

THE MICHIGAN PRESS AND THE COMING OF THE  
CIVIL WAR, 1859-1861: A STUDY OF  
EDITORIAL OPINION

Thesis for the Degree of Ph. D.  
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RODNEY HOWARD JOSEPH  
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This is to certify that the

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The Michigan Press and the Coming of the  
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Opinion

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Major professor

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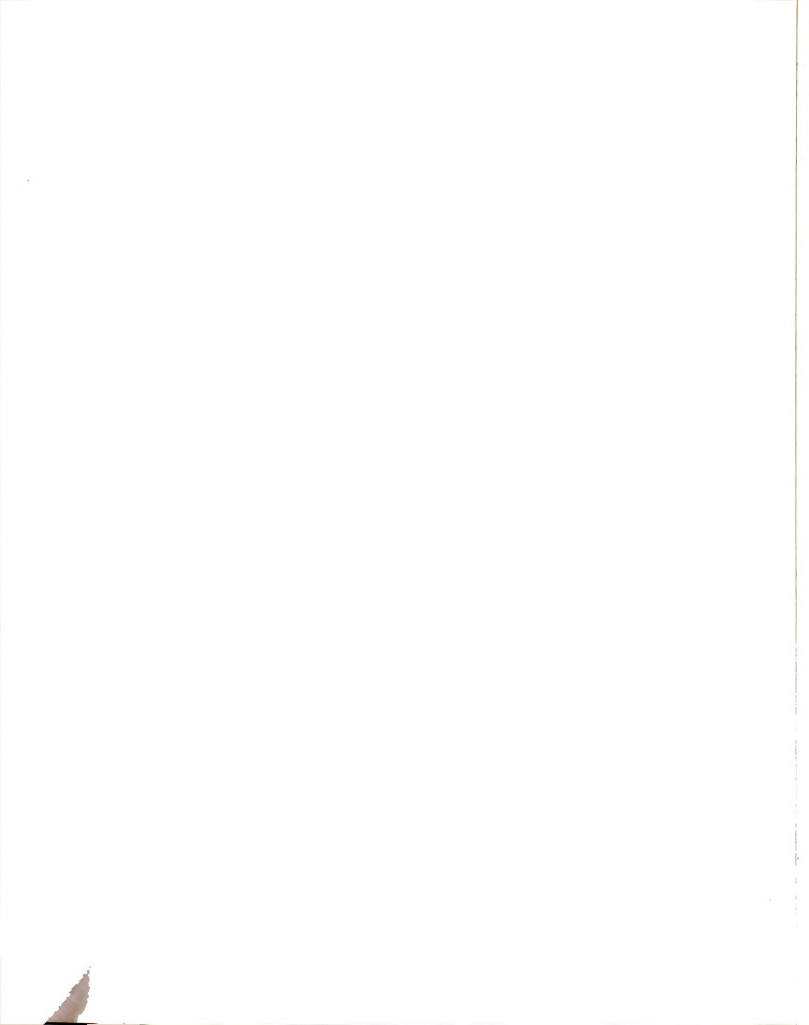
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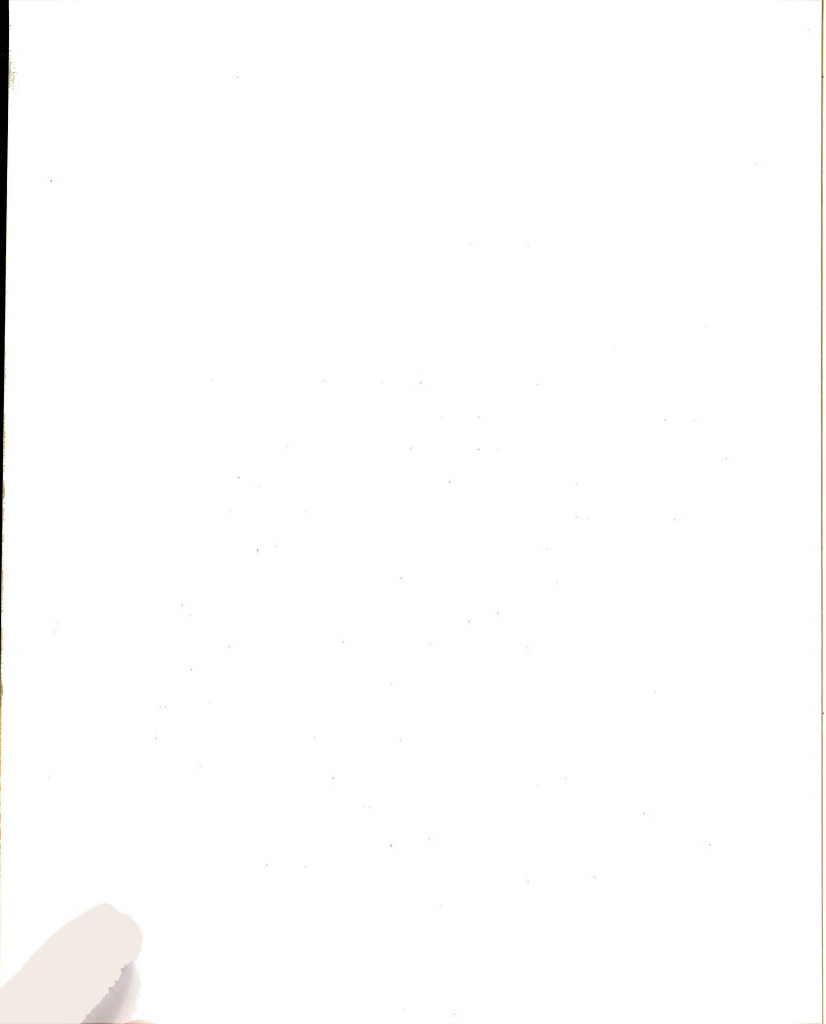
ABSTRACT

THE MICHIGAN PRESS AND THE COMING OF THE  
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By

Rodney Howard Joseph

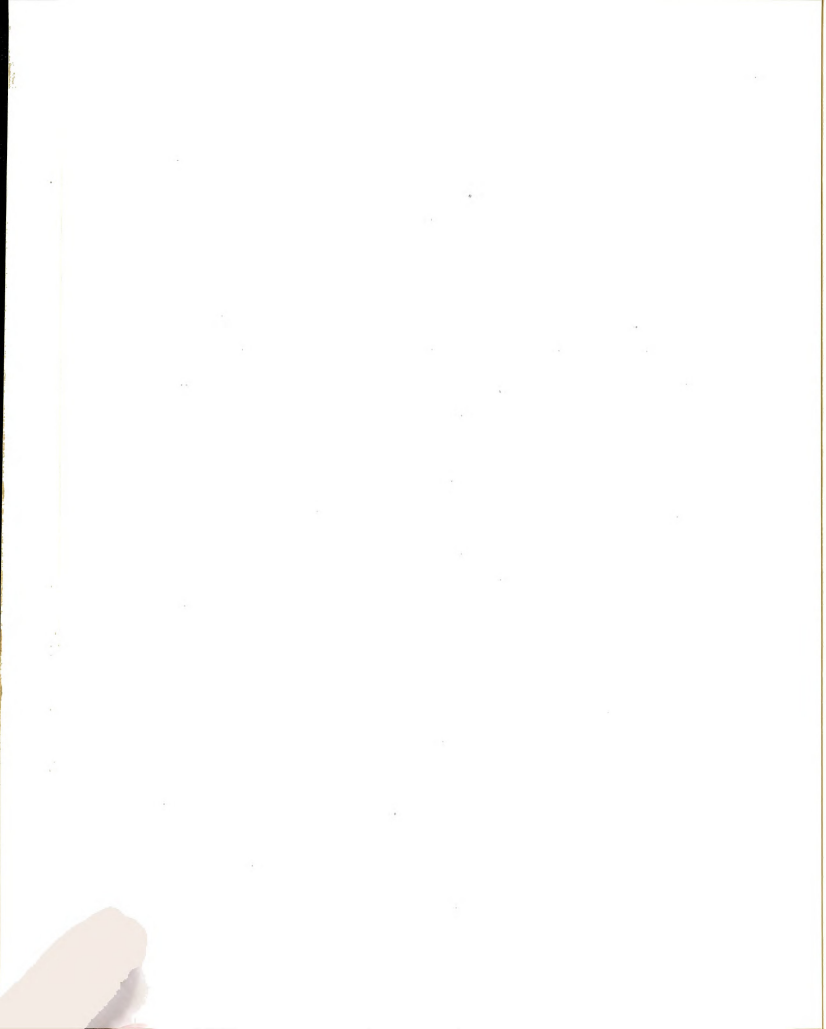
An analysis of the editorial opinion of partisan Michigan newspapers during the year and a half preceding the outbreak of the Civil War in April, 1861 reveals that fundamental differences existed between the parties in their conceptions of the nature of the Union and the threat posed to it by the expansion of slavery. Republican editors believed an aggressive Slave Power threatened the northern way of life. These men shared the Republican devotion, as described by Eric Foner in Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men (New York, 1970), to a free labor society based on the notion that any person could rise to middle-class status as long as the society remained free from unnatural restraint. To the Republicans, slavery and its offspring, the Slave Power, was a real and immediate threat to the free labor society. They viewed slavery as a system which degraded free labor and which if allowed to expand would ultimately destroy free labor in the North as



well as the South. The Michigan Republican editors not only considered the Slave Power as a threat to the northern labor system, but also to the traditional freedoms of speech and press. They were convinced that the Slave Power would not be satisfied until these freedoms were suppressed everywhere. Finally, Michigan Republicans denounced slavery as a moral evil which had to be terminated. Certainly, then, as much as they denied it, the Republicans desired the abolition of slavery in the existing slave states. But the Republicans' strict adherence to constitutionalism and their belief that slavery could be strangled to death deterred them from urging direct action against the institution. Nevertheless, their deification of John Brown clearly indicated how deeply they hated slavery.

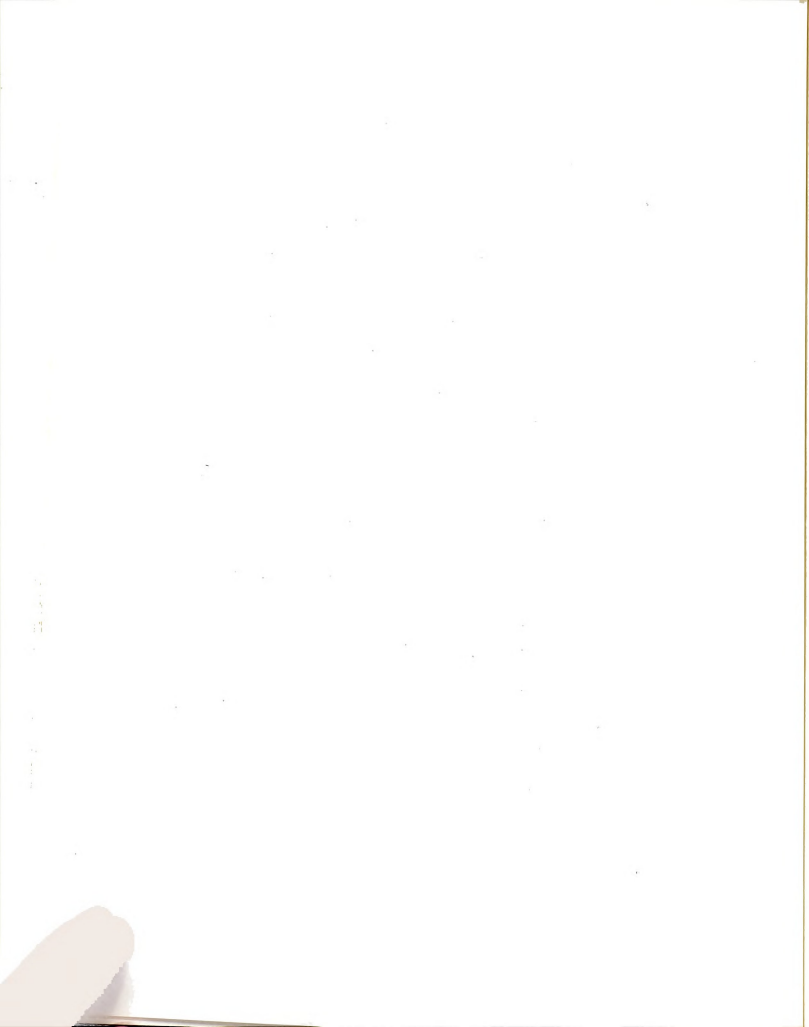
Democratic editors, on the other hand, perceived the Union nearly perfect as then constituted. Reflecting their basically amoral attitude toward slavery, Democrats could not understand how the slavery issue was shaking the nation to its foundations. Desperate to preserve the Union and bury the slavery issue, they did everything in their power to conciliate the South without sacrificing their political position at home. Hence, during the campaign of 1860 they offered popular sovereignty as a means of placating the South while telling their Michigan readers that even if slavery were legalized in the





territories, geography made its expansion there impossible. When that failed, they were willing to offer the South territorial guarantees to avoid the dissolution of the Union. But this would have meant permanent changes in the constitutional structure of the nation. Indeed, many Democratic editors went so far as to urge surrender of the coastal forts and de facto recognition of the seceded states in the hope that the slave states of the upper South would ultimately use their influence to effect a reconstruction of the nation.

The parties also differed markedly in their use of racism as an appeal for votes. The Democratic press continually argued that a Republican victory would mean the granting of civil rights to Negroes. The Republican papers denied the charge and occasionally countered that their party really represented the white man's interest. But, on the whole, the Republican press almost totally ignored the race issue. If Michigan could have been won by racist appeals, the Democrats would have easily triumphed. Yet they were trounced by the Republicans. It seems that Michiganders hated slavery more than they feared the Negro.



THE MICHIGAN PRESS AND THE COMING OF THE  
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Rodney Howard Joseph

A THESIS

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Department of History

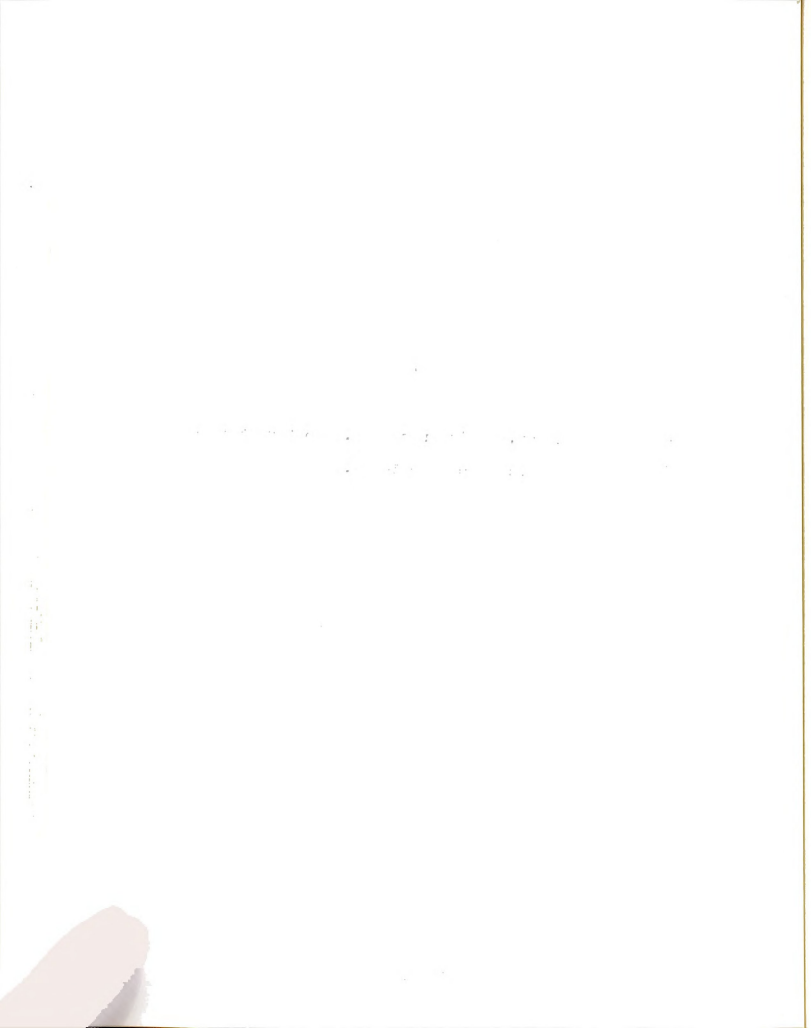
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## **DEDICATION**

**For my grandfather, Louis Greenberg, who taught me the  
value of knowledge.**



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would most like to thank Professor Frederick D. Williams who provided me with the guidance and confidence to complete this study. My appreciation goes to Professors Douglas T. Miller and Thomas Bushell for their aid to me during my entire doctoral career. I must especially acknowledge the selfless work of Professor J. Stanley Lemons of Rhode Island College for proofreading a late draft of the manuscript. Finally, many thanks must go to the staff of the Michigan State Library, Lansing, Michigan, for its consideration in lending me many reels of micro-film.





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## INTRODUCTION

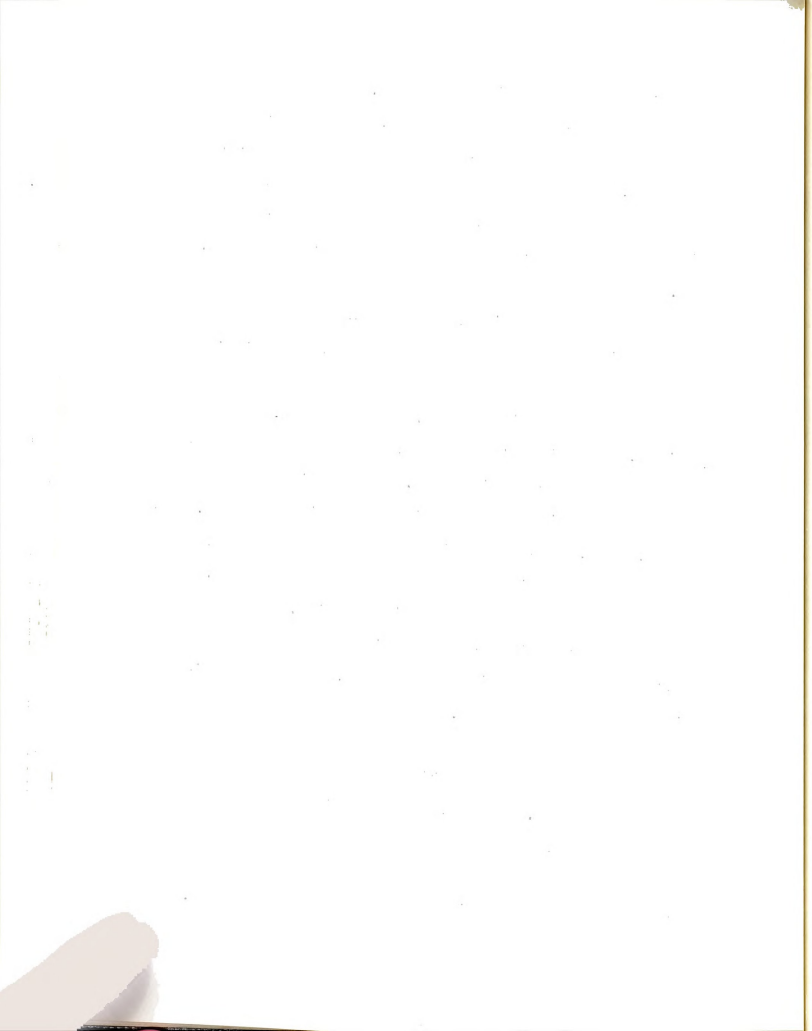
The Civil War clearly marked a watershed in American history, culminating in the end of slavery and the ascendancy of industrial capitalism. From almost the day the conflict broke out, historians, politicians, and others have attempted to explain its origins. Yet, there is still no generally accepted account of the "causes" of the war. This study hopes to shed some light on the problem of Civil War causation by analyzing the views of the press of Michigan toward the South, slavery, and the nature of northern society in the year and a half before the firing on Sumter. A second purpose has been to discover what differences, if any, existed between the Republican and Democratic parties in Michigan in their understanding of the sectional conflict. In other words, did they substantially agree in their conceptions of the Union and the nature of the discord, or did they fundamentally diverge (beyond artificially created issues devised for partisan gain) on these questions?

Specifically, I have intensively examined the editorial opinion of the Michigan press from John Brown's raid to roughly a month after Sumter. I have looked at almost all the extant files of Michigan papers for the

period, approximately thirty in all. I have only been able to uncover eight Democratic papers, yet, I believe them to be a representative cross-sample of Democratic opinion in the state. Another problem has been that several files are disrupted. Nevertheless, for most events and issues enough editorial opinion has survived to ascertain the press' view.

A common practice of the ante-bellum press was to reprint editorials from other newspapers. The Michigan papers frequently indulged in this procedure, but they usually credited their sources. To determine, as much as possible, the editors' own views, I have eliminated from consideration copied editorials. In some instances I came across copied editorials to which no credit was given. Obviously, then, I may have missed some reprinted ones. But it would seem that if the editor did not give credit, he wanted the editorial taken for his own view. Hence, I see no harm in considering such editorials to be a genuine expression of Michigan editorial opinion. Over 1200 editorials have been analyzed.

The research indicates that a fundamental difference existed between the parties, although it was not based on economic policy. Rather, the Republicans viewed southern society, based on slavery and its offspring the Slave Power, to be a threat to the northern free labor society and the constitutional liberties of the people. They were also genuinely morally revolted at slavery as an



instrument of human degradation. Democrats did not have such fears. They considered the Union nearly perfect as then constituted and deplored the needless agitation over slavery which threatened to break it asunder.

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The furor over the Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854 helped unite in Michigan the Free Soil Democrats and Whigs into the Republican party, although the merger movement had begun as early as 1852. Early in 1854, preliminary discussions were held between leading Free Democrats and Whigs, including many leading editors of the Michigan press. By April many Whig editors had come out for a new party. Aaron B. Turner of the Grand Rapids Eagle went so far as to switch his affiliation from Whig to Free Democrat, while simultaneously calling for a new party. Finally, the anti-slavery forces in the state agreed to convene at a mass convention in Jackson on July 6.<sup>1</sup>

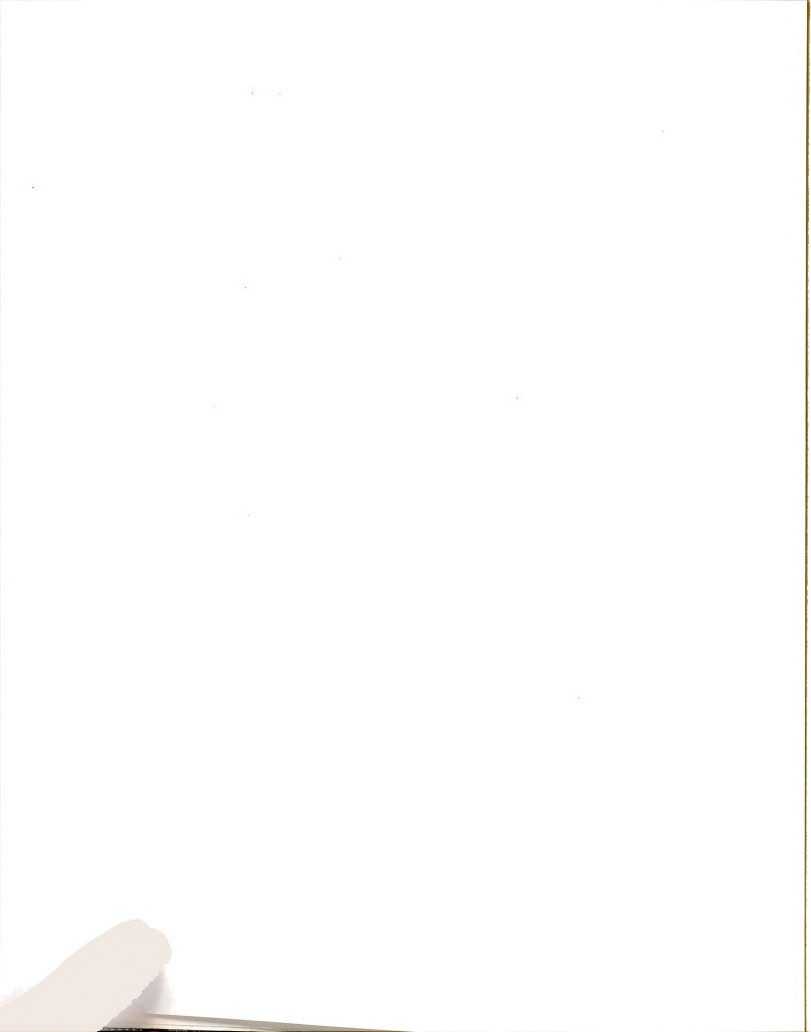
This convention, which gave birth to the Michigan Republican party, endorsed a series of radical resolutions. "The institution of slavery," the resolutions stated, "except in punishment of crime, is a great moral, social and political evil;...." It was also "a violation of the rights of man as man; that the law of nature, which is the law of liberty, gives to no man rights superior to those of another; that God and Nature have secured to each individual the inalienable right of equality, any violation of which must be the result of superior force; and that slavery

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therefore, is a perpetual war upon its victims;...." The resolutions also claimed that the Founding Fathers had worked for the restriction of slavery and that Congress had the right to forbid its expansion. Finally, both the Kansas-Nebraska Act and the Fugitive Slave Law were condemned.<sup>2</sup> Kinsley Bingham, a Free Soiler, received the gubernatorial nomination and defeated the Democrat, John S. Barry, 43,652 to 38,675. Three out of four Republicans were elected to Congress. The legislature was overwhelmingly Republican. As a measure of comparison, in 1852 the Democratic nominee for governor won with a plurality of 8,138 and a clear majority of 2,288. Democrats carried all four congressional districts, 25 out of 32 state Senate seats, and 51 of 72 in the House. But after 1854, "for the next 28 years in Michigan the Democrats did not choose a single State officer, either at the fall or spring elections. They did not have a majority in either House of any Legislature, and so, of course, could not elect a United States Senator, and out of 92 Congressmen, they chose only 6."<sup>3</sup>

An examination of presidential election statistics demonstrates the Republican ascendancy in 1860. Prior to 1856 the presidential vote was almost evenly divided between the Democrats and other parties. But because of third party voting in 1848 and 1852, the Democrats easily carried Michigan in those elections. In 1856, the Republican Fremont swept the state with 71,766 votes to 52,138



for Buchanan, carrying 35 of 39 counties. The Republican showing in 1860 was equally impressive. Lincoln defeated Douglas 88,450 to 64,449. Other party votes were negligible. Lincoln carried 44 of 51 counties. The seven won by Douglas (Bay, Cheboygan, Chippewa, Iosco, Isabella, Mackinac and Mantou) were very lightly populated. In those counties Douglas defeated Lincoln 811 to 635. The magnitude of the Republican victory is illustrated by the returns of Wayne County. Lincoln topped Douglas 7,325 to 6,701. The Democrats had not lost that county since 1840 (and then only by 9 votes) and did not lose it again until 1872.<sup>4</sup>

During the ante-bellum period, the Michigan press did its best to fan political activity and interest. A most cursory perusal of the Michigan press during this period indicates that politics was a year round activity. Elections, conventions, and politicking never ended. Indeed, the function of the press was to further the interest of the political parties. In 1861, there were 152 newspapers in Michigan;<sup>5</sup> the great majority were unquestionably partisan. The proprietors and editors were known by name to their readers. Editorials were not intended to be objective analyses of events or problems; they were expected to blame the political opposition for all that was bad. As one observer put it: "A custom of speaking bitterly, malignantly and abusively of opponents and of

competitors in the same field, was not inaptly characterized as 'the leprosy of the press.'"<sup>6</sup> Many of the papers outside of Detroit were started with an invitation to a printer to publish a journal by men interested in the growth of a town and those aspiring for political gain. Most papers were weeklies which struggled for advertising to stay alive. Many of the subscribers paid in kind. Cash was scarce in the Michigan farm country. One writer described Volney Hascall, editor and proprietor of the Kalamazoo Gazette, as "only too glad to take 'store pay' for advertising, and even assumed and felt an affectionate gratitude to the honest subscriber who proposed to pay for his paper in buckwheat straw or saw logs; this was really something to be thankful for, as a goodly number, never, by word or deed, made overtures of payment of any sort." Yet, a resourceful proprietor could be financially successful. In sixteen years, from 1846 to 1862, Hascall prospered, greatly increasing his paper's advertising.<sup>7</sup>

The ante-bellum press in Michigan was extremely influential in political matters. Next to the able orator, a newspaper was the most powerful weapon the party possessed. In addition to publishing editorials, the papers frequently offered transcripts or summaries of speeches.<sup>8</sup> But the editors of the papers were much more than mere conveyors of information. They had great influence in the formation of political policy. Most striking was the role of several Whig editors in the formation of the Republican party in

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Michigan, particularly the contribution of Joseph Warren, editor of the Detroit Tribune. One observer has claimed that "he exerted more lasting influence upon the politics of the state and country than any of his contemporaries although his reputation was, perhaps, less wide and enduring than some others."<sup>9</sup> In 1854 the Free Democrats nominated Kinsley S. Bingham for governor. There was some talk that they should merge with the Whigs into a new party. In March, a group of Whig editors, including Warren, gathered at the Tribune office to discuss the idea of a new party. Because of Warren's enthusiasm, several Whig editors endorsed the proposal. In his columns, with the advice of Horace Greeley, he continually tried to show the advantages of a new organization. Finally, the Whig state committee endorsed the concept of a new party and made Warren chairman of the Whig state central committee.<sup>10</sup> He also played a prominent role at the convention in Jackson on July 6, 1854 which gave the Republican party its name.<sup>11</sup> On the national scene, Jacob M. Howard, future Congressman and Senator, thought enough of Rufus Hosmer, editor of the Lansing State Republican to ask him in November, 1860 to use his influence with Lincoln to secure for him a Cabinet position.<sup>12</sup> Certainly, then, as one writer put it: "The oldtime Newspaper publisher became a man of influence, because it was through the columns of his publication that he had aided in the selection of men of prominence in the state to fill public places."<sup>13</sup>

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What type of men published and edited newspapers in Michigan in the years immediately preceding the Civil War? Virtually all were born outside of the state. All of the more than thirty editors studied emigrated to the state between 1830 and 1856. Roughly half came from New York State. Several, such as Walter Woolnough of the Battle Creek Journal, Joseph Saunders of the Charlotte Republican, Henry Barns of the Detroit Tribune, and Henry S. Clubb of the Grand Haven Clarion were born in England. Francis H. Rankin of the Flint Wolverine Citizen was born in Ireland. From what can be gathered about their early careers, one-half to two-thirds of them started out as apprentice printers. Several first worked on papers outside of Michigan. Morgan Bates of the Grand Traverse Herald, Donald C. Henderson of the Allegan Journal, John N. Ingersoll of the Oswosso American, and Henry Clubb all worked for Greeley earlier in their careers. Others, such as Seth Lewis of the Marshall Statesman, were originally printers for papers in western New York. The remaining third, such as Rufus Hosmer of the Detroit Daily Advertiser and later the Lansing State Republican, Edwin Willits of the Monroe Commercial, and Ezra Seaman of the Ann Arbor Journal, frequently began their careers in law or teaching. The majority of editors had little formal education beyond the common schools. Perhaps one-fifth to one-quarter had some college training. Rufus Hosmer was probably the most educated editor, having graduated from Harvard in 1834.<sup>14</sup> The



great majority of editors came from humble backgrounds. Indeed, the printing business was referred to as the "poor man's college." The apprentice learned all the tasks necessary to be a successful proprietor. The ante-bellum publisher/editor not only edited the paper but was also typesetter, job printer, foreman, business manager and pressman.<sup>15</sup> When the apprentice finally learned his trade he looked for a town to establish his own paper.<sup>16</sup> Certainly, then, the successful editor typified the proverbial nineteenth-century free laborer who had risen out of poverty to a socially prominent, if not always wealthy, position in his community. It is not surprising that Republican editors, in particular, using their own careers as examples, continually lauded the northern free labor system while castigating southern society as stagnant because of its slave labor.

Most of the publishers and editors frequently interrupted their newspaper responsibilities to engage in political activities. That is, many of these men not only served the party by promoting candidates and programs through their editorials, but also they were politicians themselves. Virtually all, at some time or another, held elected or appointed office. The most successful was Isaac P. Christiancy who owned the Monroe Commercial in 1856. A lawyer, who began his career as a Democrat, then Free Soiler, and finally Republican, served in the state senate from 1850 to 1851 as a Free Soiler, was a state



supreme court justice from 1858 to 1875, and U.S. Senator from 1875 to 1879.<sup>17</sup> He was somewhat atypical in that his active association with the Michigan press was only for a short time. Perhaps more representative was Morgan Bates who owned the Detroit Advertiser from 1839 to 1844 and the Grand Traverse Herald from 1858 to 1874. But he was also Treasurer of Grand Traverse County for eight years, Registrar of the United States Land Office under Lincoln, and Lieutenant-governor of Michigan from 1868 to 1872.<sup>18</sup> Publishers and editors were very active at various conventions. Democrats Volney Hascall and Wilbur Storey, for example, were influential in drafting the state constitution of 1850. Donald C. Henderson of the Allegan Journal served as a member of the "Texas" delegation at the 1860 Republican convention. Henderson and Walter Woolnough of the Battle Creek Journal were delegates to the Republican state convention held in Detroit on May 2, 1860. Publishers also frequently served on county committees. For example, M.E.N. Howell of the Pontiac Gazette was a member of the Oakland County Republican Committee while D.B. Cook of the Niles Republican served on the Berrien County Democratic Committee.<sup>19</sup> The publishers expected political reward for service to the party. Some, such as Wallace R. Bartlett of the Tuscola County Pioneer and Seth Lewis of the Marshall Statesman were appointed postmasters by President Lincoln. Rufus Hosmer was appointed Consul General to Frankfurt-on-the-Main.<sup>20</sup> The publisher of the Lansing paper of the



party in power usually became state printer. Hence, George Peck of the Democratic Lansing State Journal was state printer from 1852 to 1855. In 1861, Hosmer and Kerr of the Lansing State Republican did the printing. Another type of political reward was Secretary of the Senate. From 1859 to 1863, Aaron B. Turner of the Grand Rapids Eagle served in that capacity.<sup>21</sup> Business connections sometimes helped to solidify the identity between publisher-editor and politician. Rufus Hosmer, for example, was for a time the law partner of Moses Wisner, governor of Michigan from 1859 to 1861.<sup>22</sup>

Some newspapermen used their position (both as editor and politicians) as a steppingstone to economic gain. Although it is difficult to ascertain the outside business interests of most editors, some had such interests. Morgan Bates did well. His obituary noted that "the foresight which led Mr. Bates to the Grand Traverse region and the value of the services he rendered to the capitalists invested in that section bore fruit in a series of very remunerative investments, which made him at his death a man of considerable wealth."<sup>23</sup> After the war, Charles V. Deland of the Jackson Citizen (later the Saginaw Enterprise and Saginaw Morning Herald) was secretary and agent for the Economical Mutual Life Insurance Company of East Saginaw, Michigan.<sup>24</sup> In 1866 Elihu B. Pond of the Michigan Argus was elected Treasurer of the Ann Arbor Rock Oil Company.<sup>25</sup> In the 1840's, C.B. Stebbins, then editor of the Michigan

Expositor, prospered in the furniture business.<sup>26</sup> Throughout his career Henry Barns of the Detroit Tribune invested in a brick yard, glass bottle business, railroads, and a telegraph line, but all of his endeavors failed.<sup>27</sup> Since most biographical sketches of the newspapermen for the pre-war period do not list any outside business activities, it would seem that most of them had limited business interests. They apparently concentrated their efforts on the success of their newspaper and party and the attainment of political office for themselves. It is probable, however, that most of them had the opportunity to use their appointed and elected offices for some outside gain.

