynamic, expanding and diverse economic system like the North and the West. Even the slaves, by rebelling, were pushing for modernization and development unwittingly made South Carolina's dependency worse. The unsuccessful Denmark Vesey slave revolt further accentuated the feudal fragment characteristics of white South Carolina and helped spur the Nullification movement and the development of a Southern nationalism.

Culture and ideology are intimately tied to economic arrangements and social structure in Hartz' concepts of the liberal, feudal and radical fragments. The economic arrangements of Southern slavery made the strength of the feudal fragment stronger in the South than Hartz emphasizes. Richard Weaver has argued that the South was a feudal society "patterned on an order then declining in Europe, but in the New World it grew to notable proportions."³²¹ In my view it was not a feudal society, but not a bourgeois one either. It was an aristocratic capitalism that had a strong "feudal fragment". It was the liberal tradition clashing with this powerful fragment that created the Nullification Crisis.

The mixture of the feudal and liberal fragments helps explain the Civil War, Jim Crow and the Civil Rights movement. It is hard to argue that the liberal tradition has been dominant in Southern political life throughout its history. The liberal tradition has existed side-by-side with the feudal fragment.

For Hartz socialism emerges from feudalism because of the memory of obligation found in feudalism. In South Carolina and the United States class consciousness is blunted by race consciousness and the liberal tradition. In the antebellum South the American dream for whites was owning several slaves. It was the liberal dream in the

³²¹ Weaver, Richard. 1968. The Southern Tradition at Bay. New Rochelle, N.Y.: Arlington House. p. 48.

feudal fragment. In the antebellum South, any tendency towards socialism was as weak as it was in the North, because whites and blacks were separated into a two-tier system of free and slave labor allowing the liberal tradition to continue for whites. Southern history after Reconstruction reinforces how strong this feudal fragment was. When black slavery gave way to a more multiracial sharecropper system the Populist movement emerged in the South. Although the Populist movement was hardly socialist, it sought to bring the "exploited" groups of the Southern and Western farmers, both black and white, together with the industrial workers of the Northeast to form an alliance around demands for more public involvement in the economy to counteract the power of Southern landowners and Northern business interests.³²² Racial slavery and white solidarity mixed with the strong liberal tradition delayed any Populist agitation in the South until after Reconstruction. The Northern exploitation part of this argument was used by the Nullifiers in the 1820's and 1830's and had great popular appeal to the white artisans and mechanics. The Populist movement of the 1880's and 1890's also resulted from the mix of the feudal and liberal fragments.

The mix of the liberal tradition with a strong feudal fragment is key in understanding Nullification. The pro-

³²² Woodward, C. Vann. 1951. Origins of the New South, 1877-1913. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press. p. 252.

slavery arguments of Cooper and the organizing of Hamilton reflect this mix. This feudal-liberal amalgamation comes not merely from economic arrangements, but also from ideological and cultural influences within South Carolina, ideas from the political economists in England, the fear of slave revolts, and relations with the North and West in the United States. All these forces conditioned each other to help form the Nullification movement.

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