As indicated earlier, many of the editors were considered politically powerful in the state. On the Democratic side, Wilbur Storey of the Detroit Free Press and Volney Hascall of the Kalamazoo Gazette were particularly influential. Storey began his career as a "printer's devil" for the New York Journal of Commerce. During this period he was exposed to the virulent racism of that paper's editor, David Hale. In 1838 he established the LaPorte Herald in South Bend, Indiana. From 1844 to 1853, he published the Jackson Patriot. In 1849 he was appointed state prison inspector. In 1850 he defeated Austin Blair for delegate to the state constitutional convention. In February, 1853, he became part owner of the Detroit Free Press. He helped make the Free Press the most influential Democratic paper in Michigan, if not the entire Mid-west.

Because of his extreme racism and hatred of abolitionists, he became a center of national controversy. In June, 1861, he began a stormy career as editor of the Chicago Times.<sup>28</sup>

Volney Hascall was a more moderate Democratic editor.

During the election of 1860, for example, he was much less hostile to Lincoln than most other Democratic editors. He was born in Genesee County, New York in 1820. He received some college training at Michigan University. In addition to attending the state convention in 1850, he was appointed General-Land Office Registrar in 1857. One source has referred to him as "an able and convincing editorial writer...who made his paper a political power."<sup>29</sup>

Important Republican publishers and editors Rufus Hosmer, Henry Barns, Joseph Warren, and Isaac P. Christianity have already been discussed; but there were others who played significant roles also. Aaron B. Turner was an influential editor of Whig origins (the overwhelming majority of Republican editors came from a Whig background). In 1852 he abandoned the Whigs to join the Free Democrats and then helped to inaugurate the Republican party in 1854. In 1862 he was appointed Collector of the Internal Revenue by President Lincoln.<sup>30</sup> Donald C. Henderson founded, in 1856, the Allegan Journal, "one of the oldest and most influential papers in the State." He had labored for Greeley's New York Tribune from 1847 to 1855, eventually working himself up to assistant editor. He was originally a Whig anti-slavery man and "a warm and personal friend of





William H. Seward." He represented Allegan County at many state and national conventions.<sup>31</sup> John N. Ingersoll began as Greeley's apprentice and became his close friend. From 1858 to 1862, he edited the Oswosso American. He served in the Michigan House in 1849, and again from 1869 to 1870. He was a member of the State Senate from 1861 to 1862. Throughout his career he was "known as a prominent journalist and politician."<sup>32</sup> Other influential Republican editors were Charles V. DeLand of the Jackson Citizen, Harvey B. Rowson of the Hillsdale Standard, Zephaniah B. Knight of the Pontiac Gazette, and George A. Fitch of the Kalamazoo Telegraph who through their papers helped promote the development of the Republican party.<sup>33</sup> That many Republican editors came from western New York (a stronghold of Sewardism), that several worked for Greeley, who for a long time backed Seward, and that a few were Seward's friends, sheds light on why the New York Senator was almost the unanimous choice of Michigan editors for president in 1860.

In summary, the newspaper business was a means of upward mobility in ante-bellum Michigan. The publisher of a paper was known by name locally, and quite likely known statewide. Many publishers and editors held state or local offices. Federal positions, such as postmaster or collector of internal revenue, were frequently given to them as a reward for service to the party. Fervently partisan and outspoken, editors had no qualms about maliciously

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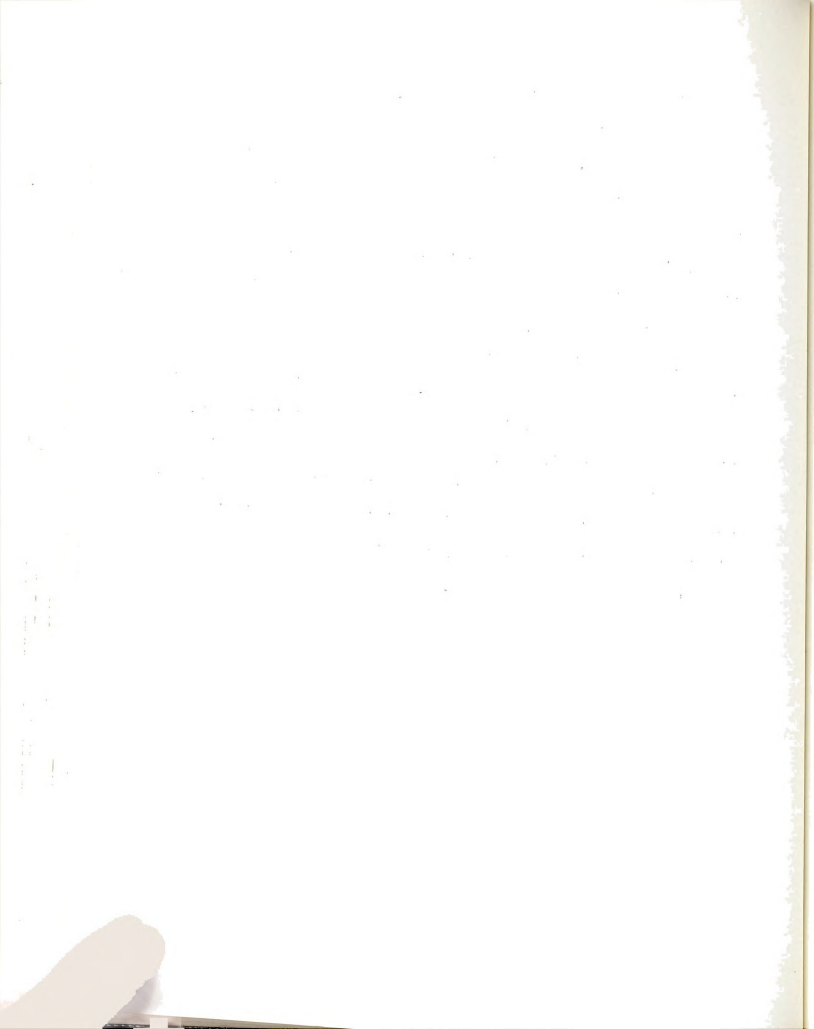
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attacking their political opponents. Terms such as "slave press," "doughface," and "black Republican" were bandied around every day. In their political diatribes, editors gave no quarter and expected none in return. Editors often had the power to make or break candidates or even parties. The action of several Whig editors helped create the Republican party in 1854. In other words, the ante-bellum press was a political press. Its purpose was to serve the party. Indeed, the publishers/editors were often some of the most influential members of the party. The editorial opinion of the party journal was, in most cases, the political position of the party itself. Only when the party was divided did significant differences in editorial opinion appear, as exemplified during the secession crisis by the split in the Michigan Republican party over the wisdom of repealing the state's Personal Liberty Laws.



## INTRODUCTION NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Wm. Livingstone, History of the Republican Party, Vol. 1 (Detroit, 1900), pp. 19-34.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 37-41.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 54-55.

<sup>4</sup>W. Dean Burnham, Presidential Ballots, 1836-1892 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1955), pp. 514-532, 239, 191-193.

<sup>5</sup>Daniel J. Kenny, American Newspaper Directory (New York: Watson & Co. Publishers, 1861), p. 120. For 1861 in Michigan, Kenny listed 13 dailies, 4 tri-weeklies, 2 semi-weeklies, 128 weeklies, and 5 semi-monthlies.

<sup>6</sup>S. B. McCracken, "The Press of Michigan--A Fifty Years' View," Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections, XVIII (1891), p. 386.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 387; John W. Fitzgerald, "Early Country Newspaper Publishers in Michigan," Michigan History Magazine, Vol. IX, January 1925, p. 66; George Torrey, "The Press of Kalamazoo," Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections, XVII (1890), p. 374.

<sup>8</sup>A. D. P. Van Buren, "Michigan in Her Pioneer Politics," Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections, XVII (1890), pp. 242-243.

<sup>9</sup>William Stocking, "Little Journeys in Journalism: Joseph Warren," Michigan History Magazine, XXII (Autumn, 1938), p. 403.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., pp. 403-407.

<sup>11</sup>William Stocking, "Prominent Newspapermen in Michigan," Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections, XXXIX (1915), p. 157.

<sup>12</sup>Jacob M. Howard to Rufus Hosmer, November 13, 1860, Jacob M. Howard papers, Burton Historical Collection, Detroit Public Library.

<sup>13</sup>Fitzgerald, "Early Country Newspaper Publishers," pp. 66-67.

<sup>14</sup>Lansing State Republican, April 24, 1861.

<sup>15</sup>McCracken, "The Press of Michigan," p. 384.

<sup>16</sup>Fitzgerald, "Early Country Newspaper Publishers," p. 65.

<sup>17</sup>"Isaac P. Christiancy," in American Biographical History of Eminent and Self-Made Men (also known as Representative Men of Michigan) (Cincinnati: Western Biographical Publishing Co., 1878), Congressional District 6, p. 93; A. D. P. Van Buren, "Memoir of Judge Isaac Pecham Christiancy," Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections, XVIII (1891), pp. 333-335; "Isaac P. Christiancy," Michigan Biographies, Vol. I (Lansing: Michigan Historical Commission, 1924), pp. 169-170.

<sup>18</sup>M. L. Leach, A History of the Grand Traverse Region (Traverse City, 1883), pp. 157-158; "Morgan Bates," Michigan Biographies, Vol. I, p. 61; "Morgan Bates," American Biographical History, Cong. Dist. 9, pp. 2-3.

<sup>19</sup>"Volney Hascall," Michigan Biographies, Vol. I, p. 378; Justin E. Walsh, To Print the News and Raise Hell!! A Biography of Wilbur F. Storey (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1968), p. 40; "Donald C. Henderson," American Biographical History, Cong. Dist. 5, p. 54; Detroit Daily Advertiser, May 2, 1860; Pontiac Gazette, March 9, 1860; Niles Republican, January 21, 1860.

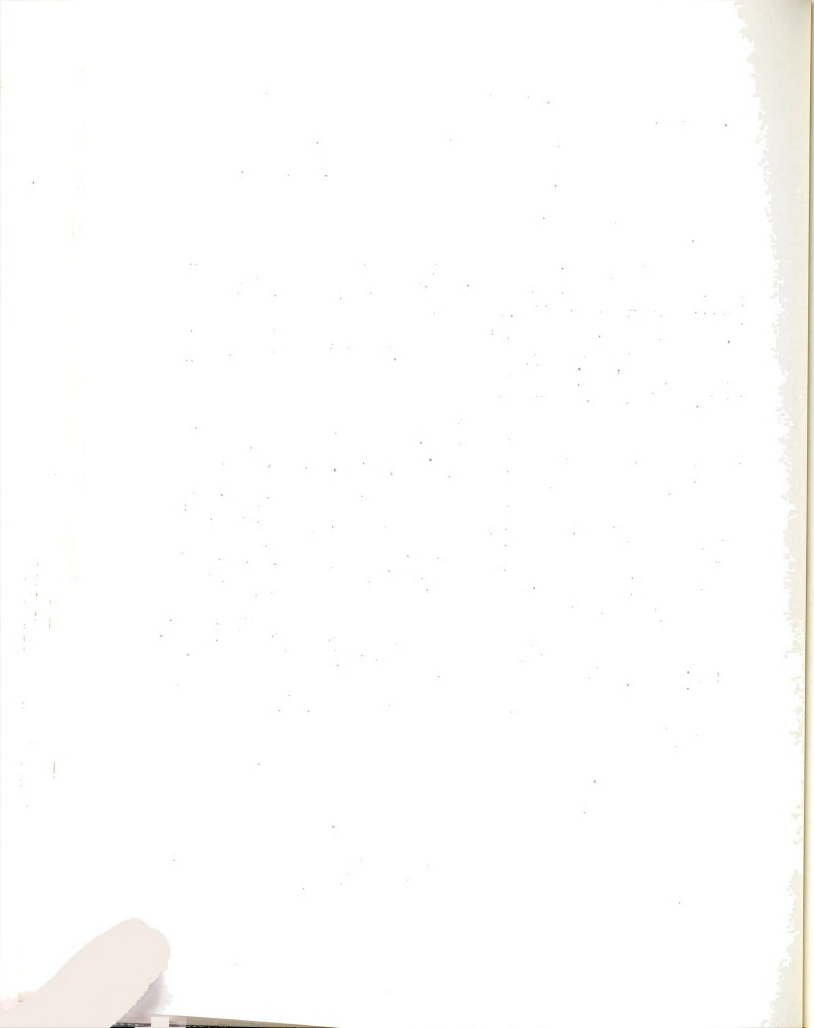
<sup>20</sup>"Wallace R. Bartlett," Michigan Biographies, Vol. I, p. 58; "Seth Lewis," American Biographical History, Cong. Dist. 3, p. 66; Lansing State Republican, April 24, 1861.

<sup>21</sup>"George Peck," Michigan Biographies, Vol. II, p. 181; History of Kent County (Chicago: Chas. C. Chapman & Co., 1881), p. 418.

<sup>22</sup>Aug. C. Baldwin, "Bench and Bar of Oakland County," Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections, XXXI (1902), p. 161.

<sup>23</sup>Detroit Tribune, March 3, 1874.

<sup>24</sup>DeLand family papers, Box 1, personal correspondence, DeLand-Crary family papers, 1842-1913, Michigan Historical Collections, University of Michigan.



<sup>25</sup>Irving K. Pond papers, Pond Family Correspondence, 1866-1880, Michigan Historical Collections, University of Michigan.

<sup>26</sup>C. B. Stebbins, Sketch of My Life (1862), p. 75. Typescript in Clarke Historical Library, Central Michigan University.

<sup>27</sup>Detroit News-Tribune, September 23, 1900, January 6, 1901.

<sup>28</sup>George B. Catlin, "Little Journeys in Journalism; Wilbur F. Storey," Michigan History Magazine, X (Oct., 1926), pp. 515-523; Walsh, To Print the News and Raise Hell!, p. 3-145.

<sup>29</sup>"Volney Hascall," Michigan Biographies, Vol. I, pp. 379-380; Torrey, "The Press of Kalamazoo," pp. 371-374; "Volney Hascall," American Biographical History, Cong. Dist. 4, pp. 34-35.

<sup>30</sup>"Aaron B. Turner," American Biographical History, Cong. Dist. 5, pp. 128-129; History of Kent County, pp. 421-422; Charles Moore, History of Michigan (Chicago: Lewis Publishing Co., 1915), Vol. III, pp. 1344-1345.

<sup>31</sup>"Donald C. Henderson," American Biographical History, Cong. Dist. 5, pp. 52-54.

<sup>32</sup>"John N. Ingersoll," American Biographical History, Cong. Dist. 6, pp. 93-94; "John N. Ingersoll," Michigan Biographies, Vol. I, p. 435.

<sup>33</sup>William Stocking, "Little Journeys in Journalism: Michigan Press Influence on Party Formation," Michigan History Magazine, XI (April 1917), p. 211.



## CHAPTER I

### JOHN BROWN'S RAID

On the evening of October 16, 1859, a battle-scarred abolitionist led a small band of sixteen whites and five Negroes into the small village of Harper's Ferry, Virginia.<sup>1</sup> The leader, John Brown, late of Kansas fame, planned to capture the arsenal in Harper's Ferry and use the arms to build a guerrilla army which would spark a servile insurrection throughout the South. Specifically, he expected that once it was known that he had "invaded" the South, blacks in the environs of Harper's Ferry would rush to his standard. Then the enlarged army would move south, spontaneously inciting revolts along the way. The slaveholders, in panic, would offer no effective resistance. Within a short time slavery would be eliminated in the United States.<sup>2</sup>

Immediately upon entering Harper's Ferry, things seemed to be going well for Brown. All his targets, including the arsenal, were captured. Several hostages were taken. But within hours the whole countryside knew that an effort to incite a slave insurrection was taking place. Federal troops and state militia were sent in to crush it. Brown, himself, was trapped in the engine house, wounded,

and captured. Ten of Brown's men were killed, two captured, and five made good their escape. Seven other people were killed.<sup>3</sup> The raid had failed within thirty-six hours after it began, but its repercussions were felt for months, if not years, to come.

This daring attempt to liberate the slaves precipitated a torrent of comment in the nation's press. The Democratic and Republican interpretations of the event were markedly different. Democrats explained the raid as an outgrowth of Republican doctrine, especially William H. Seward's "irrepressible conflict" speech, delivered in Rochester, New York on October 25, 1858. Seward had no idea that his presentation was to be remembered as one of the most influential orations of the ante-bellum period. Indeed, he had planned simply to deliver a routine campaign address.<sup>4</sup> But his statement that there "is an irrepressible conflict between opposing and enduring forces, and it means that the United States must and will, sooner or later, become either entirely a Slave-holding nation, or entirely a Free-labor nation,"<sup>5</sup> was to be cursed and praised for years to come. One author has suggested that this speech helped pin a radical label on Seward, a tag that was to be his undoing at the Republican convention of 1860.<sup>6</sup> The Republicans, on the other hand, viewed Brown as insane but noble, prodded to action by the barbarism of the aggressive slaveocracy. This dispute over the nature and causes of Brown's raid was a reflection of the basic

difference in outlook between the Democratic and Republican conceptions of American society.

As might be expected, the Michigan press extensively commented on Brown's raid. Democratic papers tended to stress abstract Republican doctrine as the cause for Brown's action. But they also indicted certain individuals alleged to have been privy to Brown's plans. The Detroit Free Press, Michigan's leading Democratic paper, lost no time in condemning Republican agitation. "The 'irrepressible conflict' announced by Mr. SEWARD has begun," it exclaimed. At first, it did not link specific individuals in the Republican party with the event, but argued that the raid was "nothing else, in fact, than Republican principle reduced to practice." It was not enough for the Republicans to condemn the raid. They also had to "make haste to repudiate Sewardism in toto, or they will have the satisfaction of knowing that they endorse the very doctrine which has produced and is now responsible for this bloody insurrection." Nor was Brown insane, as most Republican papers claimed. Rather, he was a fanatic, as were all other abolitionists.

Other Democratic papers echoed the same line of reasoning. "Every thing connected with the transaction bears unmistakable evidence that Brown was only the cat's paw put forward as the pioneer in carrying out Seward's 'irrepressible conflict' doctrine," contended the Pontiac Jacksonian.<sup>8</sup> The Michigan Argus stated that the raid grew

out of the teachings of men such as Seward, N.P. Banks, William Lloyd Garrison, Joshua Giddings, Benjamin F. Wade, and Gerrit Smith. They were "morally if not legally responsible for the work of Brown, for the deaths at Harper's Ferry, and the consequent excitement throughout the country."<sup>9</sup> The Marshall Democratic Expounder urged the citizenry to abandon the Republican doctrines and "be content with the institutions our fathers left us." The main tenet of Seward's doctrine, which struck at the foundation of the American system, was that the "people are to have no peace upon the slavery question until the whole union becomes either free or slave holding. No compromise, however solemn, that has been or shall be made, will be regarded as binding...." Brown interpreted the doctrine as a call for violence, whereby the slave would be taught to murder his master.<sup>10</sup> The raid was partly due to the fact that the control of the Republican party had passed from the conservatives to those guided by ultra anti-slavery sentiment, commented the Kalamazoo Gazette.<sup>11</sup>

Many individuals were named by the Democratic press as being directly connected with the raid, or at least having advance knowledge of it. The Free Press, noting that Brown had received aid from New York, New England, and Kansas, remarked that "the responsibility of the thing does not by any means rest on his shoulders alone."<sup>12</sup> Almost immediately, Gerrit Smith, the New York abolitionist, was connected with Brown. A one-time Brown collaborator, Hugh

Forbes, announced that Smith had aided the "old man."<sup>13</sup> The Kalamazoo Gazette and the Michigan Argus, not certain that Smith was directly connected with the incident, were convinced of his moral responsibility.<sup>14</sup> In addition to Smith, Seward, Samuel Chase, Joshua Giddings, Horace Greeley, Frederick Douglass, Franklin B. Sanborn, and Samuel Gridley Howe were frequently mentioned as somehow related to Brown's enterprise. Did not the latest information, queried one paper, prove "that the whole plot was fully known for the last year and a half to Seward, Sumner, Howe, and the leading abolitionists and black republicans on both sides of the Atlantic?" It went further by condemning "Senators of the United States, members of Congress, Governors of States, merchants, and prominent men in New York, New England and the West," for being aware of the plot and not revealing it.<sup>15</sup> Another paper commented that Brown had lived upon these types of men for years. They had done nothing to rebuke his outrages and had encouraged him in his activities.<sup>16</sup>

Naturally Seward, the leading Republican presidential candidate for 1860, was a primary target of the Democratic barbs. The Free Press charged that he was made aware of the plot by Colonel Forbes just prior to his deliverance of the famous Rochester speech in October, 1858. Accusing him of using slavery agitation as a means to the presidency, it castigated him for not revealing the plot to Secretary of War, John B. Floyd.<sup>17</sup> The Kalamazoo

Gazette was filled with "distrust as to the future of our country" when a man in such a high position as Seward could have known of the plot "without crushing the treason in the bud." It feared that if he became President, he would be favorable to further insurrection. Fortunately, it noted, the Harper's Ferry catastrophe probably eliminated Seward from presidential consideration.<sup>18</sup>

Although the Democratic papers attacked any Republican that seemed to be a good political target, their accusations were not entirely off the mark. For indeed, there was a conspiracy behind Brown's movement. A secret Committee of Six, whose purpose was to provide money and other aid to Brown, was established in March, 1858. It consisted of Samuel Gridley Howe, a noted educator, Thomas Wentworth Higginson, a Worcester, Massachusetts clergyman, Theodore Parker, noted Unitarian preacher, George Luther Stearns, a merchant, Franklin B. Sanborn, a young school-teacher, and Gerrit Smith, a wealthy New York reformer.<sup>19</sup> These men, despairing of the possibility of peaceful emancipation, concluded that revolution was the only way to rid the land of the curse of slavery.<sup>20</sup> But in May, 1858, they told Brown not to give them exact details of his plans, thus freeing them from the charge of conspiracy should his efforts fail.<sup>21</sup> The knowledge that Brown was up to something daring was not, however, limited to the Secret Six. Approximately eighty people, including Seward and Senator Henry Wilson, were aware that some sort of action against

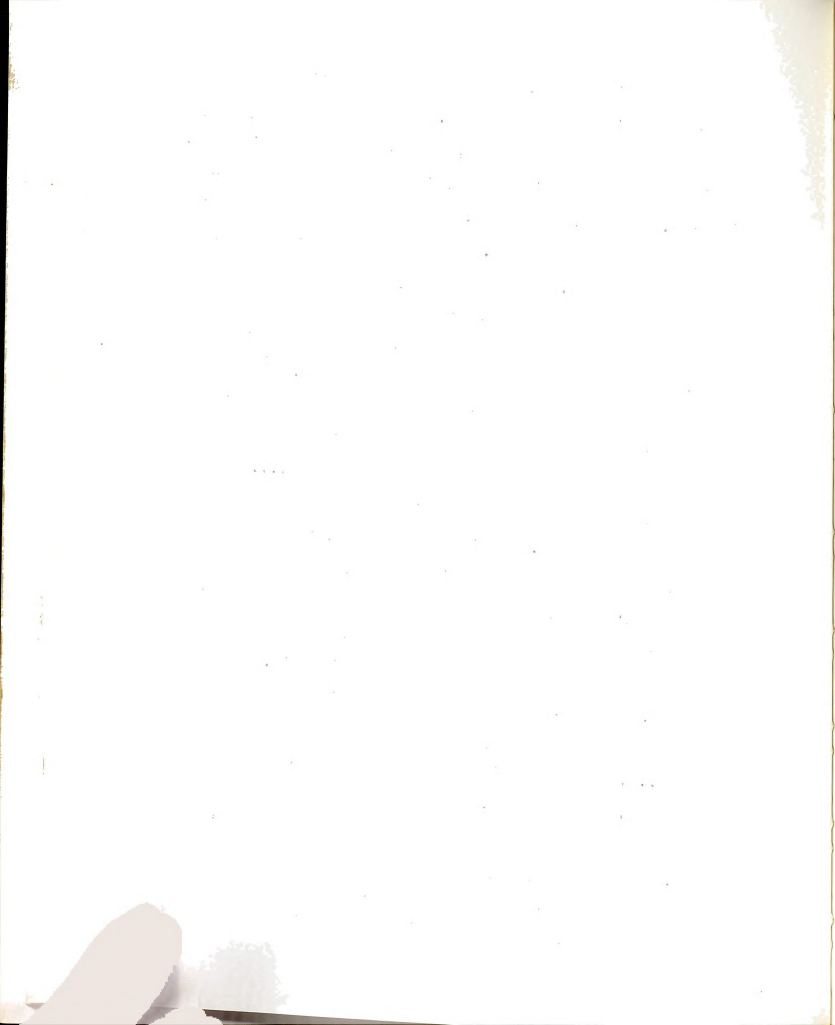
the South was soon to commence. Frederick Douglass had intended to participate in the raid, but backed out because he considered Brown's plans untenable.<sup>22</sup> Certainly, then, the Democrats were justified in their alarm at the extent of support for Brown's venture among leading Northerners. It supported their arguments that the Republicans were deeply hostile to the South and its institutions.

The Republican sympathy for Brown greatly disturbed the Michigan Democratic press. Had Brown been successful, one editor commented, thousands of people would have rallied to him, prodded on by the Republican press. Equally frightening was the fact that many northern clergymen, "few of whom have little knowledge of political matters, talk against slavery and the constitution that sustains it, more than against sin at their own doors." But, "at the same time most of these very men despise the whole race of Africans....These kind of bigoted men, would bring on a collision, would imbue their hands in their brothers blood, and herein there is danger." The same editor concluded that the northern fanatics were injuring rather than helping the slaves and free Negroes. Brown's raid, he contended, would prompt the South to enslave free Negroes or drive them North where they would steal to live or else be dependent upon charity.<sup>23</sup> "Fanaticism," another editor lamented, "has been permitted to usurp the place of reason in the heads of a large portion of the Republican party...."<sup>24</sup> The Free Press charged that not only the

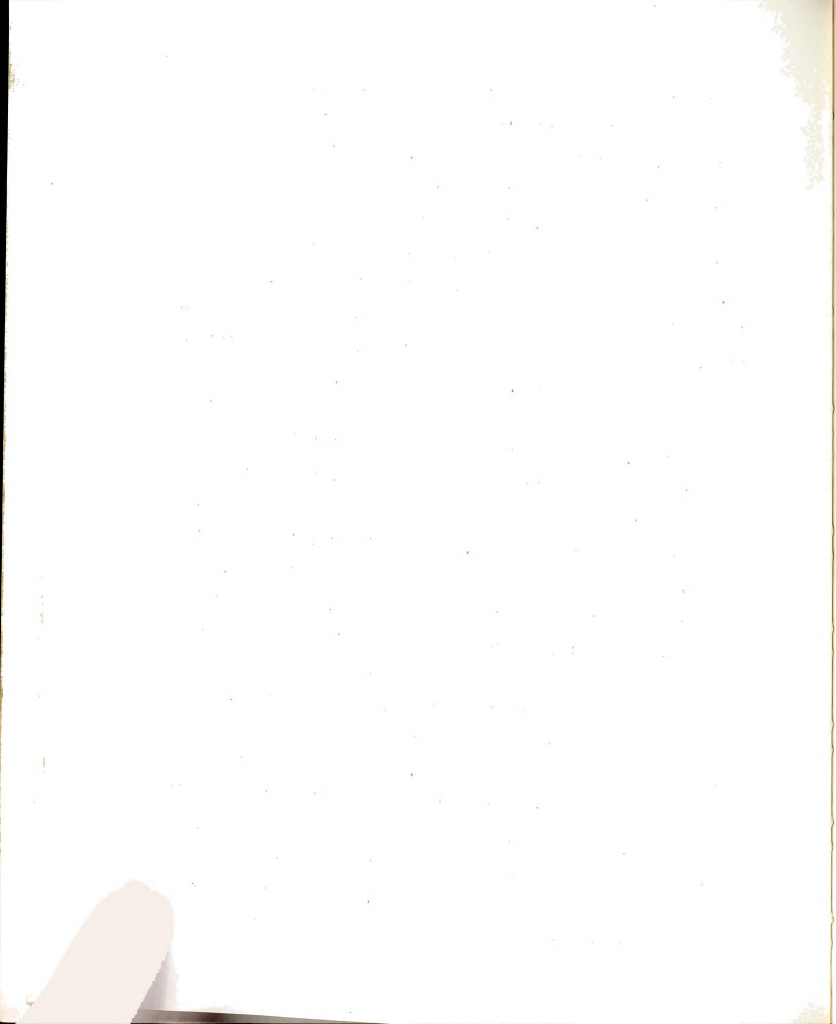
Garrison abolitionists, but the whole Republican press sympathized with the Brown raid.<sup>25</sup> The Pontiac Jacksonian complained that "every speech, and almost every editorial, we find on the Republican side, is full of Brown Republicanism."<sup>26</sup> But, of course, the Republican rank and file were exonerated from blame. They were being led by unscrupulous leaders. The Kalamazoo Gazette proclaimed that "we repeat we by no means accuse all, or even a majority of the members of the Republican party, of sympathy with BROWN's treason. Undoubtedly they condemn it."<sup>27</sup> Zachariah Chandler was chastized by one paper for being sympathetic to Brown while he "well enough knows that the masses whom he represents do not so sympathize...."<sup>28</sup>

Brown was sentenced to die on November 2, and was hanged on December 1. During this period, the Democratic papers, as much as the Republican press, were concerned about Brown's fate. They were very fearful that Brown's death would transform him into a martyr, hence their feelings were mixed as to the wisdom of hanging him. They had no doubt, however, that he deserved to die. One Democratic sheet declared "that he ought to die by the laws of the country....He was certainly guilty of murder, and probably of treason. A more cool, calculating deliberate slaughter of human life has never occurred than that at Harper's Ferry."<sup>29</sup> The Michigan Argus firmly stated that "John Brown is no martyr, he is a criminal, fanatical as it may be, but a criminal, and not an insane one either, unless it





be always insanity to do wrong."<sup>30</sup> Yet, several Democratic papers feared that Brown's death would result in his martyrdom, something to be avoided. The Niles (Democratic) Republican, noting Brown's bravery and composure, hoped that Governor Henry A. Wise of Virginia would commute the death sentence, although it was unlikely that he would do it.<sup>31</sup> The Detroit Free Press, on the other hand, thought it not improbable that Governor Wise would stay the execution. Thus, Brown could not be deified, as the abolitionists so greatly desired.<sup>32</sup> Soon, however, the Free Press changed its mind and argued that Brown should die for his many crimes. It did not mind if the abolitionists should canonize Brown for "if he be made a saint, the world shall know that is not for good works, but for hideous crimes, that his memory is embalmed."<sup>33</sup> All in all, in regard to Brown's death, the Democratic papers were ambivalent. They certainly despised what the man stood for, and thought that he deserved to die, but they also recognized the effect that his martyrdom would have on the country; hence they never really defined their position. They realized, however, that it was important for the party to take no position that would offend the South. This obligated the Democratic press to praise Virginia for the fair trial that it gave Brown. The editor of a moderate Democratic paper, the Kalamazoo Gazette, noted that the prisoners were kindly treated and allowed their own nurses. He lamented that a southern visitor to the North was not treated with equal



respect, but was rather "beset with mobs, his life threatened, and he is driven out of the community with indignities and insults."<sup>34</sup>

The unmistakably unlawful nature of John Brown's actions forced the Republican papers to the defensive. They condemned the raid, while re-affirming their moral opposition to slavery. They managed, awkwardly but successfully, to defend the Republican position while shifting the blame for the raid to the South. But the whole affair clearly highlighted the conflict between the Republican commitment to the Constitution, which certainly recognized slavery in the states where it already existed, and the fervent desire of Republicans to see the eventual extinction of the accursed institution.

Most Republican papers explained Brown's raid as the act of a crazy man. The Detroit Daily Advertiser stated that "no man whose head was not completely deranged, would embark in such a hopeless and reckless enterprise as this....Nobody but lunatics would attempt to revolutionize the Government of the United States with a force of thirty-five or forty men and a few slaves they had pressed into service!"<sup>35</sup> The Grand Rapids Eagle referred to him as a "misguided fanatic."<sup>36</sup> "The conception of the scheme," commented the Battle Creek Journal, "was the maddest possible, and the mere handful of fanatics--for there were only fifteen white men and five negroes--must have been thorough imbeciles to suppose that such a work as it

appears they contemplated, could, by any reasonable possibility, be accomplished." The result of the raid, it hoped, would teach a lesson to all would-be insurrectionists.<sup>37</sup> The Allegan Journal stated "that his mind was greatly deranged. We cannot pretend to defend his acts, for a man who adopts wrong and impractical modes of procedure, violates the law, and therefore, meets the censure of all law-abiding citizens. Society must be protected from lawlessness."<sup>38</sup>

While condemning the raid, the Republican press charged that Brown was motivated primarily by southern outrages against him and his family. These outrages drove him mad. One editor commented that "since Captain Brown's son was murdered in cold blood, by the border ruffians during the Kansas troubles, he has been a confirmed monomaniac, to use the very mildest terms." The leaders of the "Slave Democracy" were the real authors of the outrage, it charged.<sup>39</sup> The Eaton County Republican declared that the raid "is seen as one of the evils connected with and springing from the system of Slavery." Just as the Slave Power had invaded Brown's rights in Kansas, he invaded their territory in retaliation.<sup>40</sup> The outrages of Slavery, echoed the Ann Arbor Local News, plus his strong sympathy for the oppressed, unsettled Brown's mind to such a degree that he could hardly be held responsible for his acts.<sup>41</sup> The Grand Traverse Herald placed the blame "on those who first introduced and sanctioned the instrumentalities of

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violence, oppression and murder, in the contest over the extension of slavery; for they have taught him the game and educated him to proficiency in playing it." Moreover, the Slave Power first attacked Brown, murdering his son in Kansas. He, in return, "has 'carried the war into Africa,' on his own account and responsibility; and this is all there is of it."<sup>42</sup> Thus, as was typical of the extremely partisan press of the day, the violence that Brown, himself, committed in Kansas was simply ignored or excused.

Republican papers contrasted the condemnation by Democrats of the Brown raid to their alleged approval of violence in Kansas and on the Missouri border. The Detroit Daily Advertiser argued that "when Kansas was invaded by horde after horde of Missouri slaveholders...the whole doughface press of the country approved their murderous conduct, and held the free State party responsible for their villainy....The slave Democracy defended violence and bloodshed when committed by their own party. The Republicans condemn every violation of law by whomsoever committed." The paper further charged that the Slave Power had killed thousands for every one who had died at Harper's Ferry.<sup>43</sup> The Democratic reaction to the Brown raid, urged the Jonesville Independent, should be contrasted "with the course of the Administration in dealing out its favors to those who labor in behalf of the 'nigger' institutions. When the Border Ruffians invaded Kansas and slaughtered her inhabitants in cold blood and sacked the towns and

settlements the marauders were rewarded with fat appointments and became pets of the government."<sup>44</sup> Like the Democratic press, the Republican press attempted to label the opposition as inconsistent hypocrites.

Besides damning the Slave Power for precipitating Brown's raid, the Republican papers attempted to defend the party from the charge of being behind Brown. Generally the defense consisted of vague generalities. The Republicans found it difficult to dissociate Brown totally from the party doctrine. The first task was to clear the party of any connection with Gerrit Smith, the man most named by Democrats as one of Brown's conspirators. Initially, the Republican press doubted that Smith was involved in the plot. The Grand Rapids Daily Eagle argued that it was "stark madness" to connect Smith with the raid. A letter of Smith's that was found with Brown "is an old one about Kansas matters, and it is altogether probable that he knew nothing at all about the insurrection." In any case it did not matter because Smith was not really a Republican. He had previously run for governor of New York against the party's regular nominee.<sup>45</sup> The Detroit Daily Advertiser questioned whether Smith or Frederick Douglass had knowledge of the conspiracy.<sup>46</sup> The Republicans found another "out" after Smith, to avoid indictment, committed himself to the State Asylum for the Insane at Utica, New York on November 7.<sup>47</sup> One editor commented that Smith's absorption in the slavery question and the excitement over the Brown





raid had proven too much for him.<sup>48</sup> This was a tacit way of admitting that Smith, indeed, was involved in the plot. As for Douglass, by the beginning of November, Republican papers could no longer deny that he had been in collaboration with Brown. But one journal, at least, justified his actions and supported his decision to slip into Canada after Brown was captured. He had to leave the United States, stated the Detroit Daily Advertiser, for "the simple fact that he knew he would be treated as one having no rights, and that everything like justice would be denied to him....No one, of course, except doughfaces and slave breeders will blame him for encouraging Brown in his efforts to liberate the slaves, nor for anything he may do himself towards helping them to their freedom."<sup>49</sup> Interestingly, the Republican papers made no attempt to defend or justify the connection of other individuals with Brown, such as Seward, who were specifically discussed in the Democratic accusations. Apparently they felt that the only way to overcome the embarrassing predicament of having many of the leading men of the party in communication with an insurrectionist was just to avoid the whole situation as if it did not exist. On the whole, they could not effectively refute Democratic charges that important Republicans knew that Brown was planning some sort of violent action without reporting it to the authorities. But they managed to divert public attention elsewhere.

The Republican press was much more vigorous in

denying that the party, in comparison to individuals, was involved with the conspiracy. Much stock was placed in Brown's refusal to admit that he had received any outside assistance. "The only aid at all spoken of is that coming from Southern States and Canada, where the Republican party does not operate. But the locofoco organs care nothing about the facts...."<sup>50</sup> Other papers also castigated the Democrats for trying to connect the Republican party with Brown. Abolitionists, they noted, were not necessarily Republicans.<sup>51</sup> Some journals tried to shift the complicity or blame to Democratic officials. The St. Joseph Traveler coolly announced that "late developments demonstrate the fact that the whole thing was concocted by pro-slavery propagandists, in order to get up a sympathy in their favor throughout the Union, and at the same time injure the Republican party."<sup>52</sup> This conclusion was reached by the fact that the brother-in-law of one of Brown's fellow raiders, John E. Cook, was the Democratic Governor of Indiana, A.P. Willard, and that the latter had traveled to Charlestown to defend the former. Obviously, then, Brown was duped by Willard. Equally absurd was the Republican attempt to implicate Secretary of War John B. Floyd. In August, 1859, Floyd had received an anonymous letter revealing that Brown would soon invade Harper's Ferry to incite a slave insurrection. He decided, however, that the letter was from a crank and so dismissed it.<sup>53</sup> Floyd's refusal to act on the letter indicated to the Grand Rapids

Daily Eagle that he, more than any other man not directly connected with the raid, was responsible for it. "What excuse," it asked, "has the administration party for this treasonable silence on the part of their Secretary of War? Not a word."<sup>54</sup> Another editor charged that Floyd and the pro-slavery leaders hoped to make political capital out of the raid; hence they desired it go on.<sup>55</sup>

Another method used by the Republican press to divert attention from themselves was to mock the South, especially Virginia, for the panic created by Brown's raid. Indeed, some have compared the southern reaction to the "Great Fear" in France in 1789. By the beginning of December there were 4,000 men in arms in Virginia.<sup>56</sup> Republican papers frequently made mention that such a marked reaction was the result of an action by only twenty-two men. The Detroit Daily Advertiser had a particularly sarcastic comment during the period when John Cook was still at large: "If it took all the available forces of the United States army, and indefinite number of Virginia volunteers companies to conquer 'General Brown's army of sixteen white men and five negroes,' it will not be safe for them to attempt to capture Cook and his 'nigger' with less than all the Custom House expectants and a thousand or so of well armed 'citizen soldiers.' So up guards and at 'em!"<sup>57</sup> The Battle Creek Journal was equally biting: "That fifteen white men and five negroes should be able to take a town consisting of nearly two thousand chivalrous Virginians prisoners; and to

hold them for nearly a day, is only calculated to excite laughter....Virginians are brave men! At this rate, five hundred antiquated Amazons could capture the whole state, and tie up its redoubtable Governor to a bed-post, and extort pledges of sane behavior for the future from him under fear of a birch-rod castigation. Oh Virginia!"<sup>58</sup>

Other editorials, in a more serious tone, attacked southern cowardice. The conduct of the people of Virginia, commented one editor, should effectively destroy the myth of southern chivalry. "The present race of southern people," he wrote, "have degenerated to dwarf-like proportions, morally and intellectually....Now even the appearance of an unarmed woman at Charlestown is enough to set all Virginia quaking with panic...."<sup>59</sup> Another paper, noting the vast precautions taken during Brown's hanging, argued that it proved southern cowardice and invited a second raid.<sup>60</sup> The Grand Rapids Daily Eagle attempted to explain why such a panic erupted. In a free community, it contended, any disruption by the number of men that went with Brown would have been suppressed by the local constabulary force. But in the South there was an omnipresent awareness of the possibility of a slave insurrection. The slave owner knew that "his property stands ready to apply the torch to his dwelling, or the knife to the throat of his wife and children...." Thus it was the instinct of self-preservation that propagated such an incredible reaction.<sup>61</sup> The Michigan Republican press felt a deep contempt

for the southern way of life, symbolized by slavery and a romantic attachment to the supposed values of "chivalry." Some Republican papers explained the reaction of Southerners as an outgrowth of a genuine fear of a slave revolt, but many dismissed their apprehension as an index of their cowardice.

Although the Republican papers openly condemned the raid and flatly denied any connection with it, they unhesitatingly manifested a profound sympathy for Brown and the courage he exhibited. Indeed, the Democratic fear that Brown would be transformed into a martyr was not long in coming to reality. "All who love manliness and true courage," one editor proclaimed, "cannot help wondering at and admiring, while they condemn his acts, the unequalled fortitude and giant resolution with which he bears up under his misfortunes."<sup>62</sup> Another praised Brown's "manly bearing" at his trial. He had to be respected and admired, no matter how fool-hardy was his venture.<sup>63</sup> An editorial in the Grand Traverse Herald was entitled "John Brown, Hero of the Tragedy at Harper's Ferry." It argued that Brown's character, "under circumstances favorable to...~~its~~ proper development and right direction, would have made him one of the great men of the world." He was compared to Napoleon and Oliver Cromwell. He would go to his death, the paper continued, "with a feeling of grim satisfaction that, almost unaided and alone, he was able to throw the boasted Slave Power of two great States into convulsions of terror, and

summon armed thousands of the Chivalry to his capture."<sup>64</sup> Another paper commented that "he was an honest, fearless advocate of freedom, and it is against slavery that he has sinned, and Slavery hangs him. Nothing else."<sup>65</sup> The Detroit Daily Advertiser compared him to Christ when it stated that "he has proved himself almost as superior to the men by whom he is about to put to death, as the Savoir did to the thieves between whom he suffered death." A few days later, the Advertiser, reiterating the theme, declared that "when looked upon in a moral point of view, and judged by the Gospel of Him who came upon the earth 'to proclaim liberty to the captive,' Brown's act will hardly be considered a crime by the majority of the civilized world, whatever it may be according to the laws designed for the protection of slavery."<sup>66</sup> This same image was conjured by the Allegan Journal when it exclaimed that "there are many circumstances recommending him, which may best be expressed as a wonderful Christian heroism--a readiness to lay down life cheerfully for a principle, with a confiding trust that by his death, truth and justice will be advanced, which lift him far above the range of common criminals."<sup>67</sup> One editor went so far as to say that "John Brown should not be hung. He has committed no crime...."<sup>68</sup>

The Republican papers analyzed the ultimate significance of Brown's raid, and the southern reaction to it as a mighty blow against slavery. Brown was not getting a fair trial, they argued, and that would heighten anti-southern

feeling in the North. Virginia was denying Brown a decent trial, one journal charged, under the pretext of fear of an attempt to rescue him.<sup>69</sup> The Jonesville Independent resented that it only took a month to convict Brown and sentence him to be hanged. But it was confident that "the hanging of Brown will damage slavery more than have the speeches of abolitionists for twenty years back...."<sup>70</sup>

Another editorial charged that the South's treatment of Brown and its denunciations of the North converted the North from condemning the raid to enshrining the "old man" as a martyr. Thus, "the people of the North will then only remember that first having made John Brown mad by murdering all his family, the slave power hung him for an act which was prompted by this insanity...the death of Brown will be the dearest sacrifice the South ever made to the god of slavery."<sup>71</sup> The Niles Inquirer clearly saw the significance of Brown's martyrdom. It speculated that "it may have been necessary to have a human being offered on the altar of slavery, to exhibit to the world the monstrous enormities of this terrible Cancer which is eating out the vitals of the nation, and which, if not checked in its mad career, will sooner or later destroy the American commonwealth, and rear on the ruins of the Republic, the worst despotism the world ever saw."<sup>72</sup>

Perhaps the Detroit Daily Advertiser best expressed the Republican position when it declared that "it is not so much John Brown as his executioners and their system, that has been hung." His



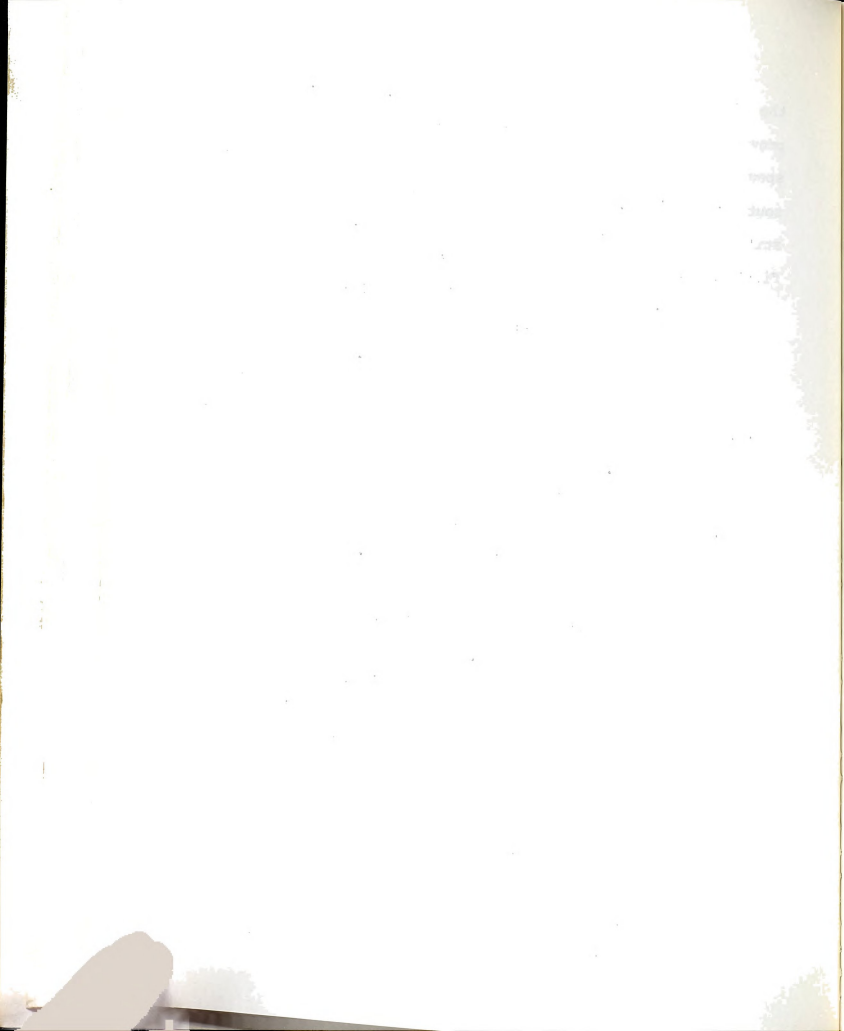
execution, it continued, marked the beginning of the end for slavery. The raid revealed to the world the weakness of slavery and tenuous base upon which it rested. The persecution of Brown did more to end "the God-accursed institution" than all the efforts in years past of moral suasion. The net result was a greater hatred of slavery than ever before. But most significantly, Brown had taught the South that the future of its institution was, indeed, precarious. As events in Kansas aided freedom in Missouri, Brown advanced freedom in Virginia and in the other slave states.<sup>73</sup>

The debate over John Brown's raid is illustrative of the political and ideological gap that existed between Michigan's two major parties. This gap, which reappeared during the election campaign of 1860 and the subsequent secession crisis, resulted not from any significant economic differences, but from a different and conflicting attitude toward slavery and its threat to the northern way of life. The Democratic outlook was essentially amoral. To those in the party leadership, at least, whether the black man should be free or not was of little concern. Although many northern Democrats were hostile to slavery, they did not consider it an issue worth agitating, especially when the Union was at stake. But the Republicans hated the institution for moral reasons and because it spawned the Slave Power, which they viewed as a threat to



the liberties the country was founded on. Brown's raid provided a catharsis which allowed the Republican press to spew out its hatred for the "peculiar institution" and southern society. The fidelity of Republicans to the Constitution was as great as that of Democrats, and that fidelity prevented them from becoming immediate abolitionists; indeed, it turned them hostile to self-proclaimed abolitionists such as William Lloyd Garrison and Wendell Phillips who scorned the political process. The Republicans knew that tampering with slavery where it already existed was unconstitutional; hence, they had no choice but to condemn Brown. Their simultaneous condemnation and deification of Brown indicates how hard they strained to keep in balance their dual belief in the supremacy of the Constitution and the barbarity of slavery. But in 1863 their hatred of slavery was so great that they strongly supported the Emancipation Proclamation, even those who doubted its constitutionality.

On the level of practical politics, the Republican papers managed to extricate the party from an initially quite embarrassing situation. The Democratic papers acted as if they had found a tremendous political weapon which could deliver a lethal blow to the opposition. Playing upon the northern people's devotion to the Union, they did as much as they could to equate the Republicans with Brown and abolitionism. They argued that if people supported that party the inevitable result would be civil war. To



save the Union, therefore, slavery agitation had to cease and the Republicans had to be repudiated. The fact that shreds of evidence implicated leading Republicans was used to great advantage by the Democracy. The only thing the Republicans could do in such a predicament was to shift the focus of attention from themselves. They did this by placing the ultimate blame of John Brown's raid on the evils of an aggressive Slave Power which had killed Brown's family and driven him insane. The additional appeal of moral outrage against slavery also aided in transferring the public scrutiny below the Mason-Dixon line. By December, 1859, the Republican press had accomplished a remarkable political feat by turning what could have been political disaster into a great triumph for the party.

## CHAPTER I NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Stephen B. Oates, To Purge this Land with Blood: A Biography of John Brown (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1970), p. 288.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 278.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 290-301.

<sup>4</sup>Robert T. Oliver, "William H. Seward on the 'Irrepressible Conflict,' October 25, 1858," in J. Jeffery Auer, ed., Antislavery and Disunion, 1858-1861: Studies in the Rhetoric of Compromise and Conflict (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1963), p. 35.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 39.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 43.

<sup>7</sup>Detroit Free Press, October 20, 21, 26, 1859.

<sup>8</sup>Pontiac Jacksonian, October 27, 1859.

<sup>9</sup>Michigan Argus, October 28, 1859.

<sup>10</sup>Marshall Democratic Expounder, November 3, 17, 1859.

<sup>11</sup>Kalamazoo Gazette, December 16, 1859.

<sup>12</sup>Detroit Free Press, October 21, 1859.

<sup>13</sup>Oates, To Purge this Land with Blood, p. 312.

<sup>14</sup>Michigan Argus, November 4, 1859; Kalamazoo Gazette, November 4, 1859.

<sup>15</sup>Three Rivers Western Chronicle, November 3, 1859.

<sup>16</sup>Michigan Argus, November 4, 1859.

<sup>17</sup>Detroit Free Press, October 23, November 1, 9, 1859.

<sup>18</sup>Kalamazoo Gazette, November 4, 11, 1859.

- <sup>19</sup>Oates, To Purge this Land with Blood, p. 238.
- <sup>20</sup>Ibid., p. 237.
- <sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 251.
- <sup>22</sup>Ibid., pp. 283-284.
- <sup>23</sup>Niles Republican, November 19, December 17, 1859.
- <sup>24</sup>Grand Rapids Daily Enquirer & Herald, December 28, 1859.
- <sup>25</sup>Detroit Free Press, November 27, 1859.
- <sup>26</sup>Pontiac Jacksonian, November 10, 1859.
- <sup>27</sup>Kalamazoo, Gazette, December 16, 1859.
- <sup>28</sup>Grand Rapids Daily Enquirer and Herald, December 16, 1859.
- <sup>29</sup>Three Rivers Western Chronicle, December 1, 1859.
- <sup>30</sup>Michigan Argus, December 2, 1859.
- <sup>31</sup>Niles Republican, November 12, 1859.
- <sup>32</sup>Detroit Free Press, November 4, 1859.
- <sup>33</sup>Ibid., November 11, 27, 1859.
- <sup>34</sup>Kalamazoo Gazette, November 11, 1859.
- <sup>35</sup>Detroit Daily Advertiser, October 20, 1859.
- <sup>36</sup>Grand Rapids Daily Eagle, October 26, 1859.
- <sup>37</sup>Battle Creek Journal, October 27, 1859.
- <sup>38</sup>Allegan Journal, December 5, 1859.
- <sup>39</sup>Detroit Daily Advertiser, October 20, 31, 1859.
- <sup>40</sup>Eaton County Republican, October 29, 1859.
- <sup>41</sup>Ann Arbor Local News, November 1, 1859.
- <sup>42</sup>Grand Traverse Herald, November 11, 1859.
- <sup>43</sup>Detroit Daily Advertiser, October 25, November 1, 1859.

- <sup>44</sup>Jonesville Independent, December 1, 1859.
- <sup>45</sup>Grand Rapids Daily Eagle, October 21, 24, 1859.
- <sup>46</sup>Detroit Daily Advertiser, October 22, 1859.
- <sup>47</sup>Oates, To Purge this Land with Blood, p. 315.
- <sup>48</sup>Detroit Daily Advertiser, November 11, 1859.
- <sup>49</sup>Ibid., November 4, 1859.
- <sup>50</sup>Grand Rapids Daily Eagle, October 24, 1859.
- <sup>51</sup>Lansing State Republican, October 25, 1859; Eaton County Republican, October 24, 1859.
- <sup>52</sup>St. Joseph Traveler, November 2, 1859.
- <sup>53</sup>Oates, To Purge this Land with Blood, pp. 284-285.
- <sup>54</sup>Grand Rapids Daily Eagle, October 24, November 7, 1859.
- <sup>55</sup>Detroit Daily Advertiser, October 26, 1859.
- <sup>56</sup>Oates, To Purge this Land with Blood, pp. 322-323.
- <sup>57</sup>Detroit Daily Advertiser, October 24, 1859.
- <sup>58</sup>Battle Creek Journal, October 28, 1859.
- <sup>59</sup>Detroit Daily Advertiser, November 21, 1859.
- <sup>60</sup>Lansing State Republican, December 6, 1859.
- <sup>61</sup>Grand Rapids Daily Eagle, January 4, 1860.
- <sup>62</sup>Ibid., October 26, 1859.
- <sup>63</sup>Detroit Daily Advertiser, October 27, 1859.
- <sup>64</sup>Grand Traverse Herald, November 11, 1859.
- <sup>65</sup>Ann Arbor Local News, November 29, 1859.
- <sup>66</sup>Detroit Daily Advertiser, December 2, 6, 1859.
- <sup>67</sup>Allegan Journal, December 5, 1859.
- <sup>68</sup>Ann Arbor Local News, November 29, 1859.





<sup>69</sup>Detroit Daily Advertiser, October 27, 1859.

<sup>70</sup>Jonesville Independent, December 1, 1859.

<sup>71</sup>Detroit Daily Advertiser, December 2, 1859.

<sup>72</sup>Niles Inquirer, December 8, 1859.

<sup>73</sup>Detroit Daily Advertiser, December 3, 1859.

## CHAPTER II

### THE MEN AND PARTIES IN THE ELECTION YEAR OF 1860: THE DEMOCRATIC PERSPECTIVE

As the controversy over Brown's raid faded from print, if not memory, public attention turned to the approaching presidential election. It was obvious to all that its outcome would have more than ordinary significance. As the year 1860 opened, southern cries of disunion sounded louder than ever. The Democratic party, split between the Douglas and Buchanan factions, required unity if it were to have any hope of success. The Republicans, confident of victory, were undecided about their candidate. Certain old-line Whigs were unsatisfied with both major parties. The American political system was indeed unsettled--a most dangerous situation when the fate of the Union was at stake. The precarious state of American politics became ominously apparent when the Thirty-Sixth Congress convened in December, 1859.

The first task of the House of Representatives was to elect a Speaker and organize itself, but the party composition of the House caused many to fear that nothing but acrimony and a deadlock could result. That fear was more than justified. No party could command a majority. The

Democrats had 101 members, of whom thirteen were Anti-Lecomptonites who maintained a tenuous relationship with the party; the Republicans had 109 members. Twenty-seven Whigs or Americans, twenty-three of whom were southern American-Whigs, while the remaining four were from New York and New Jersey, held the balance of power.<sup>1</sup> The first ballot had four candidates: the Democrat, Thomas S. Bocock of Virginia; two Republicans, John Sherman of Ohio and Galusha Grow of Pennsylvania; and Alexander R. Boetler of Virginia.<sup>2</sup> Grow represented the eastern tariff interests while Sherman represented the western anti-slavery forces. When Sherman polled more votes than Grow on the first ballot, the latter withdrew and Sherman became the candidate of the whole party.<sup>3</sup> During the two months required to organize the House, the contest boiled down to the Republican determination to elect Sherman, and the equal Democratic resolve to defeat him.<sup>4</sup>

Democratic opposition to Sherman was particularly strong because of his endorsement of Hinton Helper's Impending Crisis,<sup>5</sup> a book which portrayed slavery as degrading the southern economy and the poor whites. As much as the Democrats despised Sherman, they could not have prevented his victory had the anti-Lecompton Democrats and the Americans voted for the Ohioan, or had they voted for a motion that a plurality, rather than a majority, would suffice for election.<sup>6</sup> Their refusal to support Sherman and the failure of the southern Democrats to win them over to

their side,<sup>7</sup> explains the two-month deadlock. Not until the forty-fourth ballot, taken on February 1, 1860, did the Republicans drop Sherman, swinging their support to the more moderate William Pennington of New Jersey, who secured enough minority party votes to win election. Unlike Sherman, Pennington had not endorsed the Helper book; and as a first term Congressman he had no record to be damned.<sup>8</sup>

The Democratic press of Michigan primarily concerned itself with defeating Sherman, realizing that their party had no chance of winning with a candidate of their own. Although most papers gave the Speakership contest limited coverage, the Detroit Free Press led the anti-Sherman movement, denouncing him as a leader of the sectional, anti-slavery Republican party and an endorser of "a most obnoxious and treasonable publication,"<sup>9</sup> the Helper book. Another paper opposed him because he favored the fomenting of insurrections which would culminate in Negroes cutting the throats of slaveholders.<sup>10</sup> The more conservative Representative, Thomas Corwin, would have been acceptable to many Democrats.<sup>11</sup> One editor argued that Republicans should not object to him since their control of the House and of all committees was guaranteed. Democrats interpreted Pennington's election as a victory of sorts. The Free Press gloated that "the dominant element of black republicanism is defeated in its determination to elect a Helperite. We accept the event as a good omen." Pennington, it declared, would enforce the Fugitive Slave Law in



good faith and, most of all, was not committed to Seward's incendiary doctrines. His election was the "virtual triumph of the conservative sentiment of the country over 'irrepressible' conflict and revolution."<sup>13</sup> Another editor denied that Pennington was a Republican, pointing out that he was elected from New Jersey, not by the Republican party, but by an organization calling itself the Opposition party.<sup>14</sup>

A more conservative Democratic element favored putting aside partisan differences for the good of the country. The Michigan Argus represented this sentiment by arguing that it would be better for the Democratic party and the country if a Speaker were elected immediately, whether he be Democrat, Republican or American, rather than that "the wild ravings, by courtesy called discussion, be continued longer."<sup>15</sup> It was also disturbed by southern threats of disunion if a Republican speaker were elected. One historian has concluded that, indeed, some southern Congressmen were seriously considering withdrawing from Congress as a prelude to secession, but Sherman's withdrawal temporarily muted the southern rage.<sup>16</sup> Warning the South to be careful, the Argus realized that northern Democrats would never condone disunion. Such action by the South's "rabid politicians" would tie the hands of friends in the North. Northern Democrats had supported the South in the past and did not expect secession as the reward for their sacrifices. If that section continued to denounce

the North, its friends above the Mason-Dixon line would be "hopelessly powerless."<sup>17</sup> This disenchantment with the South increased as the year progressed.

The approach of the National Democratic Convention to be held in Charleston, South Carolina, forced Michigan Democrats to decide whom they would support for the presidential nomination. They had little difficulty in reaching a decision. Most of the party favored the Little Giant, Stephen A. Douglas of Illinois.<sup>18</sup> Throughout the election year, the Democratic press sang his praises. He was lauded by one editor as a man with "boundless faith...in the capacity of the PEOPLE to govern themselves...." His patriotism was national, not sectional.<sup>19</sup> Another paper believed that he expressed the sentiments and had the confidence of the Northwest as he represented and protected its interests.<sup>20</sup> The Free Press noted that there was never any doubt whom the Michigan Democrats wanted to see in the White House. It accurately stated that "it has all along been just as apparent as it is now that STEPHEN A. DOUGLAS occupies the first place in the hearts of the democracy...."<sup>21</sup> Another journal informed the South that Douglas would go to Charleston with the support of every northern state, "where the voice of the masses of the democracy are not stifled...." Furthermore, it was wise for the South to accept him on the platform of 1856 or somebody else who endorsed his doctrine.<sup>22</sup> Thus in the months preceding the convention, Michigan Democratic papers made it





quite clear to the South that they were not in much of a compromising mood; and although they might consider another candidate, they would not sacrifice Douglas' principles.

Even after the disruption of the Democratic party at Charleston, Michigan Democrats stood loyally behind their man. One editor pleaded to those who desired "to see the government of this country honestly administered on correct and democratic principles," not to abandon Douglas. As President, Douglas would reverse the traitorous policies of James Buchanan, who had betrayed the party and its principles, and had attempted to destroy such fellow Democrats as the Little Giant who refused to follow his treacherous path.<sup>23</sup> The Kalamazoo Gazette declared that Douglas would "show no mercy to Disunionism," while simultaneously rallying "the moderate and conservative sentiment of the southern masses against the dangerous doctrines of the ultra leaders."<sup>24</sup> When Douglas finally received the nomination at Baltimore, Michigan Democrats were overjoyed, but disillusioned with the South. One paper was distressed that the South did not understand that no man in the nation had "passed through ordeals so fiery as he in the support and defence of her constitutional rights...." Southerners were obligated to give Douglas full support or else "they will be guilty of injustice and ingratitude as we find few examples of in the history of enlightened communities."<sup>25</sup> Mingled with bitterness were feelings of triumph over those forces which had for so long hounded Douglas and prevented

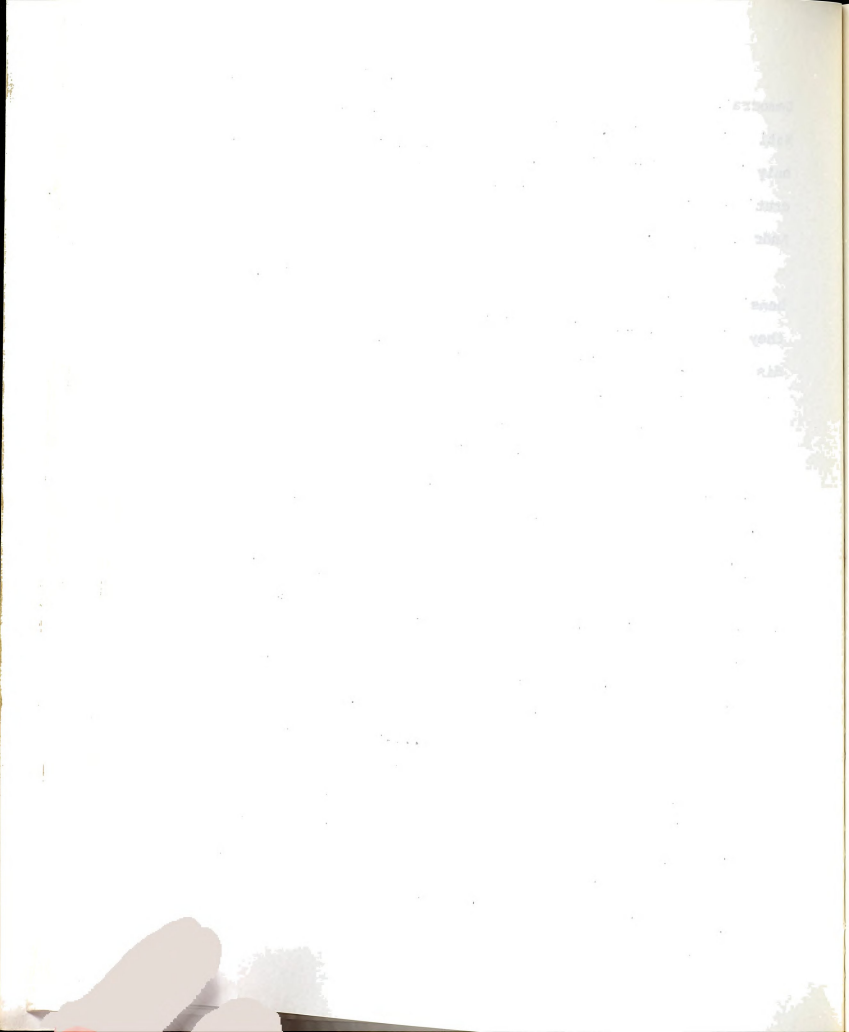
his rightful leadership of the Democratic party. One editor felt that the Little Giant had overcome a conspiracy by the Administration and the fire-eaters who "sought to crush him and supplant him...."<sup>26</sup> The nomination was "a triumph of the people over the politicians," said one paper, noting that the people would soon have the opportunity to exercise their constitutional right "to pass such laws in their local capacity as shall best conduce to their happiness and prosperity."<sup>27</sup> Thus, Democrats tried to convince themselves that the people worshipped Douglas, as another Jackson, as the political savior of the country.<sup>28</sup> As "Young America's Candidate," Douglas, the man who had risen from shop mechanic to a presidential nominee, was expected, declared the Grand Rapids Enquirer and Herald, to crush sectionalism as well as maintain the dominance of the Democratic party.<sup>29</sup>

To the end Michigan Democrats supported Douglas as their only alternative. To have accepted the southern demands to repudiate Douglas' program would have meant political disaster. Indeed, they were presently in a precarious situation due to past concessions which had undercut their position at home. Now, at last, with their own man a candidate, they no longer had to kow-tow to the southern radicals. Convinced, at least at first, that they would be able to win over the southern moderates to the Douglas banner, they felt no qualms about breaking their political ties with the fire-eaters. For these reasons Douglas



Democrats fought the Southerners so tenaciously at the National Convention. This death struggle culminated not only in Republican victory, but also in the end of a Democratic hegemony which had first emerged in the days of Andrew Jackson.

Although the Douglas Democrats were somewhat apprehensive about the outcome of the Charleston convention, they did not necessarily anticipate that it would end in disruption. Most Michigan Democrats realized that acrimony might result from southern attempts to foist a territorial slave code on the convention, but they hoped that through the adoption of a popular sovereignty platform and the nomination of a man such as Douglas, the party would remain united and march on to victory against the Republicans. The Michigan Argus declared it essential that the Union men of the South join with the Democracy of the North, thus isolating the radicals.<sup>30</sup> The Free Press understood the significance of the Charleston convention when it informed the delegates that with them lies "whether the peace which has prevailed between the different parts of the Union hitherto shall be preserved and strengthened...."<sup>31</sup> The Niles (Democratic) Republican realized that if either a slave code for the territories were adopted or an extreme Southerner nominated, the Democrats would not carry a single northern state and a sectional Republican would win the election. Yet, it predicted that the convention would be "an assembly of national men" who would nominate a national man that



could win.<sup>32</sup> Even a pro-Southern paper, the Grand Rapids Daily Enquirer and Herald, urged that "a broad catholic spirit should pervade the Democratic party...." One group, it declared, should not ostracise another. A breakup of the party would be the inevitable outcome.<sup>33</sup> In brief, Michigan Democrats on the eve of the convention did not display a spirit of hostility to the South. They were reasonably confident that the party could elect its choice if there were no falling out at Charleston. But the optimism of Michigan Democrats was quickly dashed when it became apparent once the convention began that the South would not be amenable to northern wishes.

The convention opened in Charleston on April 23, 1860. The main contest quickly emerged between those Southerners determined to force the convention to pronounce in favor of congressional protection for slavery in the territories and the Douglas forces, equally determined to write an inoffensive platform and to get their candidate nominated.<sup>34</sup> The delegates from the Northwest, including Michigan, were overwhelmingly pro-Douglas. They realized that their only chance for political survival was the Little Giant's nomination and election. They could not sacrifice themselves to a slave code, and they expected the South to realize that. But that was not to be.<sup>35</sup> The deep and permanent division in the Democratic party erupted over the vote on the party platform, which was to be endorsed before the balloting for the presidential nominee. The

convention faced a choice between a pro-slave code platform reported by the majority of the platform committee and the pro-Douglas reaffirmation of the Cincinnati platform of 1856 reported by the minority of the committee. The important resolutions of the revised majority platform were:

Resolved, That the platform adopted by the Democratic party at Cincinnati be affirmed, with the following explanatory resolutions:

First, That the government of a Territory organized by an act of Congress, is provisional and temporary; and, during its existence, all citizens of the United States have an equal right to settle with their property in the Territory without their rights, either of person or property, being destroyed or impaired by Congressional or Territorial legislation.

Second, That it is the duty of the Federal Government, in all its departments, to protect, when necessary, the rights of person or property, being destroyed or impaired by Congressional or Territorial legislation.

The key resolutions of the revised minority platform were:

1. Resolved, That we, the Democracy of the Union, in Convention assembled, hereby declare our affirmance of the resolutions unanimously adopted and declared as a platform of principles by the Democratic Convention at Cincinnati in the year 1856, believing that Democratic principles are unchangeable in their nature when applied to the same subject matters; and we recommend, as the only further resolutions the following:

Inasmuch as differences of opinion exist in the Democratic party as to the nature and extent of the powers of a Territorial Legislature, and as to the powers and duties of Congress, under the Constitution of the United States, over the institution of slavery within the Territories;

2. Resolved, That the Democratic party will abide by the decisions of the Supreme Court of the United States on the questions of constitutional law.

On the seventh day of the convention, April 30, the minority report, characterized by a biased, but perceptive reporter, Murat Halstead of the Cincinnati Commercial, as



the "Douglas-Popular Sovereignty-Supreme Court-ambiguous report,"<sup>37</sup> was substituted for the majority report by a 165 to 138 vote. The convention then considered for adoption the individual resolves of the substitute platform. The resolution reaffirming the Cincinnati platform passed 237½ to 65, but the second item and its preamble, dealing with an appeal to the Supreme Court, was decisively rejected, 238 to 21. The South found it unacceptable, and the Douglasites were willing to stand on the ambiguity of the Cincinnati platform alone. The Douglasites, "by a flank movement...had placed themselves upon the Cincinnati Platform, pure and simple."<sup>38</sup> The Supreme Court concession was not good enough for the southern fire-eaters. They knew they could keep a popular sovereignty plank out of the platform, but they also insisted that a slave-code plank be included. Failing to get what they wanted, the greater part of the delegates from the lower South withdrew from the convention. The Democratic party was now irrevocably divided.<sup>39</sup> The Douglasites were deeply embittered by the secession. Halstead noted that they "find themselves in the position of a semi-Free Soil, sectional party, and the poor fellows take it hard."<sup>40</sup> This resentment was justified; as one historical put it, "no question can exist that the main responsibility for the disruption, both immediate and remote, lay with the Southern extremists and the Administration men."<sup>41</sup>

Although the convention had been disrupted over the

platform, the business of nominating a presidential candidate still remained. John R. Howard of Tennessee moved that the approval of two-thirds of the original number of delegates should be required to nominate, rather than two-thirds of the delegates then assembled. The Douglas forces opposed the motion realizing that it would virtually ruin their candidate's chance for nomination. But on a motion to lay the resolution on the table, and on the motion itself, the Douglasites were defeated.<sup>42</sup> For fifty-seven ballots Douglas managed to maintain a majority, but he could never reach the required two-thirds. Finally, on the tenth day of the convention, May 3, the convention adjourned to Baltimore to meet on June 18.<sup>43</sup> Murat Halstead vividly described the rage of the loyal Douglasites as he noted that "our Northwestern friends will go home with hatred of the Democratic party, as it appeared here, rankling in their hearts....I have never heard Abolitionists talk more uncharitably and rancorously of the people of the South than the Douglas men here. Our Northwestern friends use language about the South, her institutions, and particularly her politicians, that is not fit for publication, and my scruples in that respect are not remarkably tender."<sup>44</sup>

The Michigan Democratic press reacted to the proceedings of the convention by stridently condemning the seceders and defending the platform that was adopted. The Detroit Free Press viewed the bolters as "bargaining and malevolent politicians" who wanted to break up the party as

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a prelude to breaking up the Union.<sup>45</sup> Another paper held that the seceders did not represent the will of the southern people and had no authority from their constituents to secede. They "do not represent the people of the South any more than the body of traitorous abolitionists do the people of the North." Their "machinations" interfered and hindered the desires of the nation.<sup>46</sup> This "desperate game played only by a restless few," said another paper, would most likely fail because there was hope that the seceders would be repudiated at home.<sup>47</sup> The Free Press declared that many Southerners were organizing "to repudiate the action of the seceders and to fill their places with sound and Union loving men who prefer democracy to black republicanism."<sup>48</sup> Michigan Democrats hoped that conventions being held in the southern states, even in South Carolina, would result in all states being represented at Baltimore, culminating in a harmonious convention. The Niles Republican noted that "the Southern press is speaking out in the right tone and spirit."<sup>49</sup> Not only were the seceders castigated, but their collaborator, the Buchanan Administration, was denounced. Michigan Democrats were shocked at the extremes to which Buchanan went to defeat the Little Giant. For them, the President was the enemy as much as any Southerner or Republican. His meddling in party politics, one paper said, was "unprecedented in the annals of the democratic party...."<sup>50</sup>

Although Michigan Democrats condemned the southern

seceders, they were not totally distressed by their withdrawal and the subsequent adjournment of the convention. As indicated earlier, the Douglasites were gladdened by the apparent repudiation of the bolters at home. They hoped that the party would now be cleansed of sectional elements. The adjournment, declared the Marshall Democratic Expounder, would provide time to reconcile sectional differences.<sup>51</sup> One editor argued that the "lopping off of the fire-eaters" could conceivably be an advantage to the National Democratic party by increasing the confidence of the masses in the stability of the Union.<sup>52</sup> The Free Press thought that the events at Charleston and the subsequent interlude would raise a tremendous popular sentiment that would culminate at Baltimore "in a pressure that will be irresistible as the tornado." Another advantage of the interlude was that the delegates, coming fresh from the people, would be more inclined to act "for the good of the party and the welfare of the nation." As far as the seceders were concerned, they might be allowed to return if they should be repentant, but that "will depend upon somebody besides themselves."<sup>53</sup> In sum, Michigan Democrats, upon reflection, concluded that the disruption at Charleston could eventually redound to their benefit. They expected the southern states to send new delegations more amenable to Douglas and his platform, and they planned to use the Baltimore convention to consolidate Douglas' control over the party. That convention would be their last chance to save

the party in Michigan from unprecedented disaster.

But no matter what happened at Baltimore, the platform could not be sacrificed. One editor declared that "the principle of non-intervention by Congress with slavery in the territories, cannot be yielded by the northern democracy without a loss of honor."<sup>54</sup> The Free Press argued that the southern minority demanded at Charleston an abstraction that could only be decided by the judiciary. To this, the Douglas majority "could never concede without sinking the democratic party in the northern states to the lowest fathom." The secession grew out of the northern determination to stand firm. The second resolution of the minority report, it continued, was struck out of the platform because the South did not want it. In any case, its deletion was not really significant because a long-standing principle of the Democratic party was to stand by the law and the Constitution. Hence, the Free Press hoped that the Baltimore convention would not tamper with the Charleston platform.<sup>55</sup> Another editor commented that if the extreme views of either the "republicans north" or the "republicans south" were adopted the government would be totally shorn of the attributes necessary to function in a way that could promote the development of the nation, or protect the citizen; it "must become volcanic-containing in its own bowels, the fire that ultimately consumes it."<sup>56</sup> Northern Democrats truly feared for the Union if either the Republicans or the southern fire-eaters reigned supreme, but they also

knew that political survival required them to maintain the Cincinnati platform. The Michigan Argus perhaps put it best when it declared that "the Democracy of the Union had already yielded expediency, policy and everything but principle to the southern wing, and to yield the principle of genuine unadulterated Popular Sovereignty would have been to bury the Northern Democracy in the grave already dug for them."<sup>57</sup>

The most important problem facing the party as it reconvened in Baltimore was the seating of the delegates from the bolting states. All except South Carolina sent delegations. Georgia, Arkansas, Alabama, and Louisiana sent contesting delegations, while Texas, Mississippi and Delaware returned the original delegates.<sup>58</sup> As in the platform fight at Charleston, majority and minority reports were presented to the convention. The majority report of the credentials committee, supported by the Douglas men, proposed that the new delegations from Georgia and Arkansas be admitted with the original delegations, their votes to be divided, and that the new delegations from Alabama and Louisiana replace the original ones. The delegations from Texas, Mississippi, and Delaware would not be contested. The minority report called for the seating of all the original bolting delegations. The fifth day, June 22, was crucial as the move to substitute the minority for the majority report was rejected 150½ to 100½.<sup>59</sup> That evening, the motion to reconsider the rejection of the minority

report was defeated 139 to 113.<sup>60</sup> The final outcome was the acceptance of the majority report, except that the original Georgia delegation was seated.<sup>61</sup> The rejection of the minority report prompted most of the southern delegates (exclusive of the newly seated pro-Douglas delegates) and a few northern delegates to secede from the convention. They, and the unseated delegates, 105 in all, reconvened at another hall, adopted the majority report of the Charleston convention, and nominated John C. Breckinridge of Kentucky for President and Jo Lane of Oregon for Vice-President.<sup>62</sup>

While the bolters were selecting Breckinridge, those remaining in the Front Street Theatre nominated Douglas on the second ballot with 181½ votes out of 194½ cast. Benjamin Fitzpatrick of Alabama was nominated for Vice-President.<sup>63</sup> Before adjourning the convention added a plank to the Charleston platform. It stated:

Resolved, That it is in accordance with the interpretation of the Cincinnati Platform, that during the existence of the Territorial Governments the measure or restriction, whatever it may be, imposed by the Federal Constitution on the power of the Territorial Legislature over the subject of the domestic relations, as the same has been or shall hereafter be finally determined by the Supreme Court of the United States, should be respected by all good citizens and enforced with the promptness and fidelity by every branch of the general Government.<sup>64</sup>

In effect, this plank, which conceded that popular sovereignty might be unconstitutional, replaced the second resolution that was discarded at Charleston. For the Douglas movement in the North this concession to the South was extremely damaging.



Murat Halstead noted that "the Northwestern delegates, on their return home, congratulated themselves upon the presumption that if they had ripped up the Democratic party, they had shown the Republicans that they, as Democrats, were not doughfaces. The reflection that they were no more to be reproached as serfs of the South seemed sweet and ample compensation for all the struggles and perils through which they had passed...."<sup>65</sup> This attitude was reflected in the commentary of the Michigan Democratic press. In proclaiming their independence from their southern masters, Democrats cast themselves in the role of the only organization that could save the Union. They announced that they were as hostile to seceders as to Republicans. It was necessary, they argued, for all national men to rally to the Douglas banner. The Free Press declared that Douglas "MUST BE ELECTED AS THE ONLY SURE WAY OF PRESERVING THE NATIONAL UNION." It warned that "so palpable is it that secession from the democratic party means secession from the Federal Union that it cannot long be soberly denied in any quarter...." The Free Press was confident Southerners knew this and would "STAND BY THE UNION." If the Democrats of the North adhered to their principles, ultimately, if not immediately, they would triumph in the South.<sup>66</sup> Another benefit of Douglas' nomination, wrote the Pontiac Jacksonian, was that devoted Unionists now had an opportunity to end over a decade of fanaticism that had repeatedly threatened the existence of

the nation.<sup>67</sup> Most Michigan Democrats were convinced that the Union, their party, and their honor required an end to their partnership with the southern Democracy. As one paper put it, any man had the right to oppose Douglas, but let not those who "oppose him pretend to any claim of fealty to the democratic party.--They are opposed to the party as much as the abolition republicans."<sup>68</sup>

Michigan Democrats cast special scorn upon Breckinridge and his chief backers, such as William L. Yancey and Lawrence M. Keitt. Some were willing to work with the Breckinridge forces on the state level, although they condemned them for disintegrating the party nationally.<sup>69</sup> Except for this most qualified sympathy for Breckinridge, Michigan Democrats continually castigated him "as the candidate for President of the advocates of Congressional interference with slavery in the Territories."<sup>70</sup> They charged that Breckinridge did not expect to win, but was nominated to split the party and give the election to Lincoln. One infuriated editor wrote that "such a scheme of infamy is unparalleled in the annals of rascality the world over."<sup>71</sup> The Niles (Democratic) Republican, noting he had no chance for victory, urged him to withdraw at once and support the National Democratic nominees. Only this could restore him to the confidence of the people. It also pointed out that throughout most of the 1850's Breckinridge had supported the doctrine of congressional non-interference in the territories. It

declared it a shame that "he has lent himself to an unholy and unjust combination of political demagogues and there will be none to save him."<sup>72</sup>

As the campaign of 1860 got underway, northern Democrats realized that reconciliation with their former southern colleagues was impossible. They had gone so far as to question the constitutionality of the concept of popular sovereignty by agreeing to abide by Supreme Court decisions on that question; but this did not satisfy the South. As the Free Press accurately pointed out, the secessionists would not have bolted the Baltimore convention only if three demands had been met: seceded delegates had to be readmitted, the Alabama platform had to be proclaimed, and Douglas had to withdraw himself from consideration.<sup>73</sup> It was impossible for the Douglas Democrats to concede these demands, especially the second. At Charleston, and again at Baltimore, the Douglasites had reached the determination that no more could be conceded to the South. When the Southerners refused to budge, the Douglasites turned bitterly against them. During the campaign, the necessity for them to attack the Breckinridge forces as well as the Republicans greatly weakened their chances for victory. The Republicans, on the other hand, could concentrate their fire solely on the northern Democrats, which they did most effectively.

While Michigan Democrats vigorously defended their own position, they simultaneously attacked the Republican

party, its candidates, and platform. Throughout the election year, they castigated the opposition as sectionalists with abolitionist tendencies. Much of this rhetoric was sheer diatribe, evidence of a failure to create a winning political issue. Yet, when Democrats charged the Republicans with planning to use the Federal government to foster the ultimate extinction of slavery, they were not really wrong. Most Democrats, however, considered it too dangerous, too likely to create sectional discord to admit publicly that slavery's death should be speeded by any sort of positive governmental action. The most that some would admit was that slavery was an evil, and hopefully Southerners would eventually see fit to abandon the institution. Conceiving the Union as nearly perfect as then constituted, they would not risk to have it torn asunder by, in their eyes, the basically trivial issue of Negro slavery. In any case, if the Douglas proposition of non-intervention were adopted, they argued, slavery would not be able to spread to the territories because of natural barriers. But this position, even if it were true, could not match the Republican appeal to moral fervor.

Many Democratic editorials tried to show that Republicans through their acts and statements were generating southern hostility against the North and ultimately against the Union. The Niles Republican accused the other party of uttering "falsehoods with the hope of fanning the

flames of discord and getting the reins of government into their own hands." The Republican attitude, it continued, was forcing the South to take measures for its own protection, hopefully in the Union, but conceivably out of it. The South was particularly disturbed by northern efforts to nullify the Fugitive Slave Law, Michigan being a prime offender. It was not strange that Southerners had become exasperated, resulting in the radicals dominating the conservatives. Certainly, the Republican argued, "the South" have cause for alarm. They see in the North a powerful party in hostile array against them, whose open threats have poisoned the atmosphere, and declared eternal hostility to them and their institutions...."<sup>74</sup> The Detroit Free Press presented similar views. It illustrated Republican sectionalism by noting that in the Democratic controlled Senate of twenty-two standing committees, sixteen chairmen were from the South, six from the North. In the Republican dominated House, however, appointments were much more skewed in the opposite direction, where thirty-two chairmanships were given to Northerners, only five to the South. Moreover, the Black Republicans were held together only by their hatred of southern states, southern rights, and the Constitution.<sup>75</sup> A writer to the Grand Rapids Enquirer and Herald, named "UNIT.," characterized Republicanism as "the embodiment of Northern opinion, education, taste, moral and mental habit on the subject of slavery, wrought into the offensive and

dangerous form of a geographical party scheme and platform...."<sup>76</sup> Another paper accused the Republicans that in the states they controlled, instead of cultivating a spirit of harmony, they passed laws of no importance except for being offensive to the South. They furthered the growth of a southern sectional party, equally dangerous to the Union as the Republicans.<sup>77</sup> During the campaign, Lincoln's refusal to visit the South was interpreted by the Kalamazoo Gazette as further evidence of a Republican sectionalism which portended "the downfall of the Confederacy."<sup>78</sup>

Closely linked with the concept of Republicans as sectionalists was that of Republicans as abolitionists. Indeed, Democrats exerted much energy to prove that the ultimate Republican goal was to interfere with slavery where it already existed. The Detroit Free Press led the effort to label the Republicans abolitionists. It argued that "ten years ago the Garrison abolitionists stood just where the black republican party now profess to stand. Five years hence the black republican party will have advanced to the present position of the Garrison abolitionists." The abolitionist tendencies of the party was evidenced by the endorsement of the Helper book by many party leaders, which indicated their "fanatical zeal" and was an open admittance that they were not just free-soilers, but abolitionists, "in the fullest sense of the term...."<sup>79</sup> Most Michigan Democrats considered

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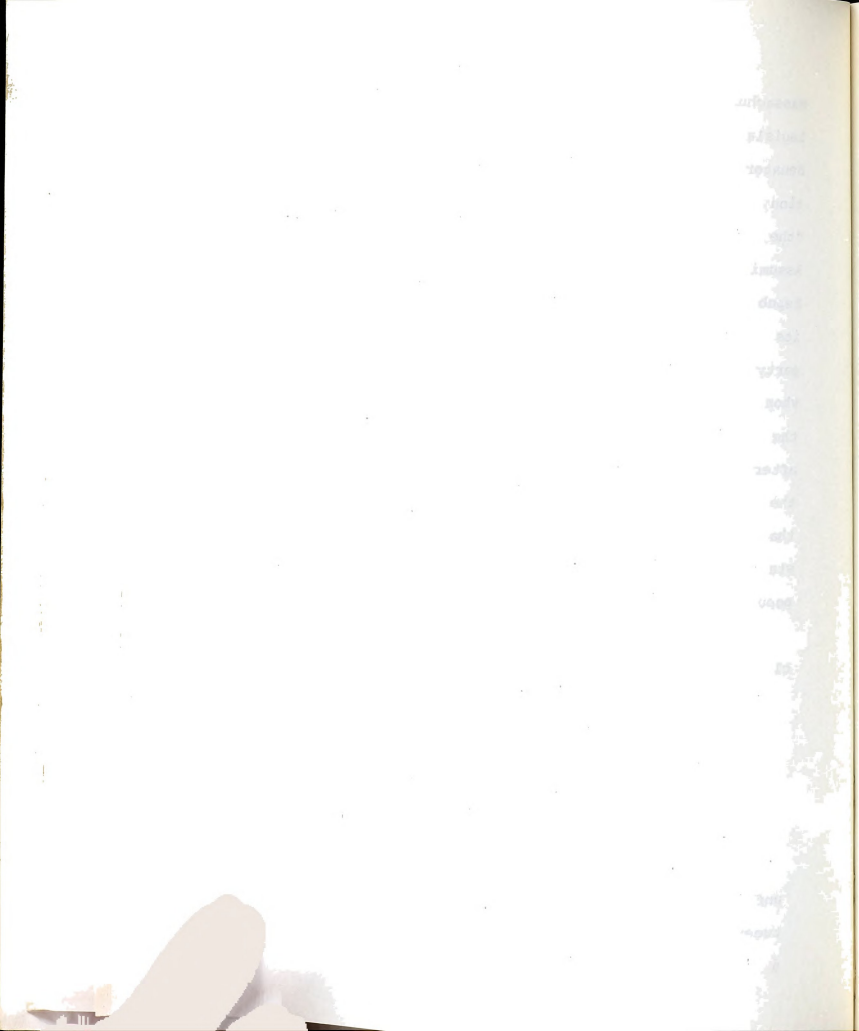
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Massachusetts the leading abolitionist state. When its legislature endorsed a particularly militant speech by Senator Charles Sumner, the Free Press described that action as an example of pure black republicanism which was "the twin brother of Garrison-Phillips abolitionism...."<sup>80</sup>

Assuming that Seward would have great influence in a Republican administration, the Democratic press continued its assault on the New York Senator, the symbol of his party. The Free Press still regarded him as a radical whose goal was simply not the limitation of slavery, but the abolition of it where it already existed.<sup>81</sup> Even after the election, the Free Press escalated the attack on the supposed Republican abolitionism. The old charges that Republicans desired to interfere with slavery in the states were reiterated. And, in a belated defense of popular sovereignty, it asserted that slavery "can exist nowhere but in the States." The editorial accurately concluded that the Republican party sought to make slavery "odious, wherever it exists, to the moral sense of the North and of the world."<sup>82</sup>

Other papers also found it expedient to condemn Republican abolitionism. One wrote that "we discover day by day, the party have been growing more and more abolitionized...."<sup>83</sup> "UNIT," contended that it would not be unfair or illiberal to claim that the dividing line between the Republicans and abolitionists had "become hardly a line of demarcation...." Their underlying principles





were the same: denationalization and sectionalism; their methods, "rancorous and unhallowed agitation," were also identical. And most of all "they have the same inevitable consummation and goal, viz: treason, civil war, and all their horrible accompaniments."<sup>84</sup> In general, then, Democrats tried to portray the opposition as virtually no different from the Garrison abolitionists. They were, as one editor put it, "ultra infidel abolitionists,"<sup>85</sup> who desired to unite the North in a great anti-slavery crusade against the constitutionally sanctioned property of the South. This attitude, the Marshall Democratic Expounder warned, could only lead to the extremes of sectional discord.<sup>86</sup>

Naturally Democrats were interested in the Republican contest for the presidential nomination. They, as were the Michigan Republicans, were quite sure that the candidate would most likely be Seward, or possibly Edward Bates of Missouri. As Democrats analyzed the situation, Seward represented the radical anti-slavery wing of the party while Bates stood for the old-line Whig element. They argued that if either one of them were nominated the opposing group would not accept the decision and probably bolt the party. Much of the debate in the party journals centered around Bates' chances. Most thought his chances slim. The Free Press commented that if the Republicans should overthrow Seward for Bates, "they would have also to throw overboard their antagonism to the fugitive slave



law and their aggression upon slavery in the States where it exists. This they will not do for should they do they would cease to be black republicans...." It later declared that "if the feeling among the black republicans against the Bates movement is as strong elsewhere as it is in Michigan, he will stand but a small chance for an election, or even carrying half a dozen northern states."<sup>87</sup>

The Pontiac Jacksonian, on the contrary, stated that "the indications are now strong that he will be the candidate of the republicans." Bates' success, it argued, would very likely drive the radicals out of the party.<sup>88</sup> This was a minority view; most believed that the radicals would drive out the conservatives.

The Free Press thought that while the Bates movement would probably fail, it was an indication of a growing conservative sentiment in the nation to which the Republicans would be forced to respond. While those who supported Bates were trading principles for success, "the movement indicates one thing, which is a glorious sign of the times: that these men feel the necessity of succumbing to the conservative sentiment of the country."<sup>89</sup>

On February 29 Seward made a Senate speech which, while repeating the traditional Republican opposition to slavery extension, was mildly conservative as he explicitly stated that he did not desire to force the northern system on the South.<sup>90</sup> Democrats interpreted this speech as a response to the growth in conservatism. The Free Press surmised

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that Seward was attempting to assuage those conservative Republicans who had "taken alarm at the violence and revolutionary tendencies of the doctrines he had formerly announced...." It found it "something extraordinary" for someone like Seward, who had "lived and thrived upon sectionalism and abolitionism" to utter such statements. His real goal was to divest the Republican party of its abolitionist taint and place it on a national level. Although he was courting the conservative element in the Republican party, he himself, the Free Press argued, had not really changed. His aim was simply to stop the flight of conservatives from the party and to assure his own nomination. Thus, "his back-down is the rankest hypocrisy, beyond all question." In reality, he was the same old Seward of the "irrepressible conflict" and the "higher law." But Seward was failing to reconcile the conservative elements because his effort was the epitome of "palpable insincerity and selfishness...."<sup>91</sup> By the end of April the Free Press was somewhat more doubtful that Seward could gain the nomination because he had failed to win over the conservatives and overcome the objections of many Republicans who contended that he could not win the election.<sup>92</sup> As the convention opened, the Free Press modified its position and conjectured that "the chances for SEWARD seem to have increased since the delegates began to assemble."<sup>93</sup> The Free Press' uncertainty as to the likely Republican nominee was a reflection of the national doubt as to what

would happen in Chicago. In Michigan, Lincoln's candidacy was rarely considered. When mentioned by Democrats, he was simply noted as another sectional agitator, defeated for the Senate in 1858 by the great Douglas.<sup>94</sup>

In discussing the Republican convention which met in Chicago from May 16 to 18, Democrats concentrated their comment on the party platform and its candidates. The Democratic papers that discussed the platform offered different opinions of it, although they all condemned it. Basically they quibbled as to how radical it really was. The Free Press saw no substantial change in the Republican position from 1856. It was as interventionist, aggressive, and sectional as ever. The call for a protective tariff was new, but "it is very well understood what this was done for, to catch votes in Pennsylvania and it is, in reality, but a resurrection of one of the effete and expanded doctrines of the old whig party."<sup>95</sup> The Marshall Democratic Expounder thought that the Republicans had retreated from their radical position of 1856 by no longer explicitly stating that Congress had and should exercise the power to forbid slavery in the territories. Rather, plank 8 of the platform stated that "the normal condition of all territories of the United States is that of freedom...." The Expounder interpreted it to mean that if the normal condition of the territories was freedom, to legislate against the extension of slavery into them was absurd because of the impossibility of the institution to expand

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there.<sup>96</sup> It further characterized the platform as filled with "generalities and truisms, which apply to one party as another...." There was nothing in the platform that the Republican party could lay special claim to. Such programs as a Pacific railroad, a homestead law and an incidental tariff were hardly opposed by anybody. It did not really call for a high protective tariff, "although the resolution is so enveloped in verbiage that it will, no doubt, be so construed in certain localities."<sup>97</sup> In contrast to the Expounder, the Grand Rapids Daily Enquirer construed plank 8 to mean that the Republicans had grown more radical since 1856. It noted that the plank contained a quote from the Bill of Rights that "no person shall be deprived of life, liberty or property without due process of law." If this clause applied to the status of slavery in the territories, argued the Enquirer, it also had to apply to the states, for the Constitution was the paramount law of the land. Hence, it followed that the Republicans were prepared to guarantee the freedom of every slave in the Union. In reality, the object of the platform was "to prepare for this Abolition dogma...."<sup>98</sup>

After his nomination, Democrats had much to say about Lincoln, most of it negative. He was castigated for being a radical who was nominated by accident and whose only claim to fame was as a rail-splitter. They stressed that his nomination was due to his availability; that is, he was not as well known nationally as Seward and would be

able to carry more states. The Michigan Argus commented that "he is as ultra in his political opinions as SEWARD, and yet he has been nominated because of his supposed availability in the so called doubtful States...."

Lincoln's friends had promised that he could take the Know-nothing and conservative vote in Illinois, Indiana, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey which they alleged Seward would lose.<sup>99</sup> The Free Press declared that "the black republican party today is the same fanatical abolition concern that it has always been, and LINCOLN is no less an abolitionist than SEWARD or GARRISON. He is himself the father of the irrepressible conflict doctrine, which he enunciated when he said at Springfield, in June 1858, that he did not believe this government could endure half slave and half free." The people should understand, the paper warned, that Lincoln was not "the rail-splitter but the Union-splitter with abolitionism for his wedges."<sup>100</sup> For the Marshall Democratic Expounder, Lincoln's doctrines were more odious, if possible, than Seward's. It declared him "an abolitionist, a federal of the darkest hue.--He upholds negro equality to its fullest extent."<sup>101</sup> Losing their favorite target, Seward, Democrats transferred his supposed beliefs to Lincoln.

Besides attacking Lincoln's radicalism, the Democrats poked fun at the Republicans for stressing their candidate's rail-splitting abilities, evidence that he had no other qualifications for high office. One editor

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argued that Lincoln probably never split a dozen rails in his life. Indeed, "the republicans...must have a miserable opinion of the intelligence of the people, to believe they would regard Mr. Lincoln with any more favor if the story of rail-splitting were true."<sup>102</sup> His body build and manners were also mocked.<sup>103</sup> Even after his election, the Grand Rapids Enquirer predicted that his administration would fail because he lacked personal prestige and character.<sup>104</sup> The Free Press tried to brand Lincoln a traitor for his opposition to the Mexican war. While most Americans fully sustained the war, "there were men at home who hoped and prayed that the Mexicans would 'welcome them with bloody hands to hospitable graves,' and there were men who responded to the sentiment, and among them was LINCOLN." It concluded that "Americans want somebody to rule over them who will not take sides with the enemy in the time of war against his own country."<sup>105</sup> Several papers pointed out that Lincoln had voted against granting 160 acres of land to those who served in the war.<sup>106</sup> The only Democratic paper that had the least thing positive to say about Lincoln was the Kalamazoo Gazette. It criticized a Republican paper for publishing "a diabolically ugly picture" of their candidate. It noted that "Mr. LINCOLN is by no means an eminently handsome man; but his countenance is at least human." It later commented that Lincoln, "although personally worthy and estimable, has lacked the power, the breadth of mind and the laborious



industry which leads to distinction and great deeds."<sup>107</sup>  
 In summary, the Democratic attack portrayed Lincoln as an ugly, crude, radical anti-slavery abolitionist whose past history was marked by treason and fraud.

In the contest of 1860 a fourth party, the Constitutional Union, met in convention at Baltimore on May 7 and 8, 1860. John Bell of Tennessee was nominated for President, and Edward Everett of Massachusetts for Vice-President. This party, whose principles were the "Constitution of the Country, the Union of the States, and the Enforcement of the Laws,"<sup>108</sup> attracted little attention in Michigan.<sup>109</sup> Its avoidance of the slavery question made it irrelevant in a state greatly concerned over that issue and where the Douglas and Lincoln parties reflected the spectrum of public opinion. One Democratic paper commented that it "is of the very highest respectability, and numbers among its numbers men of the very first ability, but it lacks in one great essential, and that is in votes. Those being wanted, respectability, talent, and all the rest go for little or nothing."<sup>110</sup> Generally, Democrats adopted Douglas' advice that "we should treat the Bell and Everett men friendly and cultivate good relations for them, for they are Union men."<sup>111</sup>

Throughout the election year of 1860, the Michigan Democrats were greatly disadvantaged in the contest with the Republicans. The schism in the national party destroyed the unity they needed for success. The

Northerners were forced to appeal for votes at home while simultaneously trying to gain votes for their candidate in the South, an area where his prospects were at best bleak. To do this, much energy was expended attacking Breckinridge, something the Republicans did not have to bother with. In their attempt to win votes North and South, the main point in the Democratic platform, non-intervention, was compromised in a manner that pleased nobody. In the South it was too radical, in the North too conservative. The contention that the Democratic party was the only national party lost its credibility after the Charleston split. Seemingly unable to generate enough support for their own proposals, Democrats resorted to invective against their opponents. They argued that if the Republicans gained control of the national government, the Union was doomed. Appeals to racism and disdain of the abolitionists were frequent campaign techniques. First Seward, and then Lincoln, were portrayed as symbols of northern abolitionism and hatred of the South. But all these efforts were futile. In a state overwhelmingly Republican, the Democrats did not stand a chance.

CHAPTER II NOTES

- <sup>1</sup>Roy F. Nichols, The Disruption of American Democracy (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1948), p. 242.
- <sup>2</sup>Ollinger Crenshaw, "The Speakership Contest of 1859-1860," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, XXIX (December, 1942), p. 323.
- <sup>3</sup>Nichols, Disruption of American Democracy, p. 274.
- <sup>4</sup>Crenshaw, "Speakership Contest," p. 323.
- <sup>5</sup>Emerson D. Fite, The Presidential Campaign of 1860 (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1911), p. 34.
- <sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 43.
- <sup>7</sup>Crenshaw, "Speakership Contest," p. 326.
- <sup>8</sup>Fite, Presidential Campaign of 1860, pp. 43-45.
- <sup>9</sup>Detroit Free Press, January 12, 1860.
- <sup>10</sup>Three Rivers Western Chronicle, January 26, 1860.
- <sup>11</sup>Detroit Free Press, January 25, 1860; Three Rivers Western Chronicle, January 26, 1860.
- <sup>12</sup>Detroit Free Press, January 25, 1860.
- <sup>13</sup>Ibid., February 2, 3, 1860.
- <sup>14</sup>Three Rivers Western Chronicle, February 9, 1860.
- <sup>15</sup>Michigan Argus, January 6, 1860.
- <sup>16</sup>Crenshaw, "Speakership Contest," pp. 333-357.
- <sup>17</sup>Michigan Argus, December 16, 1859.



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<sup>18</sup>Floyd B. Streeter, Political Parties in Michigan, 1837-1860 (Lansing: Michigan Historical Commission, 1918), p. 283. One of the pro-Breckinridge papers in Michigan was the Grand Rapids Enquirer and Herald under the editorship of A. E. Gordon. Gordon reluctantly endorsed Douglas after his nomination because the Democrats of Kent County supported him. He, however, helped form a Breckinridge party which was very ineffectual. On August 16, 1860 he sold the paper to E. D. Burr who was fully committed to Douglas. Burr renamed the paper the Grand Rapids Daily Enquirer.

<sup>19</sup>Kalamazoo Gazette, September 30, 1859.

<sup>20</sup>Marshall Democratic Expounder, December 22, 1859.

<sup>21</sup>Detroit Free Press, February 18, 1860.

<sup>22</sup>Niles Republican, January 14, 1860.

<sup>23</sup>Three Rivers Western Chronicle, May 17, 1860.

<sup>24</sup>Kalamazoo Gazette, May 18, 1860.

<sup>25</sup>Detroit Free Press, June 24, 1860.

<sup>26</sup>Kalamazoo Gazette, June 29, 1860.

<sup>27</sup>Niles Republican, July 7, 1860.

<sup>28</sup>Kalamazoo Gazette, July 13, 1860.

<sup>29</sup>Grand Rapids Daily Enquirer, August 25, 1860.

<sup>30</sup>Michigan Argus, December 16, 1859.

<sup>31</sup>Detroit Free Press, April 8, 1860.

<sup>32</sup>Niles Republican, April 21, 1860.

<sup>33</sup>Grand Rapids Enquirer and Herald, March 1, 1860.

<sup>34</sup>Allan Nevins, The Emergence of Lincoln, Vol. II (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1950), p. 207.

<sup>35</sup>Nichols, Disruption of American Democracy, p. 290.

<sup>36</sup>William B. Hesseltine, ed., Three Against Lincoln: Murat Halstead Reports the Caucuses of 1860 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1960), pp. 59-61.

- <sup>37</sup> Ibid., p. 69.
- <sup>38</sup> Ibid., p. 81.
- <sup>39</sup> Nevins, Emergence of Lincoln, Vol. II, p. 220.
- <sup>40</sup> Hesseltine, Three Against Lincoln, p. 87.
- <sup>41</sup> Nevins, Emergence of Lincoln, Vol. II, p. 223.
- <sup>42</sup> Hesseltine, Three Against Lincoln, pp. 95-98.  
The Michigan and Northwest delegates remained loyal to Douglas. He was defeated on this question because the big 35 vote New York delegation defected from his camp.
- <sup>43</sup> Ibid., p. 109.
- <sup>44</sup> Ibid., p. 101.
- <sup>45</sup> Detroit Free Press, May 4, 1860.
- <sup>46</sup> Marshall Democratic Expounder, May 2, 10, 1860.
- <sup>47</sup> Adrian Daily Watchtower, May 1, 1860.
- <sup>48</sup> Detroit Free Press, May 13, 1860.
- <sup>49</sup> Niles Republican, May 26, 1860.
- <sup>50</sup> Marshall Democratic Expounder, May 17, 1860.
- <sup>51</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>52</sup> Adrian Daily Watchtower, May 4, 1860.
- <sup>53</sup> Detroit Free Press, May 4, 5, 12, 1860.
- <sup>54</sup> Marshall Democratic Expounder, May 2, 1860.
- <sup>55</sup> Detroit Free Press, May 5, 10, 12, 1860.
- <sup>56</sup> Three Rivers Western Chronicle, May 10, 1860.
- <sup>57</sup> Michigan Argus, May 11, 1860.
- <sup>58</sup> Nevins, Emergence of Lincoln, Vol. II, pp. 266-267.
- <sup>59</sup> Nichols, Disruption of American Democracy, p. 314.
- <sup>60</sup> Hesseltine, Three Against Lincoln, p. 232.

<sup>61</sup>Nevins, Emergence of Lincoln, Vol. II, pp. 269-270.

<sup>62</sup>Nichols, Disruption of American Democracy, pp. 317-318.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid., pp. 316-317. Fitzpatrick did not accept the nomination. He was replaced by Herschel V. Johnson of Georgia.

<sup>64</sup>quoted in Hesseltine, Three Against Lincoln, p. 256.

<sup>65</sup>Ibid., pp. 262-263.

<sup>66</sup>Detroit Free Press, June 24, 27, July 11, 1860.

<sup>67</sup>Pontiac Jacksonian, June 28, 1860.

<sup>68</sup>Adrian Daily Watchtower, July 2, 1860.

<sup>69</sup>Ibid.

<sup>70</sup>Detroit Free Press, July 3, 1860.

<sup>71</sup>Marshall Democratic Expounder, August 16, 1860.

<sup>72</sup>Niles Republican, August 25, 1860.

<sup>73</sup>Detroit Free Press, October 21, 1860.

<sup>74</sup>Niles Republican, October 22, December 24, 31, 1859; October 27, 1860.

<sup>75</sup>Detroit Free Press, February 21, March 2, 1860.

<sup>76</sup>Grand Rapids Enquirer and Herald, January 4, 1860.

<sup>77</sup>Three Rivers Western Chronicle, May 17, 1860.

<sup>78</sup>Kalamazoo Gazette, August 24, 1860.

<sup>79</sup>Detroit Free Press, February 23, 26, 1860.

<sup>80</sup>Ibid., June 17, 1860.

<sup>81</sup>Ibid., August 24, 1860.

<sup>82</sup>Ibid., December 23, 1860.

<sup>83</sup>Three Rivers Western Chronicle, December 22, 1859.

<sup>84</sup>Grand Rapids Daily Enquirer and Herald, June 17, 1860.

<sup>85</sup>Adrian Daily Watchtower, June 30, 1860.

<sup>86</sup>Marshall Democratic Expounder, January 24, 1861.

<sup>87</sup>Detroit Free Press, November 24, 1859; March 7,

<sup>88</sup>Pontiac Jacksonian, March 13, 1860.

<sup>89</sup>Detroit Free Press, March 4, 1860.

<sup>90</sup>Glyndon G. Van Deusen, William Henry Seward (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), pp. 216-218.

<sup>91</sup>Detroit Free Press, March 14, 16, 21, 1860.

<sup>92</sup>Ibid., April 29, 1860.

<sup>93</sup>Ibid., May 18, 1860.

<sup>94</sup>Ibid., February 1, 1860.

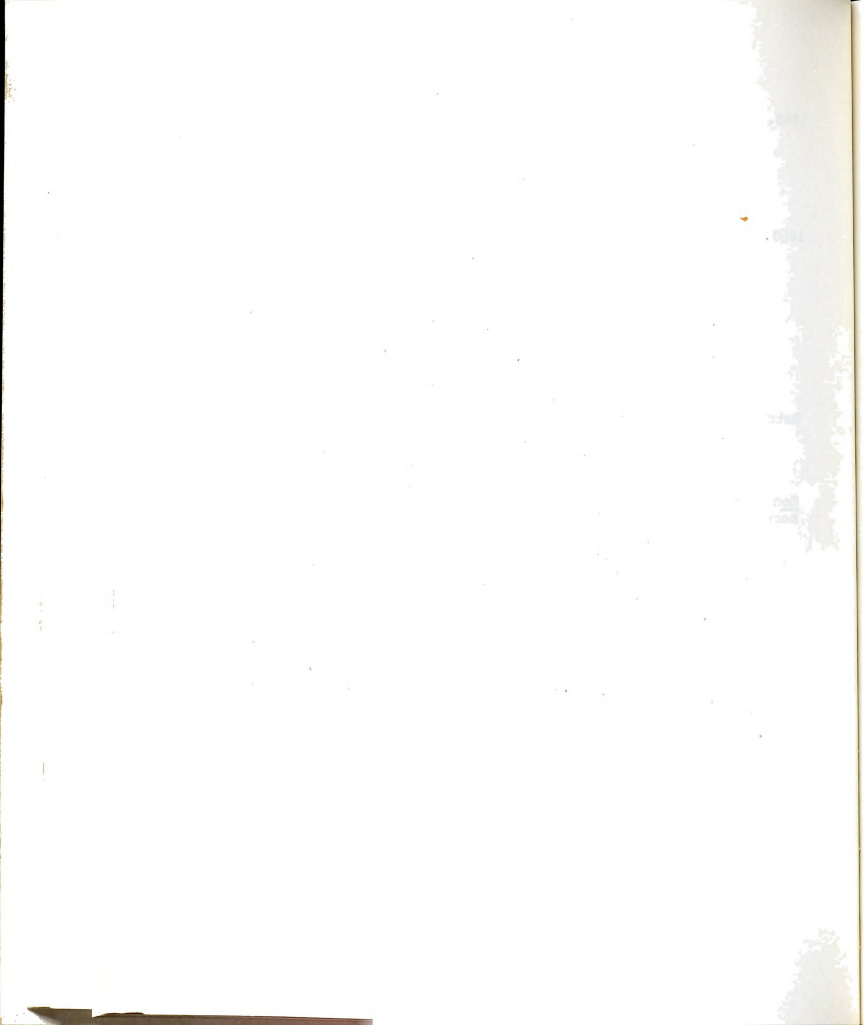
<sup>95</sup>Ibid., May 22, 1860.

<sup>96</sup>Marshall Democratic Expounder, May 24, 1860. The Expounder confused what the Republicans meant by saying that the normal condition of the territories is freedom. The platform did not imply that freedom was normal because slavery could not expand there for geographical reasons, but rather freedom was normal because of the precedent of the founding fathers in banning slavery from the Northwest Territory and the fact that freedom existed prior to slavery. Also, the plank does not imply that Congress cannot forbid slavery in the territories. The plank stated:

8. That the normal condition of all the territory of the United States is that of freedom; that, as our republican fathers, when they had abolished slavery in all our national territory, ordained that "no person can be deprived of life, liberty, or property without due process of law." It becomes our duty, by legislation, whenever such legislation is necessary, to maintain this provision of the Constitution against all attempts to violate it; and we deny the authority of Congress, of a territorial legislature, or any individuals, to give legal existence to slavery in any territory of the United States.

<sup>97</sup>Ibid.

1860. <sup>98</sup>Grand Rapids Daily Enquirer, September 25,
- <sup>99</sup>Michigan Argus, May 25, 1860.
- <sup>100</sup>Detroit Free Press, June 2, 17, 1860.
1860. <sup>101</sup>Marshall Democratic Expounder, November 1,
- <sup>102</sup>Adrian Daily Watchtower, July 6, 1860.
- <sup>103</sup>Detroit Free Press, May 30, 1860.
- <sup>104</sup>Grand Rapids Daily Enquirer, November 14, 1860.
- <sup>105</sup>Detroit Free Press, May 27, 1860.
- <sup>106</sup>Grand Rapids Daily Enquirer, September 4, 1860;  
Detroit Free Press, May 30, 1860.
- <sup>107</sup>Kalamazoo Gazette, June 22, July 27, 1860.
- <sup>108</sup>quoted in Thomas Hudson McKee, The National Conventions and Platforms of all Political Parties (Baltimore: The Freidenwald Company, 1904), p. 117.
- <sup>109</sup>Michigan sent no delegates to the Constitutional Union Convention (Hesseltine, p. 123). In the election Bell received only 405 votes compared to 805 for Breckinridge, 65,057 for Douglas, and 88,480 for Lincoln (McKee, p. 118).
- <sup>110</sup>Detroit Free Press, May 12, 1860.
- <sup>111</sup>Douglas to Charles H. Lanphier, July 5, 1860 in Robert W. Johannsen, ed., The Letters of Stephen A. Douglas (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1961), p. 498.



### CHAPTER III

#### THE MEN AND PARTIES IN THE ELECTION YEAR OF 1860: THE REPUBLICAN PERSPECTIVE

Unlike the Democrats, Republicans used the campaign issues of 1860 to their political advantage. They knew that the people were getting tired of northern acquiescence to the incessant demands of the southern ruling class. While Democrats had to placate the South as their only chance for victory, Republicans were not so constricted. To achieve victory, the Republicans had to sweep the North. To capture Michigan, Republicans stressed the issue of slavery and the Democratic support of it. Nationally the election of 1860 was marked by a growing conservatism in certain sectors of the Republican party. Many Republicans believed the party could not win on an anti-slavery expansion platform alone. In Michigan a compromise of principle was not necessary, allowing Republicans to condemn Douglas and the northern Democrats as a tool of the southern slave power. Indeed, during the campaign Michigan Republican newspapers devoted much more editorial space to dissecting the Democrats than to lauding their own virtues. The disruption of the Democratic party and the inconsistencies in the Douglas position



provided a field day for Republican editors. Although the first choice of Michigan Republicans was not nominated at Chicago, they remained loyal to the party and entered the battle completely confident of victory.

During the Speakership contest, one Republican paper explained the delay in the organization of the House to the "excitement, agitation, crimination, and recrimination" of the Democracy. In contrast, Republicans were anxious to proceed to the legitimate business of the House.<sup>1</sup> The Detroit Daily Tribune urged the party to stand firm by Sherman, a conservative Republican, because he symbolized order. After his withdrawal, it declared Pennington's victory a great Republican triumph that smashed "the disunion programme of the Democratic party....," and expressed the will of those conservatives opposed to slavery extension.<sup>2</sup> Although Sherman would have made a good Speaker, observed the Ann Arbor Local News, Pennington was a national man who would make "a judicious, impartial, and efficient officer."<sup>3</sup> A Republican of Whig origin, he supported Fremont in 1856 and gave the Republicans much service, declared another paper. The Americans voted for him, but he had never joined their organization.<sup>4</sup> Thus, the Republicans, like the Democrats, had to settle for less than total victory. Forced to retreat from Sherman, they accepted the election of a Republican whom the southern fire-eaters could not defeat.

In their attacks upon the Democratic party,

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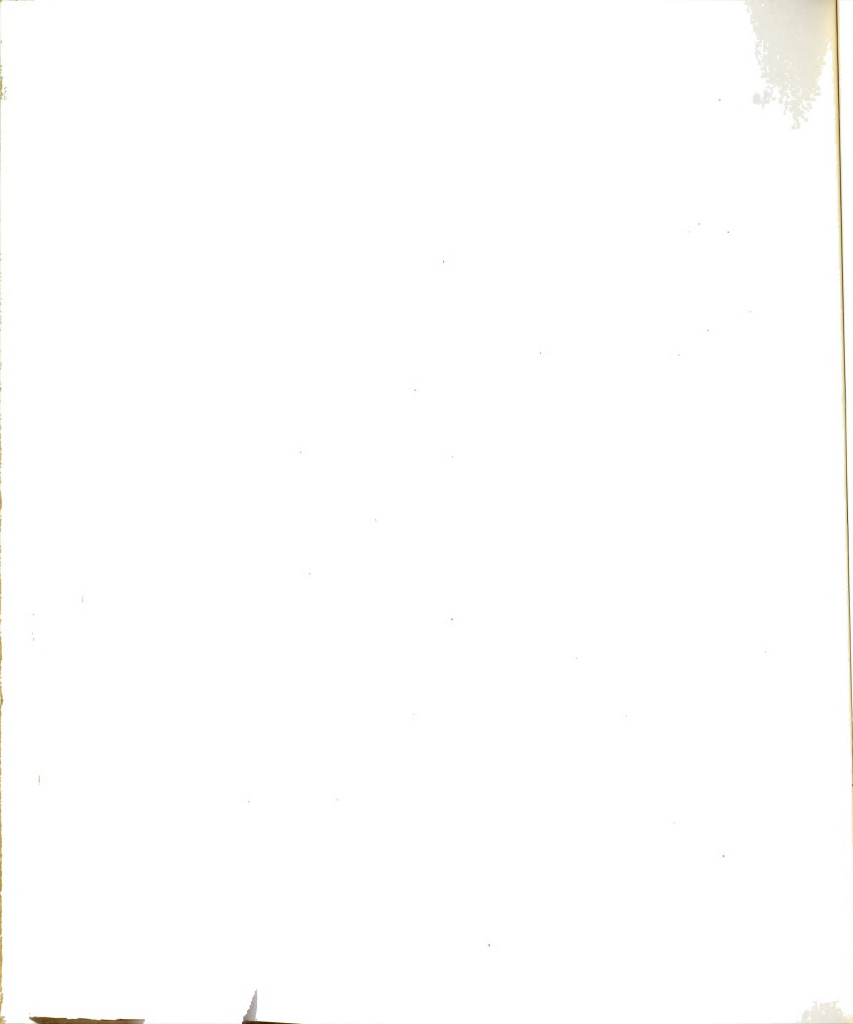
Republicans frequently did not differentiate between its northern and southern wings. On the other hand, when expedient, they highlighted the conflict that was tearing it apart. In both cases, Republicans tried to show the opposition's commitment to the perpetuation of slavery. They attempted to prove that the Democratic party supported the re-opening of the slave trade. Indeed, they charged that the slave trade was in actual operation with the tacit approval of the Administration. The Detroit Daily Tribune related supposed incidents where American vessels roamed the African coast as slave traders under the guise of trading in palm oil. These ships were fitted out in New York under the clearance of Democratic officials. If they had been scrutinized at all, their real purpose would have been obvious to anyone. But they were not inspected because "the American government is now the main bulwark of the African slave trade." Although the Administration at times had made an appearance of trying to suppress the trade, it was nothing but a "sham."<sup>5</sup> Some Republicans argued that the South was foolish in trying to re-open the trade because it would actually help drive slavery to extinction. One editor wrote that "were it not for its atrocity, we should certainly advocate this measure as the surest and speediest method of extirpating Slavery from the country." He pointed out that in Virginia, Maryland, Delaware, Kentucky, Missouri, and much of Tennessee slave labor was unprofitable. The system survived in these

states only because they provided Negroes for the lower South. Flooding the market with slaves from abroad would kill slavery in the upper South. That region would eventually unite against those states where slavery remained. Thus, it was poor politics for the South to urge the trade's re-opening.<sup>6</sup>

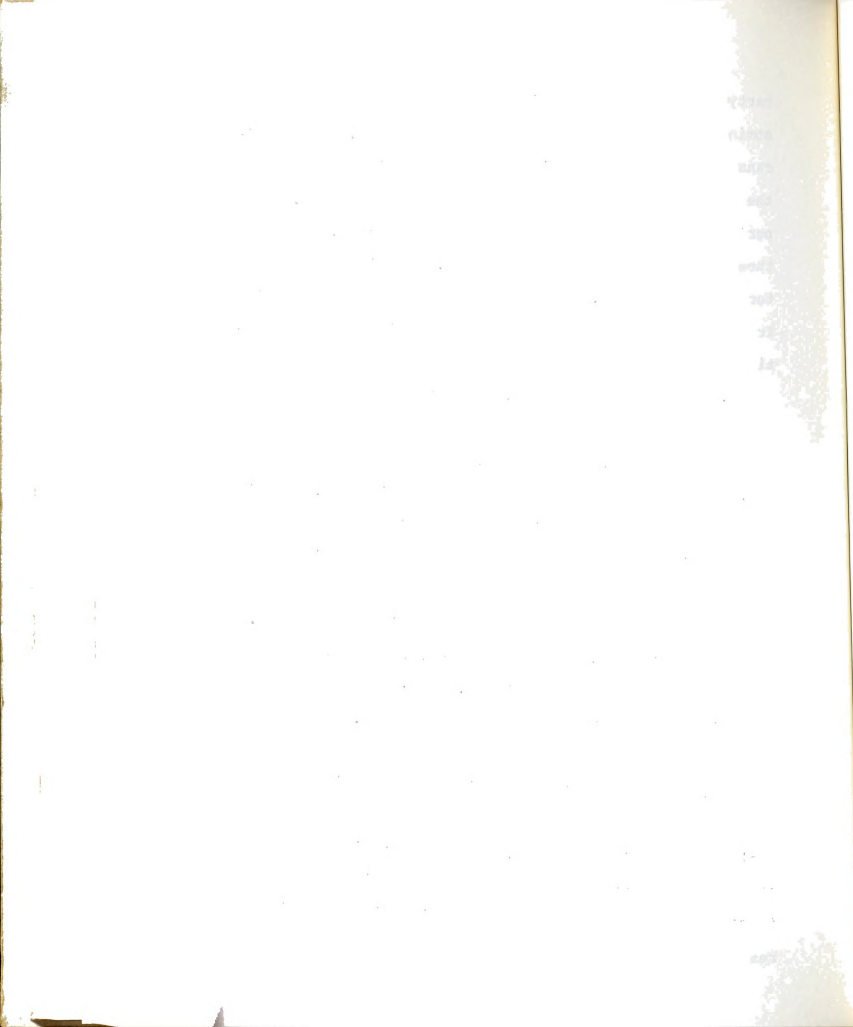
Republican papers, like the Democratic, accused the opposition of fostering sectionalism. Some Republicans traced the evolution of the Democratic party from nationalism to sectionalism. Originally, one editor claimed, that the party had lived up to its name as it defended the people and maintained "the equality of men who labor for their bread with those who in other countries assume superior privileges because of the advantages of wealth and birth."<sup>7</sup> Another paper observed that the Democratic party had supported national projects such as river and harbor improvements. Old Hickory, with firmness and patriotism, had silenced and subdued the forces of nullification. Democratic congresses and presidents had urged the limitation of slavery expansion thereby encouraging free white labor "and building up communities and states of industry, enterprise and intelligence like our own, beloved Michigan and the whole Northwest." Now, instead of trying to advance the interests of the country as a whole, the Democratic party had become the private reserve of the southern aristocratic slaveholders who desired to extend slavery at the expense of free white

labor.<sup>8</sup> The slaveholders, declared the Detroit Daily Advertiser, not only attacked free labor obliquely but in much more direct ways by opposing legislation essential to national development. Their opposition to a homestead bill, river and harbor improvements, and a tariff was meant to degrade free white labor. Democratic versions of a "Homestead" bill were shams designed to deceive the people.<sup>9</sup> Hence, Republicans considered the Democrats the real sectionalists, their party controlled by an element motivated by only one thing--slavery.<sup>10</sup>

Republican newspapers condemned several other features of the Democratic party. In particular, they took great glee in noting the servility of the northern Democrats to their southern counterparts. Not until after the Charleston convention did Republicans give the northern Democrats credit for showing any real independence from their southern masters. One paper conceded that the Northerners differed with the Southerners on such issues as the Lecompton constitution, the tariff, homestead legislation, the postal system, the slave trade, and popular sovereignty but noted that they could not exert their will out of fear that the Southerners would disrupt the party, leaving them a hopeless minority in the nation.<sup>11</sup> The South's commanding position, observed the Detroit Daily Tribune, allowed it to treat the North with contempt; and no matter what it wanted "the northern servitors must bear up under it." Southern dominance of the



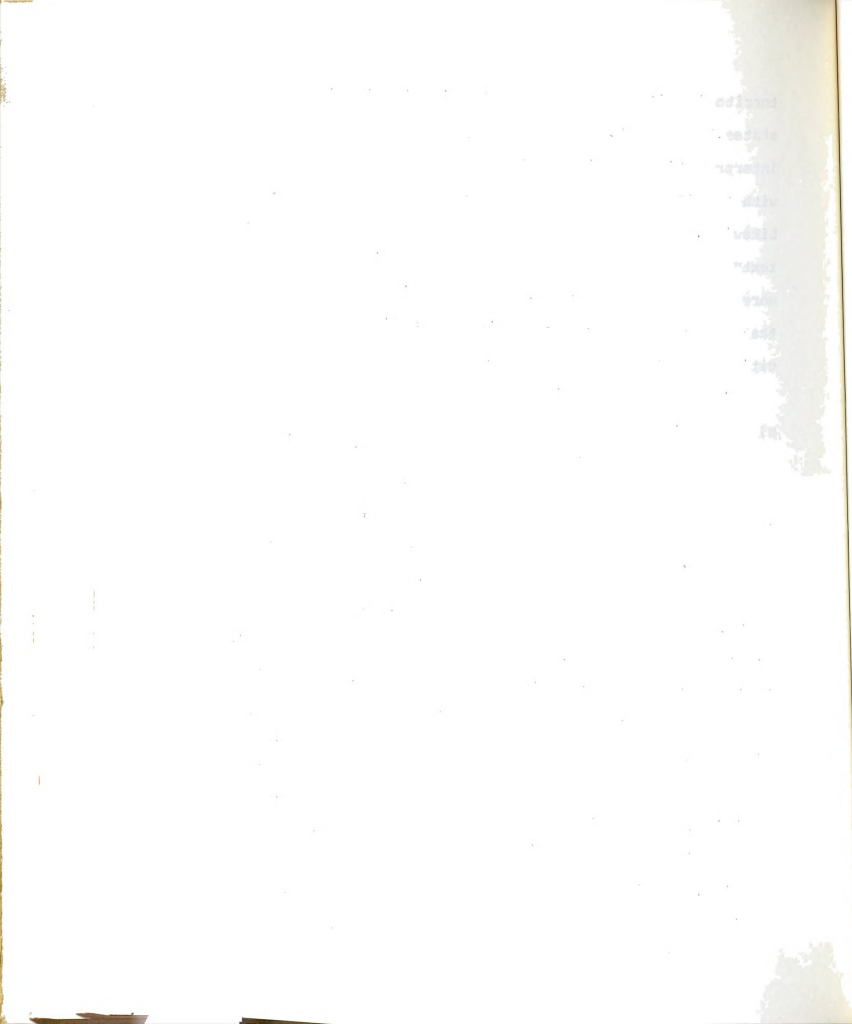
party made it virtually impossible for Douglas to be nominated at Charleston on his own platform.<sup>12</sup> Republicans also protested against the Democratic sanctioning of the suppression of freedom of speech in the South. Tampering with the mails by southern postmasters, who rifled them to remove "incendiary matters," particularly disturbed Republicans. Quite aware of this effort to stifle free discussion, they condemned the national administration for not intervening to sustain the freedom of the press.<sup>13</sup> Buchanan, himself, did not escape censure. His third annual message provided an opportunity for attack. The Supreme Court, he declared, had decided, once and for all, the question of slavery in the territories. In his interpretation every citizen had the right to take his property into the common territories, while "neither Congress nor a Territorial Legislature nor any human power has any authority to annul or appeal this vested right." Qualifying his pro-Southern position, the President added that in any particular territory, natural causes would determine whether it would be slave or free. He also proposed the suppression of the slave trade, the acquisition of Cuba, and the sending of a military force into Mexico to protect American citizens and prevent that nation from disintegrating into anarchy.<sup>14</sup> Buchanan's interpretation of the Dred Scott decision repulsed Republicans as much as it did Douglas Democrats. The Detroit Daily Advertiser reasoned that if the Constitution protected slavery in the





territories it also protected the institution in all the states.<sup>15</sup> The St. Joseph Traveler added that Buchanan's interpretation implied that free labor would be left only with territory "slaveholders cannot use to advantage." Likewise, the recommended purchase of Cuba and the "pre-text" for the conquest of Mexico really aimed to open up more territory to slavery. It sarcastically concluded that "there is no part of Mexico to-day in which the citizens of the free States would not have greater security of life and liberty than they would have in Mississippi or South Carolina."<sup>16</sup>

As much as they attacked Democrats in general, Republicans exerted even greater effort to destroy the image and career of the northern Democracy's leader, Stephen A. Douglas. As the only candidate they had to worry about, Republicans portrayed him as a tool of the South, a demagogic politician, at best indifferent to the moral side of slavery. A common theme of Republican editorials linked Douglas with the Slave Power. Even after Douglas broke with the South over the Lecompton constitution, "to win back the favor of the Slave Democracy," as exemplified by his continued support of the Dred Scott decision. The southern wing of the party opposed him only because it wanted to nominate a candidate from its own section.<sup>17</sup> His introduction of a bill which would have punished conspirators against the property or institutions of any state or territory further evidenced his



subservience to the South. This measure, prompted by John Brown's raid, observed the Detroit Daily Tribune, was really a device to suppress the Republican party. Somewhat amused, it gloated that Douglas did not win over the slaveholders in Charleston even after he had fought their "battles as no other man could have fought them."<sup>18</sup> Even after he had received the nomination at Baltimore, the Allegan Journal smirked over how the southern politicians had used Douglas for all he was worth and now "turn around and kick him for all his services to them."<sup>19</sup>

Throughout the election year, Republicans ransacked Douglas' career to show how he had served the slave power, evidence that he had no moral concern about slavery. His role in repealing the Missouri Compromise, his demands to increase the rigor of the Fugitive Slave laws, and his desire to suppress Emigrant Aid Societies proved his pro-slavery sympathies, wrote one editor.<sup>20</sup> Republicans charged that Douglas admitted that the repeal of the Missouri Compromise opened the territories to slavery. The Grand Rapids Eagle distorted his position by arguing that he believed that slavery could not be banned by a territory, even after it became a state.<sup>21</sup> Although most Republican papers did not so twist his position, the great majority condemned Douglas' role in the repeal of the Missouri Compromise which broke "asunder his party, and which, if he and his minions tell the truth, will shatter the Union to fragments."<sup>22</sup> Republicans jumped



upon his statement that he did not care whether slavery was voted up or down as an example of his moral indifference to the institution. Such a position, stated one editorial, clearly opposed the will of the majority of Northerners who vigorously opposed slavery. His indifference was just a device to gain the support of southern slaveholders. He was similarly motivated by his willingness to have the question of congressional and territorial powers over slavery settled by a Supreme Court dominated by pro-southern justices. His statement that he had made slave territory five times as large as New York State, "a boast which none of his friends have the hardihood to deny," further proved his sympathy for slavery.<sup>23</sup>

A strong Republican argument was that Douglas continually vacillated in his views, shifting them whenever convenient. Republicans charged that Douglas was unfit to be President because he lacked principles. In December, 1859 it appeared that there might have been a reconciliation between Douglas and Buchanan. One editor did not find this surprising because "these eminent demagogues have no real cause of difference, except their personal aspirations," both being equally devoted to the Slave Power.<sup>24</sup> Republican Journal considered his continued concessions to the Southerners a device to gain their support at Charleston.<sup>25</sup> His changing views on the nature of popular sovereignty was sheer demagoguery, declared the Detroit Daily Advertiser. It charged Douglas with

two-facedness because of the supposedly different positions he took in the North and South. In the South he preached the equality of slave property and free labor in the territories, the right of slaveowners to keep their slaves in the territories under the Dred Scott decision, the duty of the Government to recover fugitive slaves, and that slaves were property under the Federal Constitution. In the North, on the other hand, he stated that the people had the right to destroy slavery in the territories no matter what the Dred Scott decision said, that people could prevent the recovery of fugitives, and that slaves were property only by virtue of state law. The Advertiser concluded that Republicans hated and despised him because much like Benedict Arnold he had "betrayed the North for a price; he has prostituted his talents to accomplish the overthrow of freedom...." As a man, they cared nothing for him, but he had to be opposed because his victory would sap the political morality of the government.<sup>26</sup>

Even after the election, some Republicans did not forgive him. One paper chastised him for preaching the danger to the Union if the Republicans won, and then, immediately after the election, telling the South that there was no threat from them. This behavior, in perfect keeping "with the disreputable dodging which has characterized the entire political career of the reckless demagogue," no longer mattered for the Little Giant was through politically.<sup>27</sup> In February, 1861 the Hillsdale Standard



censured his efforts to achieve a compromise as "meritoriously deserving of every man's distrust and want of confidence."<sup>28</sup>

The proceedings of the Democratic conventions keenly interested Michigan Republicans. They joyously interpreted the bickerings, the confusion, and the disruptions as the prelude to their victory. Prior to the Charleston convention, in contrast to Democrats, Republicans emphasized the differences between the factions. Much of their commentary speculated upon the nature of the platform that would be forthcoming from the Democrats. They realized that the southern Democrats would demand a slave code while the Northerners would have to resist it, out of expediency, if not principle. As early as January, one prescient editor guessed that the Northerners would announce their adherence to popular sovereignty while recognizing it as a judicial question. This "cowardly expedient to get the Supreme Court in between themselves and the people" would undoubtedly culminate in "giving all the territories irrevocably to slavery."<sup>29</sup> Another editor thought it probable that the Democrats would again play the "old game" of adopting a platform that would "satisfy the south and deceive the north...." He was certain that as the Cincinnati platform resulted in the Lecompton constitution, the Charleston platform would lead to a slave code for the territories. No other result was possible because the southern wing, which had a veto



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power over the nomination, would endorse no candidate who did not accede to its wishes.<sup>30</sup> On the eve of the convention, Republicans agreed that the proceedings would be controlled by slaveholders, although they were not sure to what extent extremists would push their demands. They were certain, however, that the Democratic party would emerge "as a pro-slavery party."<sup>31</sup>

Republicans disagreed as to whether Douglas would be nominated. The Detroit Daily Tribune thought that the chances were against him. It noted that he was making all kinds of concessions to a South that was not prepared to forgive him for past defiance. Southern extremists did not care if Douglas was the only Democrat who had any chance of success in the North. Determined to kill Douglas and his popular sovereignty once and for all, they would let nothing stand in their way. Even worse for Douglas was the unlikelihood that the entire North and West would support him at the convention. Parts of New England, New York, and Pennsylvania, the Tribune predicted, would favor other candidates. In any case the northern Democrats deserved the contempt of the South. They had "put themselves under the dominion of the slaveholders and must expect plantation manners."<sup>32</sup> The Detroit Daily Advertiser, somewhat dubious about Douglas' chances, stated that Douglas was not the choice of the Southerners. Only with their votes could a Democrat win the election, and "they will scarcely fail to dictate

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their candidate." But if they should accede to Douglas' candidacy, they would certainly write the platform. On the other hand, if they got a slave code candidate, they might concede the platform, knowing that it would make no difference what it pledged. Thus, no matter what happened, the South would come out on top. But the Republicans, the Advertiser commented, would be victorious because the Democracy had been reduced to "a miserable sectional faction with but the single principle of slavery to stand upon."<sup>33</sup> The Niles Inquirer considered "Little Dug" a "used up man." The convention would almost certainly nominate a slaveholder who could be "no friend of liberty," or else it might decide to nominate a doughface such as Jo Lane or Franklin Pierce.<sup>34</sup> On the contrary, the Battle Creek Journal predicted "DOUGLAS will be the man." Underestimating the degree of conflict tearing the Democrats apart, the Journal thought the various factions would lay aside their differences to keep the party in power. Douglas, it argued, was the best candidate because simultaneously he could sustain the Dred Scott decision while insisting upon squatter sovereignty. He was no danger to the South. Indeed, "in regard to Slavery, we had as soon trust HUNTER or BRECKINRIDGE as DOUGLAS."<sup>35</sup> The Detroit correspondent of the Grand Rapids Eagle, VAN., argued in similar terms, declaring that Democrats made their platforms purposely ambiguous so that they could be interpreted in almost any way. As the Cincinnati platform was

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as demagogic as could possibly be imagined, so would be the Charleston platform. It "will be of the usual revolving kind," which would satisfy the northern Democracy while endorsing the Dred Scott decision and a territorial slave code. And "Douglas can do bigger things than Buchanan in the way of dodging."<sup>36</sup> In summary, as the Charleston convention opened, Republicans divided as to the possibilities of Douglas' nomination; but they agreed that it mattered little whether he got it for regardless of the outcome the South would either have its way or break up the convention. In any case, Republicans were confident that the happenings at Charleston could only redound to their benefit.

The disruption of the Charleston convention gave Republicans the opportunity to turn back upon their accusers the charge that they preached an irrepressible conflict. They noted how frequently Democrats had stated that there need not be any conflict between free and slave labor and, indeed, that the slavery question was settled. The Grand Rapids Eagle agreed: "it has settled in the Democratic camp."<sup>37</sup> Republicans concurred that the Democratic split was over slavery, for if there were no such issue, the Charleston convention would have been over in two days. That it lasted over a week was the "most overwhelming proof of the existence of an 'IRREPRESSIBLE CONFLICT' between freedom and slavery," declared the Detroit Daily Advertiser.<sup>38</sup> One editor wondered how the northern

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Democracy could claim competence to end the irrepressible conflict in the nation when it could not stop it in its own party.<sup>39</sup> For the Detroit Daily Tribune it was obvious that the "slavery question cannot be compromised into tranquillity, put down by resolutions, covered up by Union-saving palaver, or got rid of by any mere resort of expediency."<sup>40</sup> The Northerners were as much to blame as the Southerners for the demise of the Democracy, declared another editor. For years they had "cringed" to the Slave Power, making concession after concession to the "insatiate monster." Their belated resistance to their southern masters was not out of any principle, such as love of freedom, but because the northern people demanded it.<sup>41</sup> The northern Democrats, proclaimed the Allegan Journal, had "sowed the wind and is now reaping the whirlwind." After years of creating sectional discord and traducing the northern people, they found themselves in the position of either agreeing to a slave code or facing certain defeat. Their maligning the North to the South finally culminated in their doom.<sup>42</sup> Douglas, in particular, the man who tore down "the ancient landmark of freedom," the Missouri Compromise, "has got his reward," gloated the Flint Wolverine Citizen. After years of groveling to the Southerners, Douglas was still not trusted by them. Even with his "unscrupulous perfidy," the "irrepressible conflict' goes on."<sup>43</sup>

Republicans extensively commented on the platform



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squabble that precipitated the southern withdrawal. Again, and for obvious political reasons, they concentrated their fire on the Douglas Democrats. The Grand Rapids Eagle could not understand what the dispute was about. It saw no substantial difference between the major platforms that the Democrats considered. All that the northern delegates wanted was a platform with a double meaning, similar to the 1856 Cincinnati platform, enabling the North to interpret it as providing for popular sovereignty, and the South to insist that it authorized a slave code. This stand, necessary to the party's chances in the North, was pure expediency. After all, Douglas was responsible for the "proslavery ascendancy in the conduct of the Government," because he had helped make Buchanan president. In any case, Douglas had hoped for a secession of the South from the party because it would have increased his popularity and made it appear that there was a real difference between the two platforms.<sup>44</sup> Another paper asked that if the Douglasites had fundamental differences with the seceders, why did they not ask them to leave the party long ago? This "affected horror of disunionism" was the "sheerest hypocrisy."<sup>45</sup> Other Republican newspapers also attempted to prove that no fundamental difference existed between the Douglasites and the bolters. One contended that the Douglas platform, which reasserted the Cincinnati platform, really meant that slavery was not only carried into "all the Territories,

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but, also, by the same course of reasoning into all the States."<sup>46</sup> Republicans jumped upon the Douglasite offer to the South for an appeal to the Supreme Court as a method of settling the territorial question as proof that the Northerners were pro-slavery. The southern platform was more manly, Republicans contended, because it came right out and stated what it wanted. The Douglasites, on the other hand, would allow slavery to be protected in the territories by the more devious method of judicial rather than Congressional protection. The Supreme Court, the great bulwark of slavery, would most likely order protection of the institution throughout the entire Union, not just the territories. Thus, the Douglasite proposal would relieve the Democracy of the odium of enacting a slave code. Republicans also noted that the Douglasite platform completely abandoned the "'unfriendly legislation' hobby of their leader." Southerners refused to accept the concession only because it might have aided Douglas' nomination which would have hurt them in some of their strongholds. No matter what happened, Republicans warned, it was unlikely that the "people's House of Representatives will be willing to give up some of their prerogatives to the Supreme Court," or allow slavery to be "declared above the reach of the people."<sup>47</sup>

Republican papers, such as the Eaton County Republican, predicted the possibility of a new disruption at Baltimore with two separate parties resulting from



it.<sup>48</sup> This would naturally benefit the Republicans, making it impossible for Douglas to carry a single northern state, declared the Detroit Daily Tribune. After the party actually disintegrated, it stated that "ABRAHAM LINCOLN will carry every Northern State, and be inaugurated on the 4th of March, 1861."<sup>49</sup> Another paper predicted that the party would not carry the doubtful states of Illinois, Indiana, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey.<sup>50</sup> The Douglas faction was "comparatively nothing," declared the Ann Arbor Local News. Although it had seemed before the convention that Douglas would carry most of the southern states, it now appeared that the South was uniting behind Breckinridge, precluding Douglas from much of a chance of carrying any state.<sup>51</sup> The Douglas effort was reduced to "one grand game of bluff and brag." If he had been nominated by a united convention, he would have been a formidable opponent thought many Republican papers. Now they considered him the "weakest of all nominations," Breckinridge being Lincoln's most dangerous threat. The Kentuckian would most likely carry every southern state, except for one or two that might go to Bell. Southerners hoped that Douglas or Bell would carry a few northern states, throwing the election into the House of Representatives. Lincoln, Republicans emphasized, was the only man that could be elected by the people.<sup>52</sup> Yet they were not exceedingly concerned about the outcome as they realized that the chances of their man losing were slim.



Instead, most Republican papers, like the Jonesville Independent, chuckled over the impending "early and miserable death" of the Democratic party "which has ridden rough-shod and unrelentingly over law, reason and decency....."<sup>53</sup>

While witnessing the chaos in the Democratic party, Michigan Republicans pondered the future of their own party. In contrast to the Democracy where Douglas towered above all, the Republicans had no single commanding candidate. They possessed many prominent figures who eagerly sought the nomination. The best-known candidate was Seward. In the early 1850's he earned his national reputation as an anti-slavery Whig. After the formation of the Republican party he became known as the party's leading anti-slavery radical. But by early 1860 he had become more conservative to win over moderate Republicans in such states as Pennsylvania.<sup>54</sup> Another radical, Samuel P. Chase of Ohio, began his career as a Democrat. In 1854, after the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act, he organized the Free Democracy. In 1855 he joined the Republicans. His campaign to gain the nomination never got very far, however, because most of the radicals were committed to Seward, while moderates despised his radicalism and his free trade origins.<sup>55</sup> The most conservative candidate in the field was Edward Bates of Missouri, a long-time Whig who had gained his reputation as an opponent of radical anti-slavery agitation. In 1856 he associated



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with the Americans. His drawbacks in 1860 were his alienation of old-line Whigs who did not like his flirtations with the Republicans, the Germans who opposed his connections with nativism and his slavery stand, and the radicals who did not consider him a Republican at all. Yet many observers still considered him Seward's chief rival.<sup>56</sup> A candidate from the East was the political boss of Pennsylvania, Senator Simon Cameron. Although originally a Democrat, and then associated with the Know-Nothings, he aided the Republicans in 1856. He eventually became a leader of an opposition party to the Democrats, known as the People's party, composed of some Democrats, Americans, and Republicans. Mildly anti-slavery, the party stressed the need for a protective tariff. Cameron's unsavory past and conservative stand on slavery won him little support outside of Pennsylvania.<sup>57</sup> Finally, among the major candidates was Abraham Lincoln of Illinois, who had won a reputation by just narrowly losing the 1858 Senatorial contest to Stephen Douglas. A Westerner who was sound on the tariff, not associated with nativism, anti-slavery in inclination, but not known as a radical, Lincoln was to many Republicans the most available candidate.<sup>58</sup> Certainly, then, as the Chicago convention convened, the attending delegates had a wide selection of candidates and principles to choose from. In contrast to today where it is often known well in advance who the party will nominate, the Republicans in 1860 were not at all certain



as to who would be their candidate.

The Chicago convention has been an object of controversy among historians. Some have stressed that the party, as reflected in its platform, was more conservative in 1860 than in 1856.<sup>59</sup> Kenneth Stampp argued that the Republicans abandoned their frontal assault against slavery extension by not stating explicitly that Congress should exclude slavery from the territories. Rather, they pledged to defend freedom from the doctrines laid down in the Dred Scott decision; i.e., that the Constitution opened all territories to slavery. That the clause from the Declaration of Independence, included in the 1856 platform, which declared that all men are created equal was almost excluded in 1860, exemplified the growing conservatism. Finally, the inclusion of economic planks, such as a call for an adjustment of the tariff, a homestead policy, and internal improvements further indicated that the Republicans had expanded their appeal beyond simple anti-slavery extension.<sup>60</sup> Don E. Fehrenbacher, however, countered this prevailing view by claiming that these historians have exaggerated the conservatism of the Republican platform. He contended that the Republicans maintained their basic anti-slavery commitment, but in more pliable terms. Indeed, "the platform of 1860 appears to have been more comprehensive and scarcely less forceful than that of 1856 in its treatment of slavery and related issues."<sup>61</sup> Fehrenbacher was basically correct in his

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assessment of the platform. The party did feel the need to expand its base of support, and Seward was rejected because of his supposed radicalism. Yet the core of the Republican party was still anti-slavery. They added planks to the platform that were not incompatible with anti-slavery sentiment, but were rather quite complementary to it. Hence, such measures as a tariff, a homestead bill, and internal improvements would all have the effect of building up the North at the expense of the South. The growth of the North would further subordinate the South to a minority, thus aiding in bringing about the ultimate extinction of slavery. For these reasons the South vigorously opposed such economic proposals. In any case, in Michigan at least, the economic planks were clearly slighted in favor of expounding on the evils of slavery and the necessity of halting its extension.

The presidential balloting began on the third day of the convention, May 18. Seward was the favorite, but by no means assured of victory. Nevertheless, everyone knew that the guidance of Thurlow Weed and William M. Evarts made him the most formidable candidate. After the first ballot, Seward polled 173½ votes, 233 being necessary for nomination. Surprisingly, Abraham Lincoln was a strong second with 102 votes. His managers, Judges David Davis, Charles H. Ray, Joseph Medill, and Norman B. Judd were doing their work well. On the second ballot, they captured 48 of Pennsylvania's 54 votes, most of them taken



away from Cameron. Seward still led 184½ to 181. On the third ballot Lincoln shot ahead--231½ to 180, needing only 1½ more votes for victory. Medill persuaded the Ohio delegation to switch 4 votes from Chase to Lincoln. Lincoln, the most available man, was nominated.<sup>62</sup> The Michigan delegation, along with New York, was crestfallen at their hero's defeat. Only these two states, along with Wisconsin, California, Minnesota, Texas (whose delegation was recruited from Michigan), Kansas and the District of Columbia stayed loyal to Seward throughout the three ballots.<sup>63</sup> As its last business, the convention nominated Hannibal Hamlin of Maine for Vice-President.

Prior to the Chicago convention most Michigan Republicans were obsessed with securing Seward's nomination. The New York Senator, one editor observed, was clearly the strongest candidate, most feared by the opposition.<sup>64</sup> The Lansing State Republican lauded him as the most qualified to defend "constitutional liberty" with the "intuitive perception of his far-seeing statesmanship...."<sup>65</sup> As the convention approached, the Detroit Daily Tribune praised him for his strong anti-slavery background and stressed his conservative qualities. It argued that he had condemned John Brown, defended the legal and constitutional rights of the South, and, unlike the Democrats, had no desire to break-up the Union.<sup>66</sup> Thus, most Michigan Republicans felt that Seward best represented the "principles and spirit of the party...."<sup>67</sup>



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Besides their belief in his principles, Michigan Republicans supported him because they liked his endorsement of internal improvements, one quarter of the state population had been born in New York, and the leader of the Michigan Republicans, Austin Blair, was a former Whig and friend of the New York Senator.<sup>68</sup>

Michigan Republican editors considered Edward Bates as Seward's chief competitor. They gave virtually no attention to other potential nominees. To many editors Bates was not a "representative" Republican. The Detroit Daily Advertiser charged that he had never really identified with the party and his nomination could only lose it electoral votes and gain it none.<sup>69</sup> One editor condemned his connections with the Americans as antithetical to Republican principles. Moreover, "no man in Missouri was less a politician, or took less interest in the great moral, social and Constitutional questions which shook the country."<sup>70</sup> Most Michigan editors rejected as an unproven assertion the contention of certain Republican politicians that a representative man could not win. But even if this were true, most Michigan Republicans concurred that the nomination of Bates would mean the end of the Republican party as then constituted because it would certainly force the defection of the anti-slavery men, the "vital force" of the party. If driven away, they would leave "a dead party and a discouraged and disconsolate people." In other words, compromising basic principle for victory



would be a hollow triumph at best. One editor wondered "whether in grasping at a shadow, we shall not abandon the substance."<sup>71</sup>

Of the Republican papers surveyed, only the St. Joseph Traveler supported Bates. It tried to show that Bates was strongly anti-slavery, declaring that "he takes hold of the infamous institution as did Wilberforce of old, and declares it to be at war socially, politically, and religiously, with the best interests of our common country." In addition, he would undoubtedly nationalize the Republican party. It warned the Michigan Republicans that concessions of principle would be made at Chicago, and they should face up to it. Bates, a friend of internal improvements, it added, had a much wider range of support than Seward who would not be nominated because he could not win.<sup>72</sup> The Traveler had little success in winning over other Michigan papers. Bates was simply too conservative for them on the slavery issue. Their declaration that they would support a "representative" man did not just mean Seward, but it certainly excluded Bates. Indeed, the Detroit Daily Advertiser stated that it would not be bound to support Bates should he be nominated.<sup>73</sup>

On the eve of the Chicago convention, the Detroit Daily Tribune believed that differences between the radical and conservatives could be reconciled. It welcomed the support of conservatives but stated they could not lead the party for their way "is not the way of the

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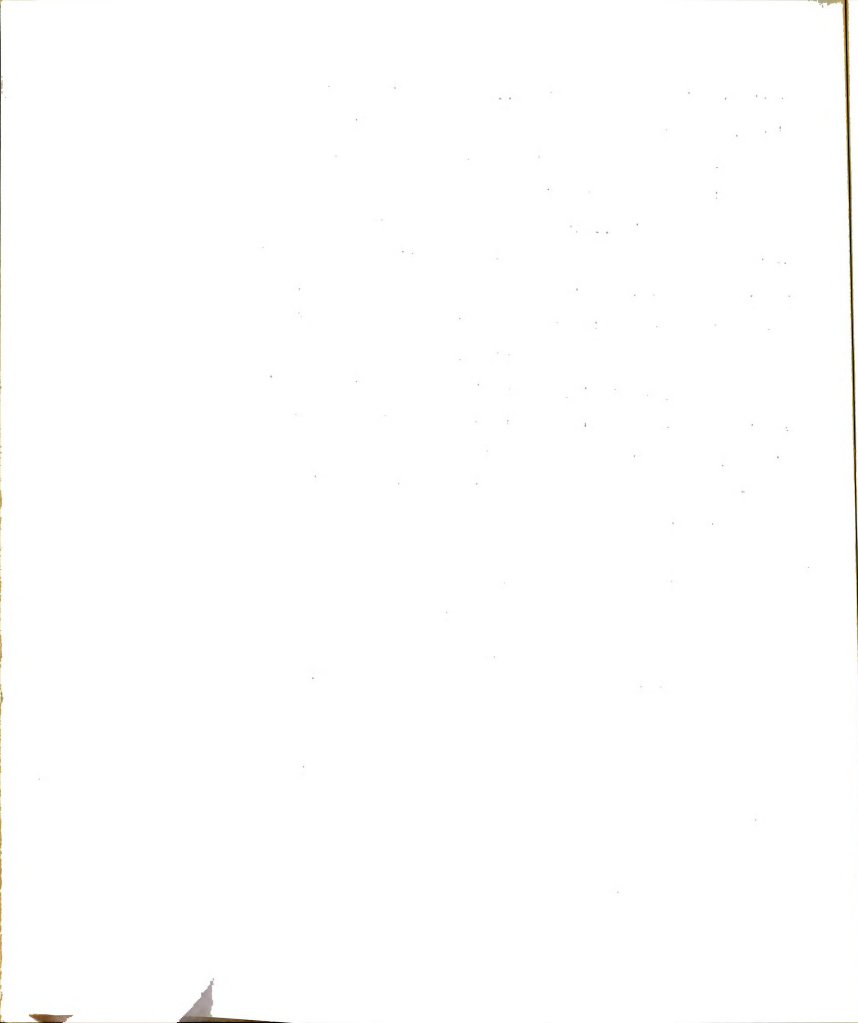
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great majority of the party...." The radicals, it continued, had found the party and could not be ignored. In any case, a common bond existed between the factions, "opposition to the extension of slavery into the territories of the Union...."<sup>74</sup> This defense of the radicals, coming from a relatively moderate Republican paper, indicates how the slavery issue towered over all others. In a sense, Lincoln's nomination symbolized the reconciliation between radicals and conservatives.

Although Michigan Republicans were extremely disappointed over Seward's defeat, they manfully accepted Lincoln. Some bitterness was directed at Horace Greeley who played a key role in sabotaging Seward, but Lincoln was not implicated. One editor declared that Lincoln, while the first choice of conservatives, was a representative man whom Michigan Republicans "can cheerfully and heartily support." Hence, "he combines the full strength of the party in his support...."<sup>75</sup> Other papers attempted to show the similarity between Lincoln and Seward. The Grand Traverse Herald eulogized Seward as "the greatest and purest man of the age in which we live," but agreed that the party standard was not lowered by Lincoln's nomination.<sup>76</sup> Another pro-Seward editor wrote that in "the success of Mr. LINCOLN we have lost nothing that is of vital consequence."<sup>77</sup> Lincoln, the Marshal Statesman conceded, was more "available" than the New Yorker, but on the slavery issue he "is but the embodiment of



Sewardism."<sup>78</sup> In brief, Michigan Republicans had no difficulty in reconciling themselves to the Lincoln candidacy.

During the election year of 1860, Republicans attempted to define what the party stood for and why people should vote for it. Perhaps the Grand Rapids Eagle described the party position best when it wrote "that a belief in the inhumanity and wickedness of human slavery, and that its tendencies were alike degrading and destructive of free labor and free institutions everywhere it obtained a foothold, and hence a desire to prevent its extension beyond the limits it already occupies, was the groundwork of the Republican movement."<sup>79</sup> While Republicans continually reiterated their opposition to the spread of slavery, they denied any desire to subvert or interfere with southern institutions, conceding, as one paper put it, "the right of the Slave States to hug the viper to their bosoms until they shall get ready voluntarily to cast it off."<sup>80</sup> Although it is probably true that the Republicans had no immediate designs on interfering with slavery where it existed, their utter hostility to the southern way of life made them a real danger to the South, justifying that section's fear of them. As one paper stated, Republicans desired to end control of the Government by and for slaveholders.<sup>81</sup> Certainly the Republicans were justified in seeking this



end, but the slaveholders knew that if the South did not have a veto power over governmental decisions, it would just be a matter of time before slavery would be squeezed to death. The advocacy by Republicans of such measures as a homestead act, river and harbor improvements, cheap postage, and a tariff threatened the South by building up free states at the expense of slave states. The Republican belief in a conflict between "Southern capital and Northern labor" could only further add to southern apprehension of a Republican victory. The real dilemma confronting the South was that security could not be achieved by defeating the Republicans or seceding from the Union. The South faced a hopeless conflict with "the Modern World of Nationalism, the Industrial Revolution, and Freedom."<sup>82</sup>

Trapped in their ambivalent position of condemning slavery as a great evil while promising not to touch it where it already existed, Republican editors castigated the abolitionists of the Garrison-Phillips school as disunionists of the same ilk as the southern extremists. One paper charged that "Garrison and Robert Toombs strike hands together over an oath for the destruction of the Government."<sup>83</sup> Republicans resented these abolitionists attacking their party and candidate Lincoln. Worse, exclaimed the Detroit Daily Advertiser, "the Republican party are held responsible for the principles and views of these men!"<sup>84</sup> Wendell Phillips, one paper commented, "denounces the constitution, advocates its destruction,

and then claims its protection," the same Constitution that protected his "violent agitations" for twenty years.<sup>85</sup> Republicans primarily opposed the non-political (Garrisonian) abolitionists because the latter wanted to accomplish their ends outside the body politic; that is, to achieve abolition, they were willing to destroy the Union and the Constitution. Republicans could never agree to this. Indeed, their loyalty to the Union and the Constitution restrained them from launching a frontal assault on slavery. Such a method, they contended, was unconstitutional and would most likely dissolve the Union. Hence, they chose to get at slavery by the slow and protracted process of choking it to death by denying it room to expand.

Michigan Republicans, like the Democrats, gave limited attention to the Constitutional Union party. The Detroit Daily Tribune portrayed Bell as a respectable southern conservative "of pure character," who had earned the respect of Republicans by his vote against the Kansas-Nebraska Act. But as a representative of the southern Whigs, he stood for a movement that was living in the past. For Washington Hunt, president of the nominating convention, continued the editorial, to declare the slavery question an "abstraction," was ridiculous for "a man might *as* well stand in a rain storm and declare that it is dry *weather*, as to pronounce a question which shakes a nation *from* center to circumference 'an abstraction.'"<sup>86</sup> Thus,

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The third side of the mountain is the south side.

The fourth side of the mountain is the north side.

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The thirtieth side of the mountain is the north-east side.

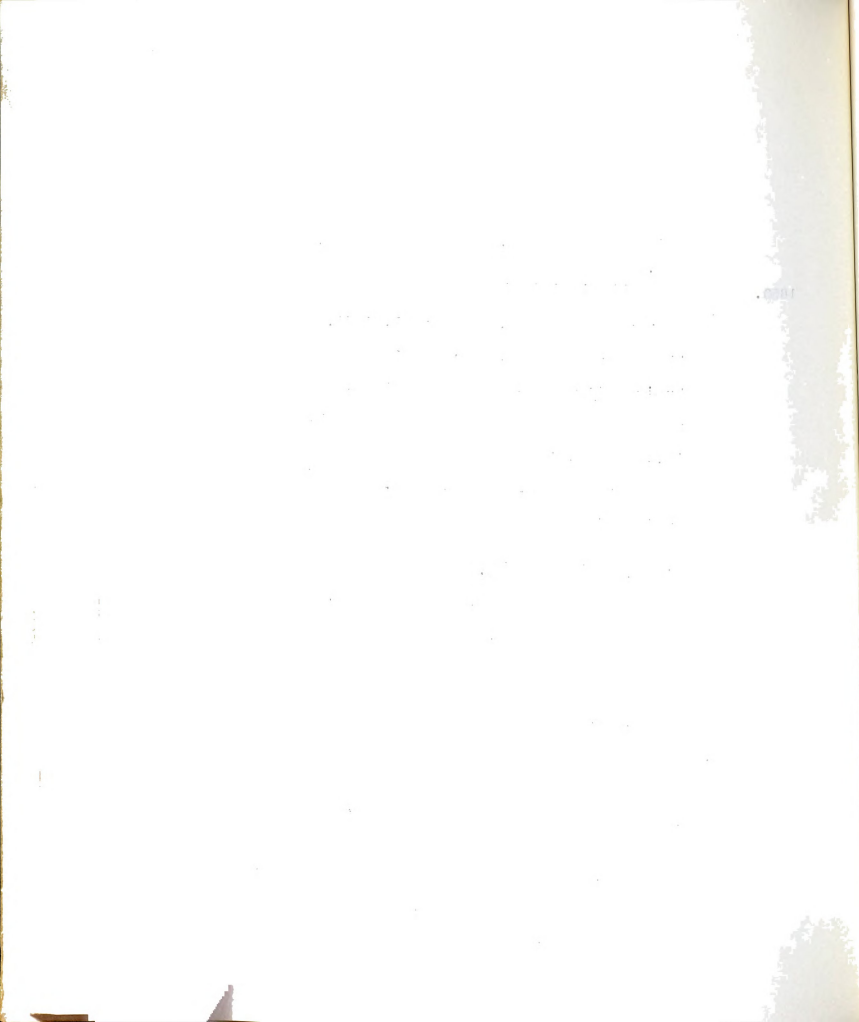
these "skeletons and fossil remains of the old organizations," did not frighten most Michigan Republicans, but at least one editor feared that their overall effect would be to help Douglas.<sup>87</sup>

In summary, in the election of 1860 Michigan Republicans attempted to show that the Douglas Democrats were traitors to their own section, subservient to the whims of a slave aristocracy, and sympathetic to the "peculiar institution." They only broke with their masters as a last gasp measure to achieve political success. Douglas was portrayed as a demagogue, continually changing his position for political expediency. On the other hand, Republicans claimed for themselves "national" stature by proposing measures that would foster the growth of the entire nation, ultimately benefiting "free labor." They considered Seward the leading statesman of the period but accepted Lincoln as "representative." To insure national growth, slavery had to be restricted because it threatened free labor. Above all, it could not be allowed to expand into the territories. Implicit in the Republican position was the desire to rid the nation entirely of slavery, but constitutional scruples prevented an open advocacy of this idea. The Republicans could never quite reconcile their commitment to freedom with loyalty to a constitution that seemingly blocked its fulfillment.

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### CHAPTER III NOTES

- <sup>1</sup>Battle Creek Journal, December 16, 1859.
- <sup>2</sup>Detroit Daily Tribune, January 11, February 2,  
1860.
- <sup>3</sup>Ann Arbor Local News, February 7, 1860.
- <sup>4</sup>Battle Creek Journal, February 10, 1860.
- <sup>5</sup>Detroit Daily Tribune, March 5, 1860.
- <sup>6</sup>Grand Traverse Herald, November 25, 1860.
- <sup>7</sup>Ibid., July 6, 1860.
- <sup>8</sup>Ingham County News, July 7, 1860.
- <sup>9</sup>Detroit Daily Advertiser, December 21, 1859.
- <sup>10</sup>Detroit Daily Tribune, July 11, 1860; Eaton  
County Republican, July 13, 1860.
- <sup>11</sup>Eaton County Republican, March 2, 1860.
- <sup>12</sup>Detroit Daily Tribune, January 17, 1860.
- <sup>13</sup>Detroit Daily Tribune, January 10, 1860; Eaton  
County Republican, January 27, 1860.
- <sup>14</sup>James D. Richardson, A Compilation of the  
Messages and Papers of the Presidents, Vol. V (Washington,  
1901), pp. 552-576.
- <sup>15</sup>Detroit Daily Advertiser, December 26, 1859.
- <sup>16</sup>St. Joseph Traveler, January 4, 1860.
- <sup>17</sup>Detroit Daily Advertiser, December 29, 1859.
- <sup>18</sup>Detroit Daily Tribune, January 26, May 3, 1860.
- <sup>19</sup>Allegan Journal, July 2, 1860.
- <sup>20</sup>Detroit Daily Tribune, January 31, 1860.



- <sup>21</sup>Grand Rapids Eagle, March 14, 1860.
- <sup>22</sup>Detroit Daily Advertiser, July 14, 1860.
- <sup>23</sup>Grand Traverse Herald, July 20, August 10, 1860.
- <sup>24</sup>Detroit Daily Advertiser, December 14, 1859.
- <sup>25</sup>Detroit Daily Tribune, January 26, 1860; St. Joseph Traveler, February 8, 1860.
- <sup>26</sup>Detroit Daily Advertiser, March 23, July 16, August 30, 1860.
- <sup>27</sup>Constantine Mercury and Advertiser, November 29, 1860.
- <sup>28</sup>Hillsdale Standard, February 5, 1861.
- <sup>29</sup>Detroit Daily Tribune, January 25, 1860.
- <sup>30</sup>Lansing State Republican, February 21, 1860.
- <sup>31</sup>Detroit Daily Tribune, April 5, 1860.
- <sup>32</sup>Ibid., April 12, 26, 1860.
- <sup>33</sup>Detroit Daily Advertiser, April 24, 1860.
- <sup>34</sup>Niles Inquirer, April 18, 1860.
- <sup>35</sup>Battle Creek Journal, April 20, 1860.
- <sup>36</sup>Grand Rapids Eagle, April 28, 1860.
- <sup>37</sup>Ibid., May 1, 1860.
- <sup>38</sup>Detroit Daily Advertiser, May 1, 1860.
- <sup>39</sup>Allegan Journal, May 7, 1860.
- <sup>40</sup>Detroit Daily Tribune, May 1, 1860.
- <sup>41</sup>Detroit Daily Advertiser, May 2, 1860.
- <sup>42</sup>Allegan Journal, May 7, 1860.
- <sup>43</sup>Flint Wolverine Citizen, May 5, 1860.
- <sup>44</sup>Grand Rapids Eagle, May 1, 2, 1860.
- <sup>45</sup>Detroit Daily Tribune, May 5, 1860.





- 46 Marshall Statesman, May 9, 1860.
- 47 Detroit Daily Advertiser, May 1, 1860; Detroit Daily Tribune, May 3, 1860; Grand Rapids Eagle, May 12, 1860.
- 48 Eaton County Republican, May 18, 1860.
- 49 Detroit Daily Tribune, June 23, 1860.
- 50 Ingham County News, July 12, 1860.
- 51 Ann Arbor Local News, July 3, 1860.
- 52 Adrian Daily Expositor, June 25, 1860; Detroit Daily Tribune, June 25, 1860.
- 53 Jonesville Independent, June 28, 1860.
- 54 Richard H. Luthin, The First Lincoln Campaign (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1944), pp. 23-35.
- 55 Ibid., pp. 36-50.
- 56 Ibid., pp. 51-68.
- 57 Ibid., pp. 92-105.
- 58 Ibid., pp. 69-91.
- 59 For example see Emerson D. Fite, The Presidential Campaign of 1860 (New York: Macmillan Company, 1911), p. 124 and Luthin, First Lincoln Campaign, p. 149.
- 60 Kenneth M. Stampp, "The Republican National Convention of 1860," in J. Jeffery Auer, ed., Antislavery and Disunion, 1858-1861 (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), pp. 202-206.
- 61 Don E. Fehrenbacher, "The Republican Triumph," in Norman A. Graebner, ed., Politics and the Crisis of 1860 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1861) pp. 51-52; Don E. Fehrenbacher, Prelude to Greatness: Lincoln in the 1850's (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1962), pp. 156-157.
- 62 Luthin, First Lincoln Campaign, pp. 162-167; Jay Monaghan, The Man Who Elected Lincoln (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1956), pp. 164-173; William B. Hesseltine, Three Against Lincoln (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1960), pp. 167-170.
- 63 Hesseltine, Three Against Lincoln, pp. 167-170.

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- <sup>64</sup> Detroit Daily Advertiser, December 14, 1859.
- <sup>65</sup> Lansing State Republican, February 14, 1860.
- <sup>66</sup> Detroit Daily Tribune, March 3, 1860.
- <sup>67</sup> Adrian Daily Expositor, May 9, 1860.
- <sup>68</sup> Luthin, First Lincoln Campaign, p. 44.
- <sup>69</sup> Detroit Daily Advertiser, November 17, 1859.
- <sup>70</sup> Niles Inquirer, February 1, 1860.
- <sup>71</sup> Detroit Daily Tribune, February 16, 1860; Detroit Daily Advertiser, February 24, 1860; Battle Creek Journal, March 30, 1860.
- <sup>72</sup> St. Joseph Traveler, November 16, 1859, February 22, 1860.
- <sup>73</sup> Detroit Daily Advertiser, February 24, 1860.
- <sup>74</sup> Detroit Daily Tribune, May 12, 15, 1860.
- <sup>75</sup> Eaton County Republican, May 18, 1860; Detroit Daily Tribune, May 19, 1860.
- <sup>76</sup> Grand Traverse Herald, May 25, 1860.
- <sup>77</sup> Battle Creek Journal, May 25, 1860.
- <sup>78</sup> Marshall Statesman, May 30, 1860.
- <sup>79</sup> Grand Rapids Eagle, October 22, 1859.
- <sup>80</sup> Detroit Daily Advertiser, January 6, 1860. As will be shown in Chapter IV, there was a hollow ring in these Republican disclaimers.
- <sup>81</sup> Detroit Daily Advertiser, June 1, 1860.
- <sup>82</sup> Avery Craven, "The Fatal Predicament," in Graebner, Politics and the Crisis of 1860, p. 134.
- <sup>83</sup> Ingham County News, March 13, 1861.
- <sup>84</sup> Detroit Daily Advertiser, November 12, 1860.
- <sup>85</sup> Detroit Daily Tribune, December 7, 1860.

<sup>86</sup>Ibid., May 11, 1860.

<sup>87</sup>Grand Rapids Eagle, May 14, 1860; Detroit Daily Advertiser, February 16, 1860.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE CAMPAIGN ISSUES OF 1860

The status of slavery in the territories was by far the most vexing problem facing politicians in 1860. This issue had dominated public attention since the Mexican War when in August, 1846 Congressman David Wilmot of Pennsylvania moved that in any territory acquired from Mexico "neither slavery nor involuntary servitude shall ever exist in any part of said territory, except for crime, wherefore the party shall be duly convicted."<sup>1</sup> The various crises that racked the nation for fourteen years, including the Compromise of 1850, the Kansas-Nebraska Act, the Lecompton Constitution, the Dred Scott decision, the disruption of the Democratic party, and the secession of the South, all had at their roots the problem of determining whether the territories would be slave or free and who would make such a decision. Many people at the time and many historians later argued that the issue was a mere abstraction because natural barriers made it impossible for slavery to expand and survive much beyond its present bounds.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, many contemporaries viewed the territorial issue as a matter of principle that could not be compromised, regardless of the realities of the

situation. Others were not convinced that slavery was unadaptable to new conditions and that the United States would not continue to acquire more land. If expansion continued, they argued, it would probably be southward, adding more territory suited for slavery.<sup>3</sup> To many concerned people the question of slavery in the territories was a matter of principle; they believed that there the life or death of slavery in the United States would be ultimately determined. This especially was the view of the Republicans and the southern Democrats.

Throughout the long period of controversy and agitation over slavery in the territories, various "solutions" of the problem were offered. In an age of extreme legalism, advocates of each viewpoint claimed that its position was constitutionally sanctioned. By the end of 1860 these views had not merged into a nationally accepted consensus, indicating that beneath the constitutional bickerings all the parties believed that any formula that was adopted would settle the fate of slavery in America. Hence, those forces that were extremely pro- or anti-slavery could not compromise. But northern Democrats and the Constitutional Unionists were willing to compromise because they had basically an amoral attitude toward slavery. Still they were not able to carry the majority of the nation with them. The positions of the Constitutional Unionists and the Republicans grew out of the oldest interpretation of the power of Congress to

determine the nature of the institutions in the territories. Soon after the Constitution was ratified it became generally accepted that Article IV gave Congress the power to "make all needful rules and regulations, respecting the territory, or other property belonging to the United States," and that Congress had virtually complete legislative powers over the territories. On this basis the Federal government adopted the Missouri Compromise which prohibited slavery in the territory of the Louisiana purchase north of 36°30' except for the contemplated state of Missouri.<sup>4</sup> While the Constitutional Unionists and the Republicans agreed that Congress could exclude (or even recognize) slavery in the territories, they differed on whether Congress should do so. The former considered the congressional tradition of compromising over slavery in the territories, i.e., allowing it in certain areas, forbidding it in others, as almost a constitutional principle to be upheld. The Republicans, on the other hand, viewed this tradition as a mere political policy which could be altered at the whim of Congress. Hence, they considered the Wilmot Proviso perfectly constitutional.<sup>5</sup> Interestingly, some Republicans in their desire to forbid slavery in the territories adopted another constitutional argument which in some ways contradicted their previous position. They used the clause of the fifth amendment which states that "no person shall be deprived of life, liberty, or property without due process



of law" as sanction for the claim that neither Congress nor a territorial legislature could legalize slavery in the territories. This doctrine, adopted by the Liberty party in 1844 and by the Free Soil party in 1848 and 1852, had little historical validity. Nevertheless, Republicans wrote it into their platforms of 1856 and 1860, although Lincoln argued against slavery expansion from the traditional viewpoint.<sup>6</sup>

The constitutional doctrine asserted by southern Democrats can best be called the "common-property-of the states" doctrine or the theory of state sovereignty. It maintained that the purpose of the Federal government was to serve as the agent of the states.<sup>7</sup> The basis of this formulation, conceived by John C. Calhoun, was that in contrast to the common conception that sovereignty was divided, it was, in reality, undivided, residing in the states. As the trustee of the states, the Federal government was the logical agent to administer the territories. But it could not legally discriminate against any of the states and, hence, had to protect in the territories any and all property, including slaves. And as the creature of Congress, neither could a territorial legislature do anything but protect slavery.<sup>8</sup> Thus, according to the southern doctrine, the Federal government was obligated to promote the interests of slavery in the territories. As one author had put it, "within their borders the slaveholding states were invoking a sovereign's immunity from

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all external control. Beyond their borders, however, they were demanding--as sovereigns--the strictest respect for whatever rights they chose to place beneath the protective mantle of their sovereignty."<sup>9</sup> By 1860, Southerners, to insure the protection of slavery in the territories, demanded acceptance of their interpretation of the Constitution. Such a proposal was introduced in the Senate by Jefferson Davis in February, 1860 and was later adopted as part of the Breckinridge platform.<sup>10</sup> This doctrine, to preserve the power of a regional elite, was unacceptable to northern Democrats.

Northern Democrats attempted to eliminate the territorial issue from national politics. Reflecting an amoral attitude towards slavery, they supported a policy that was ostensibly neither for nor against slavery. It failed to win national support because forces committed either way on the issue wanted not neutrality but a doctrine that would positively strengthen their own positions. The policy of the northern Democrats, commonly referred to as popular sovereignty, was also called squatter sovereignty or territorial sovereignty. Senator Lewis Case of Michigan, who first championed popular sovereignty in 1847, held that Congress had no authority to regulate the internal affairs of the territories except for matters placed directly under Federal authority by the Constitution. In other words, the people of the territories would decide for themselves the status of slavery.<sup>11</sup>

Aside from the challenge that the Constitution did not really sanction such a policy, popular sovereignty ran into many difficulties that blocked its effective implementation in areas where both pro- and anti-slavery forces thought they had a chance for success. This became readily apparent when the Kansas-Nebraska Act, which mandated popular sovereignty,<sup>12</sup> degenerated into "Bloody Kansas." Many people went to Kansas primarily to swing the balance of power to their side in the growing sectional struggle.<sup>13</sup> Popular sovereignty failed in a dual sense: not until the secession of the South were the people of Kansas allowed to exercise their will to ban slavery, and it failed to remove from national politics the issue of slavery in the territories. In fact, the controversy intensified and produced greater sectional antagonism than before. Popular sovereignty theory, critics charged, was decidedly vague in stating when local determination should begin. A majority in Congress could delay the establishment of local government until its sectional interest was served. In addition, if Congress deemed the population in a territory a political community, why bother with a territorial stage? Why not proceed directly to statehood? Opponents also observed that non-intervention was limited at best because the President appointed such officials as the governor.<sup>14</sup> This latter restriction on popular sovereignty was a primary concern of Michigan Republican papers in 1860.

The lack of preciseness in the popular sovereignty doctrine made it possible to manipulate the concept, to interpret it in more than one way, as was done in the campaign of 1856. The Cincinnati platform pledged popular sovereignty, but not until the statehood stage.<sup>15</sup> Buchanan used the concept in a double way. At time he claimed that the people of a territory could decide their domestic institutions during the territorial stage, at other times, only when the territory was on the verge of becoming a state. In the North, Democratic politicians promoted the former position.<sup>16</sup> This ambiguity probably kept the Democratic party united in 1856. But then in 1857, it appeared that the concept of popular sovereignty, vague as it was, received a death blow by the ruling of the Supreme Court in the Dred Scott decision. The Court ruled that the Missouri Compromise was unconstitutional and that Congress could not forbid citizens from taking their slaves into the territories and holding them there.<sup>17</sup> Most advocates of the extreme southern position and many Republicans wishing to discredit the northern Democrats contended that if Congress could not forbid slavery in the territories then the child of Congress, the territorial legislature, could not do it either. Defenders of popular sovereignty responded by noting that the Court had not ruled on the powers of the territorial legislature; therefore, it had to be assumed that the territories still possessed the inherent right of self-government.<sup>18</sup>

This defense of popular sovereignty was vigorously articulated by Stephen A. Douglas, who by the late 1850's had become the leading advocate of the doctrine.<sup>19</sup> He contended, in what came to be known as the Freeport Doctrine, that even if the Court should rule against the right of the territorial legislature to ban slavery, if the legislature did not support the institution by local police regulations, or if it passed unfriendly legislation, slavery would be effectively excluded.<sup>20</sup> But because many people were still unconvinced of the constitutionality of popular sovereignty, Douglas found it necessary, as the presidential election of 1860 approached, to present a detailed exposition of the constitutional sanction of his position. He did this in a famous article published in Harper's Magazine in September, 1859 entitled "The Dividing Line between Federal and Local Authority: Popular Sovereignty and the Territories." He argued that Congress could confer powers to the territorial governments which itself did not possess, in matters relating to domestic affairs as opposed to those dealing with the general welfare of the nation. As an historical analogy, he contended that the American colonists were fighting for the same rights that were being denied the people of the territories, i.e., the right to control their local institutions. Finally, he wrote that outside of interference in regard to fugitive slaves, the Federal government had no power to regulate, introduce, establish, prohibit or

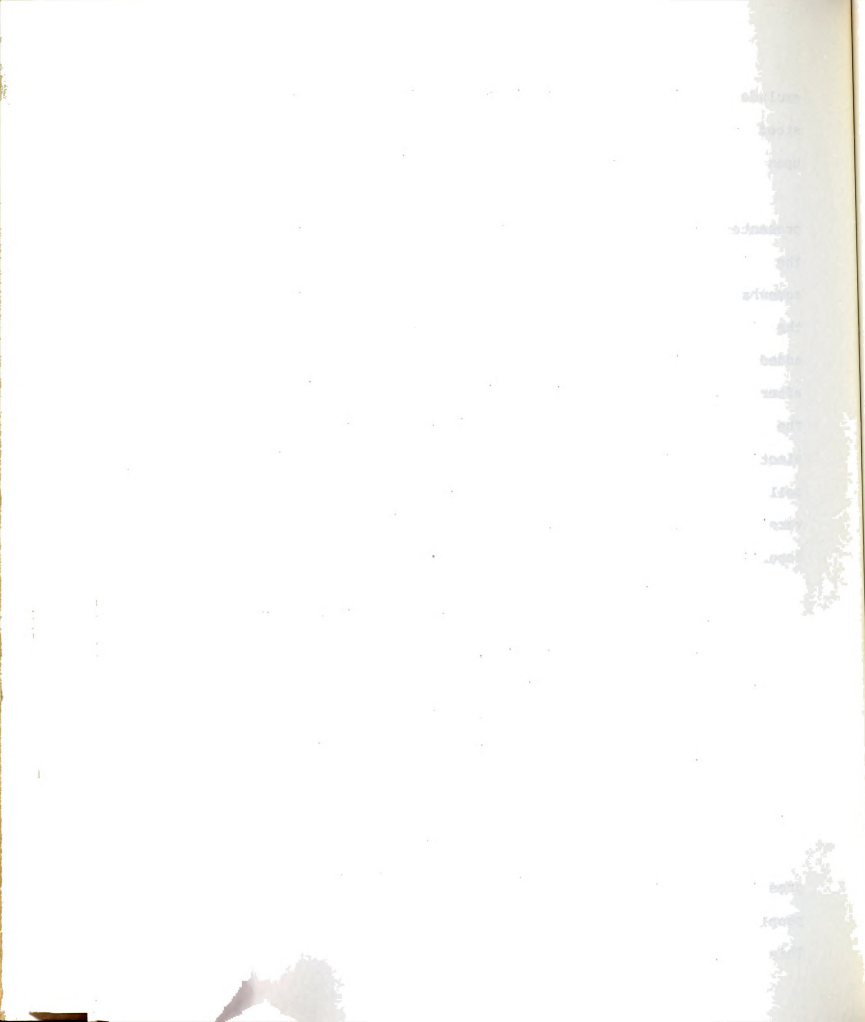


exclude any kind of property in the territories. Slaves stood on an equal plane with all other property, dependent upon local authority and laws for protection.<sup>21</sup>

From this article, it appeared that Douglas had presented his definitive view on popular sovereignty. But the exigencies of politics forced Douglas to back-track somewhat at the Charleston and Baltimore conventions. In the discarded second plank at Charleston, and the one added at Baltimore, the Douglas forces announced that after all, popular sovereignty might be unconstitutional. The Supreme Court would have to decide.<sup>22</sup> Thus, in the election campaign of 1860, northern Democrats were compelled to defend popular sovereignty, or at least some version of it. Simultaneously, it was obvious that the Republicans would attack this doctrine.

The Michigan Democratic press vigorously supported the concept that Congress should not intervene in the internal affairs of the territories. They generally avoided defining exactly when a territory could be considered to have matured to the point to regulate its own affairs. Some papers, especially the Detroit Free Press, de-emphasized that part of the popular sovereignty doctrine which stated explicitly that the people of a territory could ban slavery. Rather it stressed the idea of congressional non-intervention, implying, of course, that the people of a territory would make the decision on slavery. This fact, coupled with the avoidance of the term popular





sovereignty and the stress on final judicial decision, indicates that the Free Press was trying to make the Douglas doctrine more palatable to the South. Other papers, with only a local influence, continually reiterated the right of the people of the territories to reach any decision on slavery they so desired.

As a paper with national prestige, the Free Press tried to extend its appeal beyond its local constituency. Throughout the election year and subsequent secession crisis, it tried to prove to the South that the northern Democracy was not hostile to southern institutions and rights. Simultaneously, the paper could not offend the party faithful in the North who would not tolerate extreme southern demands, such as a slave code. On such issues as popular sovereignty, therefore, the paper was forced into a middle ground that was somewhat vague in its details and probably did not really satisfy anybody. It attempted to prove that the Dred Scott decision was not incompatible with non-intervention (the Free Press never used the term popular sovereignty) by arguing that all the Court did was to recognize "the right of property in slaves in the Territories and places that property upon the same footing as all other property in the Territories." By placing slavery on the same footing as other property, the paper meant that the institution could not have special congressional protection. It, however, was "willing to abide by the decisions of the Federal Supreme Court as to the extent of

the constitutional power of the Territorial legislatures over slave property and all other property." In summary, it wanted the slavery issue expelled from Congress.<sup>23</sup>

The position taken by the Free Press was generally in line with the Democratic platform, finalized at Baltimore, which did not explicitly state that popular sovereignty was unquestionably constitutional, beyond challenge. Rather it argued that the final decision would have to be determined by the Supreme Court; and whatever power the Court should decide the territorial legislatures possessed should not be interfered with by Congress. Thus, the Free Press position was in effect a concession to the South by telling it to wait and see what the Court said before taking any extreme action. The Free Press implied that it was likely that the Court would rule that neither Congress nor the territorial legislature could do anything but provide positive protection for slavery in the territories, the people only being allowed to ban slavery when they should write their constitution on the eve of statehood. Interestingly, neither the Free Press nor any other Democratic paper discussed whether such a Court decision could be, in effect, nullified by Douglas' Freeport Doctrine. While holding out promise to the South, the Free Press could simultaneously state to its northern readership that until the Supreme Court ruled, which it might never do, the people of the territories could exercise their power to determine whether slavery should or

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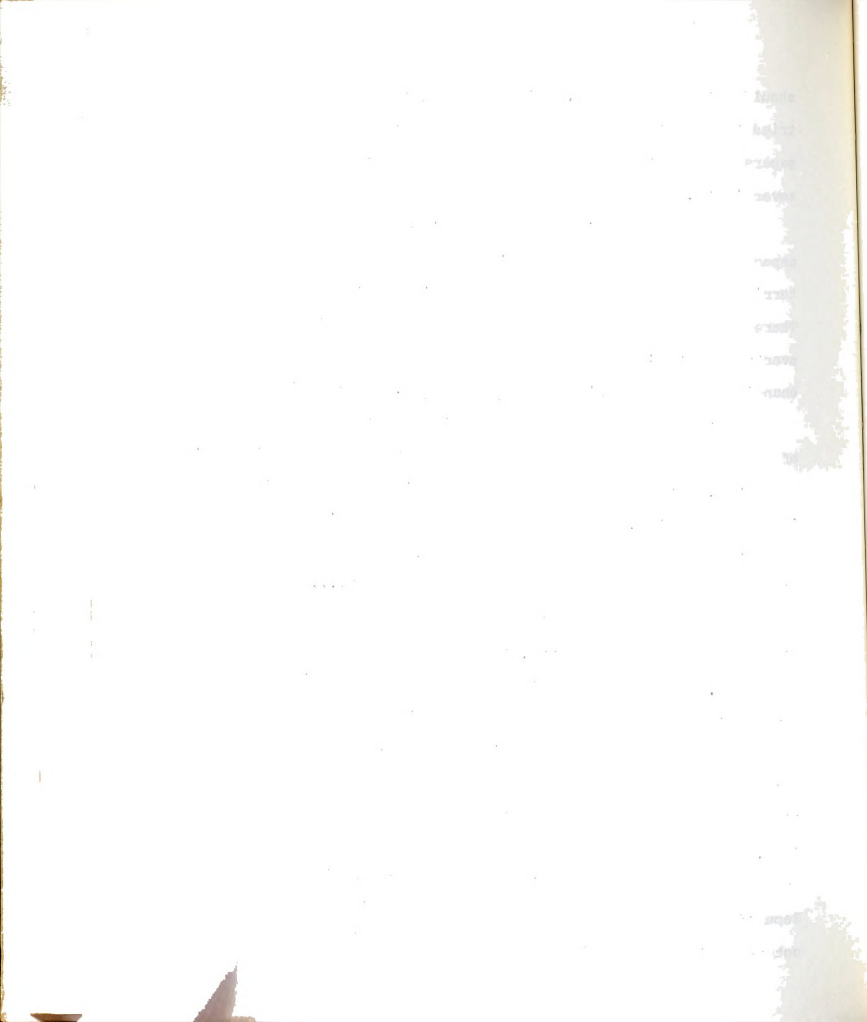
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should not be permitted. Like Douglas, the Free Press tried to ride two horses at once. Most other Democratic papers rode just one horse, out-and-out popular sovereignty.

Most Democratic papers emphasized the democratic aspects of popular sovereignty in that the people of the territories would be allowed to determine their own fate. There was little mention that the Supreme Court might overturn that right. One line of Democratic argument, as enunciated by the Adrian Daily Watchtower, was that it made no sense to say that an American citizen while a resident of a state had the knowledge and the right to decide what he wanted, but when he moved into a territory he suddenly lost that ability. Such a right was one for "which our forefathers struggled in the revolution, a principle of right which underlies all democratic government...."<sup>24</sup> It was only through the doctrine of non-intervention, declared the Kalamazoo Gazette, that such a right could be exercised. And it was inevitable that such a doctrine would triumph because "popular sovereignty is gaining ground in the South as well as in the North." The people were sure to know that there was nothing in the Constitution against the right of people to make their own local laws. The sense of fair play would eventually win out.<sup>25</sup> One Democratic paper, the Michigan Argus, almost took a Republican position by stating that the Constitution did not recognize the existence of slavery except in the slave



states and the District of Columbia and only protects the institution by providing for the rendition of fugitive slaves. Slavery was the creature of local law "and freedom is the law of the Constitution and slavery the exception." The northern Democracy would stand by southern rights but would not allow them to override territorial governments. If slavery were protected during the territorial stage, it would most likely be retained after the territory became a state.<sup>26</sup> Several Democratic papers parried the charge that the Dred Scott decision nullified popular sovereignty. The Court did not rule, they contended, contrary to Republican claims, that the Federal government had to protect slavery in the territories. Nor did the Court rule on the question of popular sovereignty. Hence, there was no contradiction when Democrats stated that they supported the Dred Scott decision and popular sovereignty.<sup>27</sup>

While defending their own position, Democratic papers vigorously attacked the Breckinridge and Republican "solutions" to the territorial issue. The Kalamazoo Gazette contended that the Republican position was similar to George III trying to control the local institutions of the American colonies. The same theory was propagated by Alexander Hamilton who wanted to invest the Federal government with monarchical powers. Throughout American history, the paper asserted, the Democratic party had opposed successfully such threats to the people's

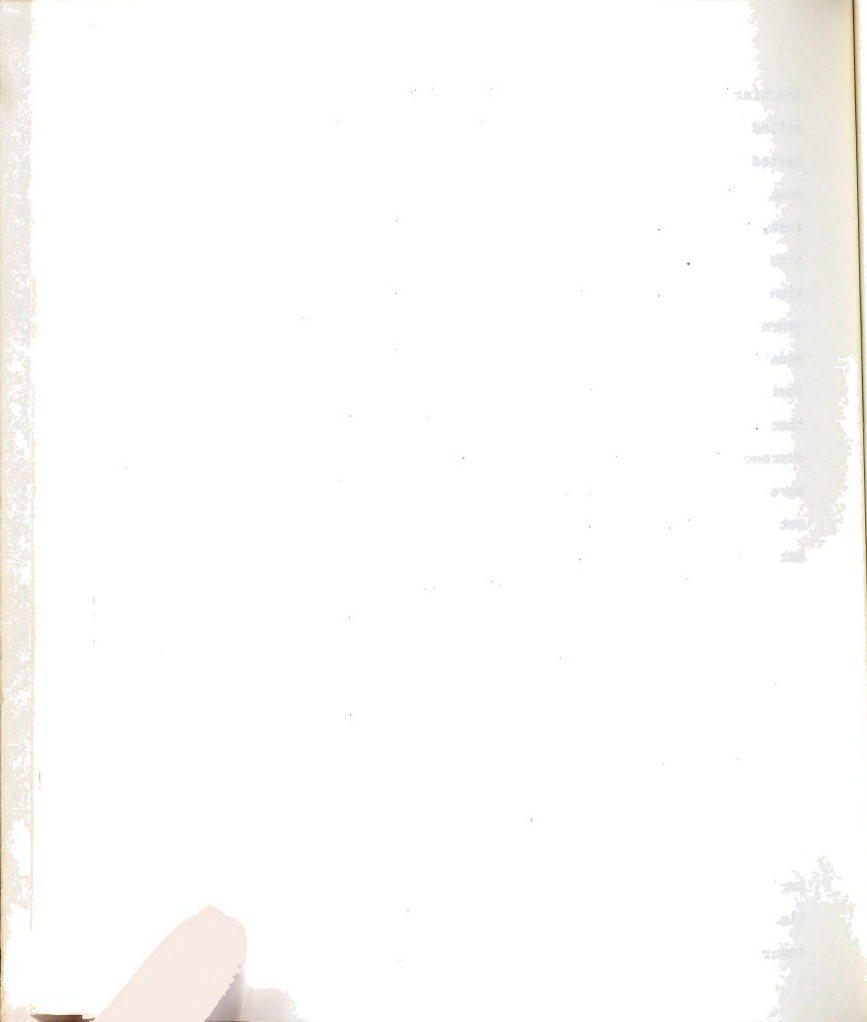
liberties.<sup>28</sup> Although the Republicans at present only claimed "supreme dictation over the people of our territories," it was but a "stepping stone to the exercises of a greater power," declared another journal. Such a threat had to be resisted by the triumph of popular sovereignty.<sup>29</sup> The Grand Rapids Daily Enquirer charged that the Republican doctrine was sectional in appeal and had the effect of alienating the South by attacking slavery as a moral wrong.<sup>30</sup> Several Democratic papers stated that the Republican position of congressional intervention had more potential for the growth of new slave states than did popular sovereignty. They argued that if the Republicans claimed that Congress could forbid slavery in the territories, the southern extremists could claim that Congress could protect it, which in fact, they had done. On the other hand, since the introduction of popular sovereignty in 1850, not one new slave state had joined the Union; but Minnesota, California and Oregon had entered as free states.<sup>31</sup>

In defense of popular sovereignty, the Democratic press found it necessary to devote much space to attacking the southern position. Indeed, they expounded on the evils of congressional protection of slavery as much as they criticized the Republican view. Both the Republicans and Southerners were extremists, charged the Kalamazoo Gazette, willing to use Congress to intervene in the internal affairs of the people of the territories. The



Breckinridge version of congressional intervention which called for protection of slavery in the territories suggested "feelings of aversion and disgust." For a government that protects something, such as religion, literature, the press, or industry, actually restricts or fetters freedom. The same was true of congressional protection of slavery, a clear danger to liberty.<sup>32</sup> Another journal denounced the Breckinridge position that state equality meant that slaveholders had the right to take their slaves into the territories and have them protected there. State equality really meant that each state was supreme within its own jurisdiction. When a citizen removed to another state, the laws of his former state did not follow him. Hence, "if the laws of one state do not extend to another state, by what process of reasoning can they be made to extend to a territory...?" The people of a territory owed no allegiance to another state, only to the laws of the territory. It was absurd to contend that a minority could force their institutions upon the people of a territory against the will of the majority.<sup>33</sup> Finally, the Free Press criticized Breckinridge for his hypocritical change of position from non-intervention in 1856 to intervention in 1860.<sup>34</sup>

The approach of the Republican press to the territorial question was to expose continually the contradictions and failures of popular sovereignty. It devoted remarkably little space to discussing the attributes of



their own doctrine: congressional prohibition of the extension of slavery into the territories. (Apparently Republican editors felt it more politically expedient to devote their energies to revealing how popular sovereignty would mean the extension of slavery.) The Republican attack on the Douglas doctrine basically consisted of showing how the Federal government could thwart the will of the people, how it actually did in specific cases, and after the Baltimore convention, how an appeal to the Supreme Court made it even more of a fraud. Republican papers argued that although Democrats claimed that the Douglas doctrine of non-intervention would take slavery agitation out of Congress by allowing the people in the territories to determine their own institutions, it would do no such thing. One editor pointed out that the experience in Kansas proved that non-intervention would not mute the slavery issue in Congress or the territories. As bloody warfare erupted in that Territory, so it would in any other territory where slavery had the slightest chance for success. Under the pretext of fairness, the non-intervention doctrine invited the North and South to a test of strength in the territories with victory going to the strongest, making "one party insolent or the other desperate."<sup>35</sup> Many Republican papers declared that the Douglas doctrine did not really allow the people of the territories to determine their own destinies. They noted that the executive and judicial officials of the

territories were not elected by the people, but appointed by the President. The territorial governor had the power to veto acts of the legislature, an effective means of preventing that body from abolishing slavery. If Douglas were president, he could easily thwart the will of the territorial population. Even if the territorial legislature should be able to override the governor's veto with a two-thirds vote, the Little Giant "still reserves to himself...by his judges appointed by the President, the power to declare all laws which do not please him unconstitutional." An appeal to the Supreme Court would simply mean another Dred Scott decision.<sup>36</sup> One journal presented the case studies of Kansas and Nebraska to illustrate Federal interference in the territories. It recalled that the Kansas-Nebraska Act mandated the principle of popular sovereignty for those Territories; but it was not only not implemented, it was purposely opposed by the Administration. Buchanan's governors' vetoing bills in Kansas and Nebraska to abolish slavery best exemplified the failure of popular sovereignty. Yet, no storm of protest came from the Douglas Democrats, much less "a word of rebuke for this most effectual nullification of the whole doctrine." With one hand the Democrats offered the people the choice of their own institutions, but with the other took it away if they did not choose slavery. Actions such as these were prompting the people to repudiate this "enormous machine for the spread of slavery."<sup>37</sup> Douglas' failure to condemn the vetoes, stated the Grand Rapids Eagle, proved

that popular sovereignty was "the most contemptible humbug ever attempted to be palmed off upon an intelligent people and those time-serving, spoils-worshipping demagogues know it."<sup>38</sup> One paper claimed that Douglas' silence was in effect a confession that he had abandoned popular sovereignty for the Dred Scott decision which declared that "the constitution carries slavery into all the Territories...."<sup>39</sup>

The Democratic platform endorsed by the Baltimore convention provided the Republican press with more ammunition to attack popular sovereignty. The plank which stated that the Supreme Court would have the final say on popular sovereignty proved for Republicans that the Douglasites had no real fidelity to their supposed principles. As the Detroit Daily Advertiser observed, there was no appeal beyond the Supreme Court. The justices, appointed for life, could only be removed by impeachment, which was "utterly impracticable." Decisions by this pro-slavery tribunal, no matter how subversive or tyrannical, could not be reversed until a pro-freedom majority replaced it, a process that could take years.<sup>40</sup> This plank, coupled with Douglas' support of the Dred Scott decision, prompted many Republican journals to conclude that there was virtually no difference between the Douglas and Breckinridge doctrines. Indeed, many of them considered Douglas a greater threat than Breckinridge to the cause of freedom. Both doctrines, they argued, protected

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slavery in the territories, Breckinridge's by congressional intervention, Douglas' by judicial intervention. The former program, however, needed congressional approval for enactment and could be repealed by the same body, while the latter had no checks on it whatsoever. One editor stated that "a decision of the Court declaring the existence of slavery in the territories would be eternal."<sup>41</sup>

Despite the Douglasite contention that non-intervention had been Democratic policy for the last ten years, the Grand Rapids Eagle shrewdly pointed out that that doctrine had never been incorporated into a national Democratic platform. It observed that the Cincinnati platform did not state that during the territorial existence the people could decide on slavery, but "was plainly declared to be when they form a State Constitution...." Neither, of course, did the Baltimore platform declare for popular sovereignty. The Douglasites were only willing to give the people a real choice over slavery when they formed a state constitution, and "that is of no account whatever...."<sup>42</sup>

The Republican press defended its position by reiterating the concept that Congress should ban slavery in the territories. As the Detroit Daily Tribune explained the Republican viewpoint, the purpose of the Union, as formulated in the Constitution, was to promote the general welfare. It was the duty of Congress to

legislate upon every subject dealing with the general welfare. And as slavery "is subversive of the interests of the entire people;...and disgraces the nation in the eyes of the Christian and even of the heathen world," Congress was obligated to see that it was not extended.<sup>43</sup>

The Grand Rapids Eagle took the Democratic claim of state equality and reversed its interpretation. Beginning with the premise that the territories belonged to all the American people, the editorial argued that its governing power was "vested in Congress, which alone represents the whole people." With the states being equal, it was discrimination that a resident of a territory could exercise certain rights because they were recognized by his home state while another resident did not have those rights because his home state did not recognize them. Hence, "only those laws which are national and recognized in all the States, are extended over a Territory," i.e., the Constitution and the common law. In addition, the Eagle bluntly announced that Republican policy was to "prevent the introduction of slavery into free territories, by embodying a positive prohibition in every act of Congress organizing such territories."<sup>44</sup>

Republicans considered freedom to be national and slavery local because the Constitution in no way recognized or noticed slavery. Its real purpose, noted one editor, was to establish liberty, something Republicans were trying to preserve by preventing the blight of slavery from extending into future states.<sup>45</sup> As



would later become evident during the secession crisis, Michigan Republicans were determined to fulfill the pledge of no more slave states.

The Republican press got the better of the territorial debate. Michigan Democratic papers had to cope with events largely beyond their control. The compromising of popular sovereignty at the conventions, with the shift in emphasis to non-intervention, seemed to contradict the local editor's claim that Douglas stood for pure popular sovereignty. While most Michigan Democratic papers, exclusive of the Free Press, virtually ignored the Supreme Court concession in the Baltimore platform, the Republican press did not. It convincingly showed that popular sovereignty was never genuinely implemented and probably never would. Although Republican papers frequently felt compelled to attack the Democrats by distorting the Dred Scott decision, claiming that it forbade the territorial legislatures from abolishing slavery, and by contending that Douglas believed the Constitution protected slavery, their basic line of attack did effectively demolish the applicability of popular sovereignty in a Federal system where the judiciary was dominated by slaveholders. With a pro-slavery Court, it was, indeed, most unlikely that the people of the territories would have been entirely free to determine their own fate. The Democratic press, on the other hand, found it politically unwise to attack the principal weakness in the Republican position, i.e., that

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congressional prohibition of slavery in the territories was clearly unconstitutional, as ruled in the Dred Scott case. Michigan Democratic papers found it hard enough to accept the decision, much less defend it, realizing the tremendous northern indignation against it. Under these circumstances, they fell back to the position that congressional intervention heightened slavery agitation, while denying the people of the territories the right of self-determination. Although most Michigan Democratic papers were probably sincere in their desire to implement the basically democratic doctrine of self-determination in the territories, they were morally neutral on the issue of slavery in a state where most people were not. The Republican promise to stop the spread of the iniquitous institution was a much more powerful appeal.

Although the slavery question dominated the political scene in Michigan, other issues commanded attention. Among these the demand for a homestead bill was most frequently discussed. Support for a homestead law had been agitated for nearly two decades with the first bill introduced in Congress in 1845.<sup>46</sup> By 1860 chances for the passage of a bill were good, despite opposition from the South. Galusha A. Grow of Pennsylvania introduced a bill into the House which passed on March 2. In the Senate a homestead bill was introduced by Andrew Johnson of Tennessee. His proposals were opposed by some Republicans and southern Democrats, prompting him to present a revised

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bill, which after several revisions, finally passed the Senate on May 11 by a 44 to 8 vote. Senate Republicans voted for the Johnson bill after they had failed to substitute the House bill for it. The South's success in considerably watering down the Senate bill compelled the House to refuse to accept it. Finally, after three conferences a compromise measure was agreed upon which passed the Senate 36 to 2 and the House 115 to 51. While the South wanted no homestead bill, it probably assented to the compromise version because it knew that Buchanan would veto the act, which he did on June 22.<sup>47</sup> After the furor over the veto, in Michigan at least, the homestead controversy faded as an issue.

The Michigan Republican papers dominated the discussion of the homestead bill and convincingly showed that the Republican House version was markedly superior to Johnson's Senate bill. Democratic papers, indeed, rarely discussed homestead legislation; and when they did, it was generally in vague terms. Republican journals frequently compared the Grow bill to Johnson's versions in the Senate. They noted that the House bill applied to any person over twenty-one who was a citizen or announced his attention to become such and threw open all lands subject to pre-emption,<sup>48</sup> i.e., all land not reserved for especial purposes, whether surveyed or not. The original Johnson bill was limited to heads of families who were already citizens or had declared intent of citizenship before the passage

of the act; and it opened only alternate sections of lands subject to private entry, i.e., land remaining after a public land sale.<sup>49</sup> Republican papers objected to the "alternate sections" restriction of the Senate bill. They argued that such a provision would force people to live a mile from each other, "tending to encourage separate Plantations instead of Villages." Grow's bill was "calculated to encourage the settlement and foster the growth of Colonies," ultimately resulting in thriving villages and thrifty farms. Even more objectionable was Johnson's exclusion of the emigrant from the benefit of the act, which only pleased the slaveholder "because it will not encourage the growth of Free Territories and States, which the House Bill will, directly and strongly."<sup>50</sup> The Eaton County Republican supported the Grow bill because it would have prevented a monopoly of the unsettled lands by ending speculation in lands bought up as soon as they went on sale, held until their values rose by the labors of pioneers on adjoining lands, and then sold to new people looking for farms. The homestead bill "would secure to the new settler the benefit of the national wealth, and to render the new unsettled public domain productive to the individual, to society, and to the State."<sup>51</sup>

Republican papers compared in great detail their party's bill to Johnson's revised version which passed the Senate. The House bill included all citizens over twenty-one, while the Senate bill excluded all but heads of

families, thereby reducing the potential beneficiaries by about fifty per cent. The House bill included pre-emptors currently on the public land, while the Senate bill required them to pay the government price of the land, or abandon it. The House bill applied to all lands subject to pre-emption, while the Senate bill was confined to land subject to private entry. The House bill gave settlers a quarter section for ten dollars, while the Senate bill required forty dollars. Finally, the Senate bill compelled the President to expose public lands for sale two years after a survey, thus opening them to speculators. Republican papers observed that the Senate bill opened much less land than the House version for settlement. The Grand Rapids Eagle described the Senate measure as "characteristic of the sham Democracy--framed, like Senator Douglas' squatter sovereignty traps, expressly to cheat the people with a name."<sup>52</sup> The Eagle also lauded another bill passed by the House "which is in some respects of greater importance to settlers upon the public lands than the Homestead bill." It observed that the prime impediment to western settlement was not the nominal prices of the lands, but that speculators had monopolized them in huge quantities. To prevent this, the Eagle considered it more important to protect the development of communities than to give away land. The recently passed House bill solved this problem by forbidding the sale of public lands until ten years after survey while they would be subject

to pre-emption by actual settlers. They, rather than speculators, would get the choice lands. Unfortunately the bill was opposed by the forces that would "sustain the interests of the soulless monopolies in the North, and large plantations in the South, regardless of the rights or comforts of the poorer masses." This bill was also more valuable than the homestead bill in that it overcame "the hardships and expenses of pioneer life in isolated settlements...."<sup>53</sup>

The compromise that emerged from the Homestead Conference Committee stipulated that land subject to private entry as well as one half of the surveyed public lands not yet offered for sale was to be opened for homesteads at 25 cents an acre. Pre-emptors were to have two years to pay for their land at 62½ cents per acre. The section of the Senate bill requiring the President to sell the public lands within two years after being surveyed was stricken out. A provision of the Senate bill which allowed a settler to pay for his land and have years to secure title was replaced by one requiring a settler to be on the land for six months before securing title, thus reducing speculation. The Senate restriction of limiting the act to heads of households was retained.<sup>54</sup> As indicated by their reaction to Buchanan's veto, Republican papers found the compromise bill at least temporarily acceptable. One sheet declared that Buchanan really vetoed the bill because "the South has always opposed the



Homestead Bill, as hostile to the introduction of slave labor into the Territories."<sup>55</sup> Another editor lamented that pioneer farmers were still to be left "at the mercy of cormorants and speculators," because the Democratic party had "wedded itself to every form of oppression," which was "made to bear against the laborer, whether white or black."<sup>56</sup> The Battle Creek Journal chastized the Democracy for its subservience to the Slave Power whose goal was the destruction of free labor. "And thus," it stated, "has another effort by the Republicans, in behalf of FREE LABOR, FREE HOMES and FREE MEN, been defeated by the sham 'democracy.'"<sup>57</sup> Certainly, then, the Republican press accounted for the southern opposition to the Homestead bill, "second in importance only to the Slavery issue,"<sup>58</sup> as motivated by a desire to hinder the growth and development of free labor in order to facilitate the spread of slavery into the territories.

The Democratic defense of the Senate bill was limited, weak, and not very persuasive. The Free Press argued that if the House bill had passed, "it would not have been a score of years before the government would be deprived of every foot of land it has between the two oceans." It claimed that the Senate bill was rejected not because it was not sufficiently liberal, but simply because it originated with a Democrat.<sup>59</sup> Republicans, another editor charged, did not really desire for land for the landless, but advocated it out of political expediency

and the desire to reduce the revenue, compelling the necessity for a high protective tariff.<sup>60</sup> The Democratic party, wrote the Grand Rapids Daily Enquirer, "abounds in overwhelming proofs of their fidelity to the homestead law."<sup>61</sup> Interestingly, however, the Democratic press made no mention of Buchanan's veto. As much as it tried, the Democratic press could not refute the overwhelming amount of evidence that the Republican journals brought forth showing the superiority of their bill.

The tariff issue in Michigan was of some importance although of much lesser magnitude than slavery or the homestead. While protectionism had gained strength among northwestern Republicans in the years preceding 1860, substantial elements of the party, particularly those of Democratic origins, were not fully committed to it.<sup>62</sup>

Michigan, however, more than other northwestern states accepted the concept of a protective tariff in the hope of establishing Detroit as the hub of a great industrial state.<sup>63</sup> Interestingly, Republican papers did not choose

to discuss the Morrill Tariff of 1860 which passed the House, increasing duties on iron and wool.<sup>64</sup> But the Detroit Free Press vigorously attacked the tariff bill.

It claimed that there was no great demand for it among the industrial interests who were quite content with incidental protection except among the "iron-mongers of Pennsylvania, who have not been known to be satisfied with any tariff, high or low, that has existed for the last

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twenty-five years." Its only purpose was to catch votes in Pennsylvania and a few wool-growing states. Other provisions of the bill, such as increasing the duties on imported books and sugar, were a direct blow at the poorer classes, especially those of the West. The Free Press was confident that the Senate would kill "this electioneering dodge" which virtually nobody wanted except the manufacturing interests in Pennsylvania and New Jersey and "a portion of the German adopted citizens who have peculiar notions about the tariff."<sup>65</sup> The paper also defended Douglas who had been accused of advocating a revenue tariff everywhere but in Pennsylvania where he called for protection. It stated that Douglas' position was consistent: "protection must be incidental to revenue, not for the sake of protection itself."<sup>66</sup>

Republican papers contented themselves in lauding in general terms the virtues of a protective tariff while simultaneously castigating the Democrats for their opposition to it. The Detroit Daily Tribune and the Grand Traverse Herald were the only Republican papers that discussed the issue to any extent. The Advertiser charged the Democracy with being concerned only about the "negro, the slave negro." It argued that a tariff would encourage manufacturers, create a market for agricultural goods, and promote jobs for poor white men.<sup>67</sup> Both papers claimed that the Democratic policy of a low tariff was helping British industry while hurting it in America.

Agricultural products were bought by England only when there was a crop failure in Europe. Otherwise she would provide her manufactured goods only for gold and silver. Hence, Republicans considered it important to keep American money at home to create industry which would generate jobs and provide a market for agricultural products. The Herald endorsed an article in the Chicago Democrat which argued that the Democratic low tariff policy was depressing American industry, driving many laborers to agriculture, consequently creating a food surplus and lower prices for farmers. A revision of the tariff, aside from ending tribute to the slaveholders, would protect infant industries while developing a home market for agriculture.<sup>68</sup> Michigan Republicans supported a revised tariff, but the issue was not of extreme importance to most people in the state.

Internal improvements were an economic issue of minor importance. Democratic papers did not discuss the issue at all, while the Republican press made infrequent mention of it, concentrating on Buchanan's veto of the St. Clair Flats bill and Douglas' past record. Although Democrats did not discuss the 1860 veto of a bill to deepen the flats of the St. Clair and St. Mary's rivers, they had previously denounced similar vetoes by Pierce.<sup>69</sup> A Republican editor described the President's veto as "the smallest, meanest, most pusillanimous kind of despotism."<sup>70</sup> The Grand Rapids Eagle declared that

Republicans did not just blame Buchanan, but the policy of the "entire Democratic party during the last ten years...."<sup>71</sup> To attack Douglas, Republican journals had to go back to 1852 when he had proposed a bill to shift the improvement of rivers and harbors from the Federal government to the states, authorizing them to levy a special tax upon ship tonnage to finance improvements. Republican papers opposed this measure because it "would cripple and embarrass the commerce of the lakes, effect a direct and fatal blow upon the most...important interest of our city and the North, and indeed upon our whole State." Moreover, the southern ports would gain at the expense of the North by building themselves up by taxing northern shipping.<sup>72</sup> That Buchanan's veto was not supported by Democrats and that Republicans had to go back to 1852 to attack Douglas indicates that there was a strong consensus in favor of internal improvements among the parties, and hence was not a significant election issue.<sup>73</sup>

A non-economic issue that aroused moderate interest was the role of ethnic groups in the election of 1860, especially Germans. For many years under the influence of a 1932 article by Donnal V. Smith,<sup>74</sup> historians had assumed that the German population played a decisive role in the election of Lincoln, particularly in the Northwest. But in 1941 Joseph Schafer attacked this view by his study of Wisconsin where he found that the German voting strength was not big enough to provide Lincoln's margin of victory

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and that, indeed, most Wisconsin Germans voted Democratic.<sup>75</sup> For Michigan, he noted that in 1860 out of 53,500 Germans and their American born offspring there could not have been more than 10,700 voters, making it impossible for them, no matter how they voted, to be decisive in the outcome, for Lincoln's majority over Douglas was 22,500.<sup>76</sup> Two studies of the vote in Iowa have also cast great doubt as to Republican success with immigrants.<sup>77</sup> Paul Kleppner has provided a further indirect challenge to the traditional thesis. He argues that in the 1870's and 1880's German Catholics in Michigan were disproportionately Democratic while German Lutherans formed no cohesive block of voters.<sup>78</sup> Although there has been no detailed study of the foreign vote in Michigan in 1860, Floyd Benjamin Streeter's 1918 study of ante-bellum Michigan parties also casts doubt upon the Smith thesis. He noted that "practically all the naturalized citizens residing in the State in 1835, and the majority of those who came during the next twenty-five years, voted the Democratic ticket."<sup>79</sup> By 1860, he observed, Republicans had made gains upon the Germans, but he implied that the majority were still Democratic. He pointed out that the Democratic candidate for governor polled a majority in both German wards in Detroit, while Douglas won one of them losing the second by only 18 votes. In Frankenmuth Township in Saginaw County, the German voters went Democratic 183 to 24.<sup>80</sup> Streeter's remarks are certainly not



conclusive, but they lead one to question seriously the editorial opinion that placed the Germans squarely in the Republican camp.

While the Germans might not have been decisive in the Republican victory in 1860, or even provided that party with a majority of their votes, both parties in Michigan did think they were overwhelmingly Republican. In a long editorial on April 17, the Free Press expressed the opinion that the "main dependence of the black republicans in all the States where they have an existence is on the German vote. In that lies their main strength." It argued that outside of Massachusetts and Vermont, if the German population did not vote, Lincoln would not carry a single state. In recent municipal elections in St. Louis, Cincinnati, Chicago, and Detroit, the Germans provided the majorities for Republican victories.<sup>81</sup> It noted that the strongest Republican states, New York, Ohio, Michigan, Iowa, Wisconsin, and the northern portions of Indiana and Illinois had large German populations. The Free Press differentiated between those Germans who had arrived before and after the revolutions of 1848. The former were still Democrats, "industrious, honest, and in every way a respectable class of citizens...." Those arriving after 1848 had become attached to the Republicans. These people, expelled from their homeland for promoting sedition and revolution, were socialists, communists, and free-thinkers, "whom many dub infidels." They, the Free

Press continued, brought these same principles with them to America "as ready to wage war upon the mythical slave power as they were upon their government at home...."

Eager to return to Germany, they were not really Americanized. The major characteristics of these revolutionaries were extremism, radicalism, sectional fanaticism, and socialism. The editorial concluded by arguing that the many hundreds of thousands of Germans that had entered the country since 1848 greatly influenced elections.<sup>82</sup>

Republican papers, totally devoid of nativist sentiments, at least toward Germans, quickly responded to what one editor termed "a disgraceful attack upon the Germans." These citizens were denounced by the Free Press because they had arrayed themselves on the side of liberty against "our American system of aristocracy, consisting of Southern slaveholders and planters and of the great moneyed classes of the North...." If they were Democrats, they would not have been subjected to such abuse.<sup>83</sup> Another paper similarly noted that Democratic papers did not stigmatize the Germans when they had voted overwhelmingly for their party. Next, it predicted, the Irish would be attacked because they were rapidly joining the Republicans.<sup>84</sup> The Marshall Statesman defended the German population as "an honest, hard working people." Through hard work and rigid economy they had made homes for themselves, many becoming wealthy. Compared to other foreign groups, they had proportionately fewer convicts. The Free Press

was really rankled, the Statesman commented, because the Germans, who had felt the heel of despotism in the homeland, were on the side of the party trying to prevent the spread of despotism instead of falling down and worshipping "the Dragon of slavery...."<sup>85</sup> Leading men in both parties, apparently discounting the German aversion to temperance and Know-Nothingism, expected that group to vote Republican. Whether they actually did is still a moot question. Certainly, however, the Free Press did little to attract them to the Democratic party.

Two Republican papers briefly commented on the Irish role in the election. They optimistically believed that the Irish would soon see that they were being manipulated by the self-seeking Democratic party. Indeed, commented the Detroit Daily Advertiser, some Irishmen were "beginning to discover the injury their blind adhesion to so corrupt a party is doing to them...." Unfortunately, most Irish were still "complete victims to unscrupulous political wire-workers...." If each Irishman voted freely, urged one editor, it would do more to uplift the Irish character than putting a few of their countrymen into office.<sup>86</sup>

The Detroit Free Press tried to show that Republican "abolitionism" was forcing the South, out of self-defense, to institute a policy of non-intercourse with the North to coerce that section to change its policies. In particular, Massachusetts was a prime target of the southern



movement because that state's abolitionism was "too offensive to be tolerated by southern men." Indeed, the abolitionism of the whole North was becoming repugnant.<sup>87</sup> The Free Press accounted for a strike by Massachusetts cordwainers in the shoe industry as due primarily to the withdrawal of southern orders, culminating in the lowering of the worker's wages. Other factors, such as the surplus of workers and the policy of the state which favored the moneyed corporations, while doing little to protect the laboring "classes from the encroachments and despotism of monopolies," were important also, but secondary to southern non-intercourse. It predicted that when the laboring masses understood the perils of abolitionism, New England "will become Democratic."<sup>88</sup> Nor would Michigan be unaffected by the southern action. Although the state had little direct trade with the South, it would feel the consequences of abolitionism because "a commercial revulsion in the East reaches the West in a day." And Michigan deserved what it got because of its attempts to nullify the Fugitive Slave Law and its refusal to allow traveling Southerners to bring their slaves into the state.<sup>89</sup>

Republican papers dismissed the non-intercourse movement as absurd. The Detroit Daily Tribune argued that "men will sell where they can find the most accessible market and best prices, and buy where they can buy easiest and cheapest; and even supposing the South had the disposition she has not the facilities for 'direct trade.'"

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southern politicians might attempt to bully the North, but southern merchants will trade where the buying is best.<sup>90</sup> Neither was the strike of the Lynn shoemakers due to the falling off of the southern trade, but rather due to a general depression throughout the country. Moreover, Southerners had no choice but to buy shoes from the North, because they had no factories of their own. Obviously, declared the Marshall Statesman, "the southerners will not go barefoot after their feet become sore,...they will send to Lynn and other Northern towns to try their boots and shoes."<sup>91</sup>

A pattern emerges in analyzing the campaign issues of 1860 that bore upon the sectional conflict. Democratic papers were much more conciliatory toward the South than Republicans. They were willing to placate the South with concessions, hoping to undermine its disunionist element. But while doing this, they compromised their position at home, making it appear to many that they were "dough-faces," northern men with southern principles. The Douglas press in Michigan was not really "doughfaced" because it did not automatically accede to every southern demand, yet the Republican press skillfully projected that image of it. Republican papers, on the other hand, were sectionalists in the sense that they had determined that northern interests would no longer be sacrificed to satisfy the whim of an expansive, aristocratic slaveocracy. They did feel, however, that their program was really national because

once the slaveocracy was driven from power their measures would benefit the entire nation. In their determination to preserve and promote the northern way of life, the Republican press was convinced that slavery had to be contained and ultimately destroyed.



#### CHAPTER IV NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Quoted in Arthur Bestor, "State Sovereignty and Slavery: A Reinterpretation of Proslavery Constitutional Doctrine, 1846-1860," Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society, LIV (Spring 1961), p. 151.

<sup>2</sup>This position was most forcefully argued in Charles W. Ramsdell, "The Natural Limits of Slavery Expansion," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, XVI (1929).

<sup>3</sup>Some recent historians have supported this view by challenging the contention that slavery could not expand into the then existing territories by noting that previous historians had assumed that slavery could only survive in a plantation setting. Robert S. Starobin in Industrial Slavery in the Old South (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970) has shown that slavery adapted well to an industrial setting. Eugene D. Genovese in The Political Economy of Slavery (New York: Vintage, 1965), pp. 243-274 has pointed out that the South desired additional territory to act as a buffer zone for the existing slave states.

<sup>4</sup>Arthur Bestor, "The American Civil War as a Constitutional Crisis," American Historical Review, LXIX (1964), pp. 344-345; Robert R. Russel, "Constitutional Doctrines with Regard to Slavery in the Territories," Journal of Southern History, XXXII (1966), pp. 467-468.

<sup>5</sup>Bestor, "American Civil War," pp. 346-347; Russel, "Constitutional Doctrines," pp. 467-468.

<sup>6</sup>Bestor, "American Civil War," p. 347; Russel, "Constitutional Doctrines," pp. 468-470, 485-487. Russel notes that in the 1856 platform, the Republicans used both the traditional and the free-soil argument, in the 1860 platform only the free-soil argument.

<sup>7</sup>Bestor, "State Sovereignty," p. 121.

<sup>8</sup>Russel, "Constitutional Doctrines," pp. 470-471.

<sup>9</sup>Bestor, "State Sovereignty," pp. 165-166.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 173.

<sup>11</sup>Russel, "Constitutional Doctrines," p. 472; Milo Milton Quaife, The Doctrine of Non-Intervention with Slavery in the Territories (Chicago: The Mac C. Chamberlain Co., 1910), pp. 128-129.

<sup>12</sup>Robert R. Russel, "The Issues in the Congressional Struggle Over the Kansas-Nebraska Bill, 1854," Journal of Southern History XXIX (May, 1963), pp. 192-193.

<sup>13</sup>Quaife, Doctrine of Non-Intervention, pp. 129-130.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., pp. 130-132.

<sup>15</sup>The Cincinnati platform stated: "Resolved, That we recognize the right of the people of all the territories, including Kansas and Nebraska, acting through the legally and fairly expressed will of a majority of actual residents, and whenever the number of their inhabitants justifies it, to form a Constitution, with or without domestic slavery, and be admitted into the Union upon terms of perfect equality with the other states." Thomas H. McKee, The National Conventions and Platforms of All Political Parties (Baltimore: The Friedenwald Company, 1904), p. 92.

<sup>16</sup>Roy F. Nichols, The Disruption of American Democracy (New York: Macmillan Company, 1948), p. 62.

<sup>17</sup>Russel, "Constitutional Doctrines," pp. 474-479.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., pp. 480-481.

<sup>19</sup>Don E. Fehrenbacher, Prelude to Greatness: Lincoln in the 1850's (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1962), p. 134.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., pp. 121-122; Russel in "Constitutional Doctrines," p. 482 described the Freeport Doctrine as follows: "If the Court has decided that a territorial legislature may not legally prohibit slavery, it will make no practical difference anyway, for such a decision cannot be enforced in a territory whose people are opposed to slavery."

<sup>21</sup>Robert W. Johannsen, "Stephen A. Douglas, 'Harper's Magazine,' and Popular Sovereignty," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, XLV (March, 1959), pp. 617-620.

<sup>22</sup>Russel in "Constitutional Doctrines," p. 484 has noted that "the Douglas platform did not denounce the Dred Scott decision. It did not endorse the Freeport

doctrine. It did not endorse popular sovereignty unconditionally. In short, considering the realities of Northern public opinion, the Douglas platform made remarkable concessions to the demands of the state-rights faction." Fehrenbacher in Prelude to Greatness, p. 131, has noted that as early as 1856 Douglas admitted that popular sovereignty might be unconstitutional.

<sup>23</sup>Detroit Free Press, July 25, August 10, 1860.

<sup>24</sup>Adrian Daily Watchtower, June 28, 1860.

<sup>25</sup>Kalamazoo Gazette, August 17, 1860.

<sup>26</sup>Michigan Argus, January 6, 1860.

<sup>27</sup>Three Rivers Western Chronicle, August 23, 1860; Grand Rapids Daily Enquirer, October 9, 1860.

<sup>28</sup>Kalamazoo Gazette, October 7, 1859.

<sup>29</sup>Niles Republican, September 22, 1860.

<sup>30</sup>Grand Rapids Daily Enquirer, November 1, 1860.

<sup>31</sup>Detroit Free Press, August 16, 1860; Grand Rapids Daily Enquirer, October 4, 1860.

<sup>32</sup>Kalamazoo Gazette, July 13, 1860.

<sup>33</sup>Marshall Democratic Expounder, July 19, 1860.

<sup>34</sup>Detroit Free Press, July 14, September 12, 1860.

<sup>35</sup>Detroit Daily Tribune, August 14, 1860.

<sup>36</sup>Eaton County Republican, September 14, 1860; St. Joseph Traveler, October 31, 1860; Detroit Daily Advertiser, May 14, 1860.

<sup>37</sup>Detroit Daily Advertiser, January 23, February 27, 1860.

<sup>38</sup>Grand Rapids Eagle, March 3, 1860.

<sup>39</sup>Detroit Daily Advertiser, March 6, 1860.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., May 29, 1860.

<sup>41</sup>Hillsdale Standard, July 24, 1860; Detroit Daily Advertiser, May 29, 1860.

<sup>42</sup>Grand Rapids Eagle, May 15, July 28, 1860.

<sup>43</sup>Detroit Daily Tribune, July 18, 1860.

<sup>44</sup>Grand Rapids Eagle, July 23, 28, 1860.

<sup>45</sup>Eaton County Republican, October 29, 1859.

<sup>46</sup>George M. Stephenson, The Political History of the Public Lands from 1840 to 1862 (Boston: R. G. Badger, 1917), p. 116.

<sup>47</sup>Stephenson, Political History, pp. 195-216; Roy M. Robbins, Our Landed Heritage: The Public Domain (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1942), pp. 179-181.

<sup>48</sup>According to the Pre-Emption Act of 1841, bona fide settlers were allowed to squat on 160 acres of public land. When the land was opened to purchase, they could buy it at the minimum government price.

<sup>49</sup>Stephenson, Political History, p. 198, Grand Traverse Herald, April 20, 1860; Detroit Daily Advertiser, April 5, 1860.

<sup>50</sup>Detroit Daily Advertiser, April 5, 1860; Grand Traverse Herald, April 20, 1860.

<sup>51</sup>Eaton County Republican, February 17, March 23, 1860.

<sup>52</sup>Grand Rapids Eagle, May 25, June 16, 1860; Grand Traverse Herald, June 15, 1860.

<sup>53</sup>Grand Rapids Eagle, May 30, 1860. This bill was killed in the Senate.

<sup>54</sup>Grand Rapids Eagle, June 22, 1860; Stephenson, Political History, p. 211.

<sup>55</sup>Detroit Daily Tribune, June 25, 1860.

<sup>56</sup>Grand Rapids Eagle, June 26, 1860.

<sup>57</sup>Battle Creek Journal, June 29, 1860.

<sup>58</sup>Allegan Journal, October 8, 1860. The Republican press blamed the failure of the Homestead bill on the southern rather than northern Democrats. Indeed after the passage of the House bill, the Marshall Statesman declared on March 28 that "the northern Democrats for once

have done their duty, and we give them due credit for it." On June 29 the Grand Traverse Herald observed that opposition in the House to the acceptance of the compromise bill was purely from the South.

<sup>59</sup>Detroit Free Press, June 23, 1860.

<sup>60</sup>Adrian Daily Watchtower, June 27, 1860.

<sup>61</sup>Grand Rapids Daily Enquirer, October 26, 1860.

<sup>62</sup>Thomas M. Pitkin, "Western Republicans and the Tariff in 1860," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, XXVII (1940), pp. 419-420.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid., pp. 413-414.

<sup>64</sup>For a discussion of the tariff situation in 1860 see Richard Hofstadter, "The Tariff Issue on the Eve of the Civil War," American Historical Review XLIV (October, 1938).

<sup>65</sup>Detroit Free Press, May 16, June 6, June 22, August 5, 1860. Hofstadter basically supports this Democratic argument by stating that outside of Pennsylvania, manufacturers were at best divided on the necessity for an upward revision of the tariff at that time. Hofstadter, "Tariff Issue," p. 55.

<sup>66</sup>Detroit Free Press, September 13, 23, 1860.

<sup>67</sup>Detroit Daily Advertiser, June 23, 1860.

<sup>68</sup>Detroit Daily Advertiser, June 30, July 18, 1860; Grand Traverse Herald, July 6, August 17, 1860.

<sup>69</sup>Floyd Benjamin Streeter, Political Parties in Michigan, 1837-1860 (Lansing: Michigan Historical Commission, 1918), pp. 244-248.

<sup>70</sup>Marshall Statesman, March 7, 1860.

<sup>71</sup>Grand Rapids Eagle, February 11, 1860.

<sup>72</sup>Grand Rapids Eagle, July 24, 1860; Detroit Daily Advertiser, August 14, 1860.

<sup>73</sup>Thomas D. Odle, in his article "The Commercial Interests of the Great Lakes and the Campaign Issues of 1860," (Michigan History, XL 1956) has argued that the commercial interests in the Northwest supported the Republicans in 1860. This might be true, but he only provides

circumstantial evidence to prove his case, reasoning that they would not vote for a Democratic president who, under pressure from the South, would veto internal improvements for the Northwest. But in Michigan in 1860 the issue was not significant. As Streeter points out (p. 232) by the middle 1850's "the Democrats in Michigan and the Northwest generally were united in demanding the improvement of the inland waterways while the President and the members of Congress from the slaveholding States were arrayed against them on this question."

<sup>74</sup>Donnal V. Smith, "The Influence of the Foreign-Born of the Northwest in the Election of 1860," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, XIX (1932).

<sup>75</sup>Joseph Schafer, "Who Elected Lincoln," American Historical Review, XLVII (1941).

<sup>76</sup>Ibid., pp. 61-62.

<sup>77</sup>Robert P. Swierenga, "The Ethnic Voter and the First Lincoln Election," Civil War History, XI (1965); George H. Daniels, "Immigrant Vote in the 1860 Election: The Case of Iowa," Mid-America, XLIV (July, 1962).

<sup>78</sup>Paul Kleppner, The Cross of Culture: A Social Analysis of Midwestern Politics, 1850-1900 (New York: The Free Press, 1970), pp. 41-43. Kleppner estimates that in Michigan in 1870, Baptists made up approximately 10% of the electorate, Congregationalists 10%, Lutheran 5%, Methodists 25%, Presbyterians 5%, and Catholics 10%. (p. 99) Unfortunately this only adds up to 65% of the electorate. Kleppner does not account for the missing 35%. Perhaps they had no religious affiliations.

<sup>79</sup>Streeter, Political Parties, p. 162.

<sup>80</sup>Ibid., pp. 169-171.

<sup>81</sup>Streeter notes (p. 169) that in Detroit in 1859, the Germans voted for a Republican mayoral candidate of German origins.

<sup>82</sup>The influx of Germans into Michigan was a reflection of the great immigration that the Free Press spoke of. In 1850 there were only 10,260 Germans in Michigan. During the 1850's 28,527 settled in Michigan from Germany. (Streeter, p. 161, 162) If one assumes that the post-1848 Germans were radical on the slavery issue, it would lend credence to the Free Press argument that most Germans were Republicans.

<sup>83</sup>Detroit Daily Advertiser, April 18, 1860.

<sup>84</sup> Detroit Daily Tribune, April 20, 1860.

<sup>85</sup> Marshall Statesman, May 2, 1860.

<sup>86</sup> Detroit Daily Advertiser, October 11, 1860;  
Detroit Daily Tribune, June 19, 1860.

<sup>87</sup> Detroit Free Press, December 4, 1859.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., February 28, March 4, 27, 1860.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., February 3, 8, 1860.

<sup>90</sup> Detroit Daily Tribune, January 7, 1860; Ann  
Arbor Local News, January 24, 1860.

<sup>91</sup> Detroit Daily Tribune, March 8, 1860; Marshall  
Statesman, April 18, 1860.

## CHAPTER V

### SLAVERY, FREE SOIL, AND RACISM

Most writings on the origins of the Civil War have discussed slavery as a cause of the conflagration. The Revisionist historians dismissed it as inconsequential, saying that no fundamental differences existed between the sections but that agitators--abolitionists and southern fire-eaters--raised emotions to irrational peaks.<sup>1</sup>

Slavery was also discounted by Charles A. Beard and the Marxist historians who thought the war resulted from a conflict between industrial capitalism in the North and agrarianism in the South.<sup>2</sup> For the last two decades, however, historians have again placed slavery on the center stage, but in much more sophisticated versions than the "irrepressible conflict" historians of the latter part of the nineteenth century.<sup>3</sup> In addition, recent research has shown that the ante-bellum North was seething with racism. Blacks were discriminated against in every imaginable fashion--in jobs, education, housing, socially, politically, and legally.<sup>4</sup> The Old Northwest was as racist, or even more so, as the rest of the North. While Michigan did not go to the extreme of Illinois and Indiana which passed Negro exclusion laws, in 1827 the territorial legislature



required Negroes to possess certificates of freedom and to post \$500 bonds. At the 1836 constitutional convention they were barred from voting. Intermarriage was banned. In an 1850 referendum 72 percent of Michigan voters rejected Negro suffrage.<sup>5</sup> The attitude of the region was not much different on the eve of the war; the majority were declared white supremacists. The Democrats, in particular, played to white fears. Not until near the end of the war did racial virulence decline; and even then, most Midwesterners were far from advocating any real equality.<sup>6</sup>

A widespread northern racism was not necessarily incompatible with opposition to slavery or its extension. It was possible to condemn slavery as being immoral while denying that blacks should be raised to social and political equality with whites. Many Republicans held this view. They considered slavery to be immoral and its extension to be a threat to the northern way of life. They warned of a conspiracy of southern aristocrats, commonly called the Slave Power or the Slaveocracy, who seemed to have irresistible power. The Slave Power was frequently portrayed as a threat to civil liberties and freedom. It dominated the national government. Many resented the Slaveocracy's forcing Northerners to do its dirty work, such as returning fugitive slaves.<sup>7</sup> Those who hated the Slave Power, especially Republicans, did not at the same time necessarily favor abolition or Negro equality.

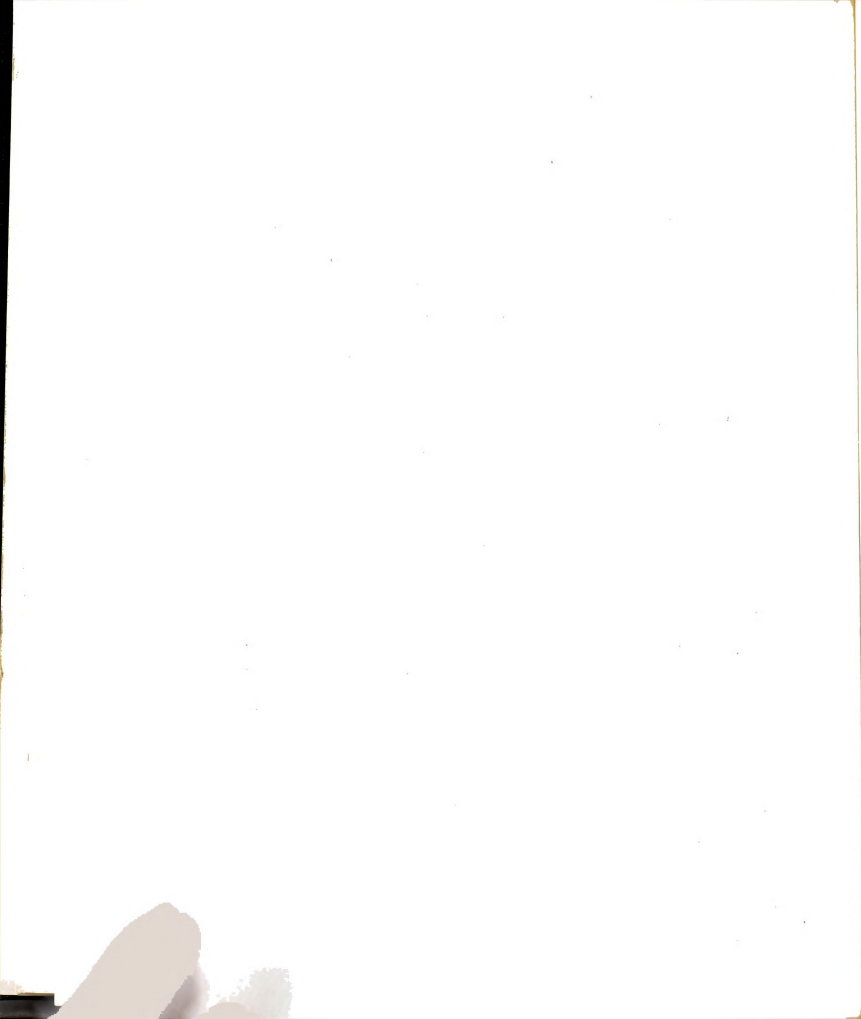
In his study of Republican ideology before the

Civil War, Eric Foner argued that "free labor" was the key to the party's appeal. Republicans viewed their society as dynamic, growing, and capitalistic; and they believed that each man could through his own effort rise from the wage-earning class into the middle class. Rather than extolling large-scale capitalism, they preached the economic independence of the small entrepreneur. Instead of paving the way for the Robber Baron, they desperately sought to create and preserve equality of opportunity and the supposed upward mobility of Jacksonian America. The expansive tendencies of the Slave Power threatened the North because the aristocratic way of life was antithetical to the northern conception of the good society. The southern social system, based on slavery, degraded free labor, hindering the latter's economic progress. The seeming stagnation of southern society, ruled by aristocrats, was unacceptable to a North committed to the work ethic and white equality. The Republicans perceived the Slaveocracy's control of the national government and its desire for more territory as a real threat to all that they cherished. Hence, the political power of the Slaveocracy had to be curtailed, and later it became necessary to destroy the institution which was the basis of its strength.<sup>8</sup> The reasons why Northerners supported the restriction of slavery were complex. Some hoped that it would ultimately lead to the demise of the institution; others simply wanted to restrain the Slave Power, still



others desired both.

In Michigan many Republican papers attacked slavery as a moral evil. One paper considered slavery "the foulest wrong that man, in his lust for power and love of dominion, ever inflicted upon his fellow-man." It was founded by robbery and perpetuated by lies. It degraded man to a level of a brute, denied him the right to himself, and robbed him of his humanity. A Republican victory would assure that "slavery will die out, and men will own at least themselves."<sup>9</sup> In the aftermath of John Brown's raid, the Grand Rapids Eagle informed the South that it misapprehended northern anti-slavery sentiment. It was based on religious principles and strengthened by persecution and martyrdom. John Brown's concern for the plight of the slave was not unique for "there is just as genuine love for the slave, just as firm anti-slavery principles and just as much courage, unallied with madness, cherished in the hearts of millions of freemen...."<sup>10</sup> A writer to the Hillsdale Standard claimed that the "prime question in American politics" was "shall Slavery live, or shall it die?"<sup>11</sup> The Niles Inquirer condemned the institution as "an atrocious outrage upon the national and inalienable rights of man, nor can it anymore be justified upon ethical and Christian principles, than can widow burning or cannibalism." It abnegated the Christian doctrine that all men are brethren, inheriting a common destiny, and that all men are children of a common parent.



Slavery destroyed the moral, physical, social, and spiritual nature of men by repressing aspirations for knowledge and higher life. Such a system was undoubtedly in an "irrepressible conflict" with all the moral forces of the nineteenth century. It was abhorred by God and "all good men."<sup>12</sup> The Marshall Statesman also denied that slavery could be in any way compatible with Christianity. As much as the slaveholders tried to prove that Christianity taught "the doctrine that stealing a man's labor for his life-time, separating husbands and wives, selling children like hogs and horses, is right, proper, just, expedient, moral and righteous," the Bible actually denounced oppression and oppressors. Indeed, it was impossible to show that the Bible sanctioned slavery.<sup>13</sup> Another paper forthrightly declared that "slavery is a moral wrong, which cannot be made right by the most artful sophistry." Aside from defying "justice, reason, natural law, religion and impartial legislation," it did not in any way benefit the black man. Rather than uplifting him, slavery resulted in his acquiring the worst vices of civilized society. Forbidden to learn to read, slaves were unable to understand the precepts of religion and morality. This ignorance was the slaveholder's best assurance against his chattels' aspiring for freedom. The "gibberish of negro talk" was encouraged by slaveholders to symbolize the gulf between slavery and freedom. Hence, "slavery withers every social virtue where it exists...."<sup>14</sup> In addition to

considering slavery "a stench in the nostrils of the civilized world," the Ingham County News believed that slavery was doomed, not from interference by Republicans, but by the actions of the slaveholders themselves. Because the institution was "in the agonies of death," Republicans just had to stand firm by defending the Union and the Constitution.<sup>15</sup> The young men of the country, the Detroit Daily Advertiser predicted, would vote for the Republican party because youth "are always on the side of Humanity and Right." That party stood on the side of free men, whatever their color and attracted those people opposed to "oppression and wrong in every shape to any human being."<sup>16</sup> The Grand Traverse Herald perhaps best summarized the Republican position when it declared that the election would "decide not merely whether this or that political party shall prevail, but the future destiny of the country--which is involved in the great question of Human Freedom or Human Bondage?"<sup>17</sup>

Not all Republican papers stressed the moral evils of slavery. The Detroit Daily Tribune, for example, rarely discussed the issue. Others mentioned the immorality of slavery only infrequently. Yet, the evidence warrants the conclusion that many Republican editors considered slavery evil in itself, and for this reason America could never live up to its ideals as long as the institution existed. Indeed, the Marshall Statesman went so far as to suggest that the South should immediately

begin to ameliorate slavery as a preparatory step to its final extinction. It urged southern legislatures to revise the slave code by forbidding slave families to be separated and by recognizing slave marriages. Slaves should be encouraged in their moral and mental development. Finally, slaves should be allowed to accumulate property in their spare time, giving them an interest "in the peace and order of the society." These measures would decrease the chances for insurrection while preparing the slave for freedom.<sup>18</sup> Although Republican papers continually reiterated that the party had no intention of interfering with slavery where it already existed, many of them devoutly believed and desired that the party should be an instrument in the ultimate destruction of the institution. To this extent the Democracy was right in its charges and the South justified in its fears that the Republican party was a real threat to chattel slavery.

If some Michigan Republican editors did not consider slavery a moral evil, virtually none failed to oppose its offspring, the Slave Power. As Major L. Wilson has pointed out, many "free-soilers" opposed the aggressive Slaveocracy in order to regenerate the nation's commitment to freedom for all that it supposedly possessed at its inception. Believing that the Constitution was originally designed to limit national support of slavery, free-soilers argued that the noble ideals of the national purpose had been subverted by the predatory Slave Power.



Some radicals, such as Chase, fixed the "degeneration" of freedom as far back as 1790, while moderates such as Lincoln settled for the 1854 Kansas-Nebraska Act. By 1858, both groups agreed that degeneration had reached the point where freedom in the nation was seriously threatened. Lincoln's plan to halt degeneration was to forbid the extension of slavery into the territories, which would ultimately lead to its extinction. In other words, moral regeneration in the territories would set an example for the rest of the nation.<sup>19</sup> The Michigan Republican press made frequent reference to the necessity of returning the government to the ideals it was founded upon. The Grand Rapids Eagle considered it essential to defeat the "propagandism of wrong and outrage," and "return the Government to those Republican principles, which were the glory and the chief care of the fathers."<sup>20</sup> A Republican victory, the Allegan Journal predicted, would restore quiet to the country "by a return to the benignant policy of the founders," which were scoffed at by the "slave-breeders," and their allies, the "Doughfaces."<sup>21</sup> The Battle Creek Journal observed that the pro-slavery party, "which was but a small black spot in 1789," had now become the deadliest enemy of the Republic and was sucking out the moral strength of the nation. By restraining the Slave Power, the Journal continued, the Republican party hoped "to preserve intact the Freedom guaranteed by our Fathers."<sup>22</sup>

More specifically, many Republican journals felt

that the basic freedoms guaranteed by Constitution were in jeopardy. Not only were the rights of Negroes denied, but the rights of mankind were threatened. "The bloody hand of Slavery," declared one editor, had in half the nation demoralized the people by disregarding the rights of free speech, free press, and the "sacredness of citizenship."<sup>23</sup>

The Marshall Statesman detailed the abuse of freedom in the South, noting that northern visitors were outraged, insulted and subject to such indignities as being "horse-whipped, tarred and feathered, rode on rails, gagged, stoned, imprisoned, exiled, and driven out of the country." People were driven from their homes or dismissed from their jobs because they had dared to exercise their constitutional right of free speech. The effort to drive out free Negroes or reduce them to slavery was "an insult to common manhood." Censorship of the mails was a repugnant attempt to keep the poor whites ignorant. The editorial concluded by exclaiming that "we have borne the insults and injuries of the 200,000 slave-holders long enough. Shall they crack their whips over free men?"<sup>24</sup>

The Detroit Daily Tribune resented the stifling of the slavery question in the South and urged an end to such "despotism."<sup>25</sup> The political power of the southern aristocracy was denounced by another editor. Slaveowners consolidated their power by being the only ones elected to political office. The Slave Power had to be confined within its present bounds. Indeed, it would be far safer

"to establish by law an order of nobility amongst us."<sup>26</sup>

Republican papers occasionally protested against the Slave Power's use of the 3/5 clause of the Constitution for its political advantage. They noted that the white citizens of the North did not have equal political influence with their southern brethren. The Detroit Daily Advertiser compared the representation of Michigan and Louisiana. In a recent election Michigan polled 120,000 votes while Louisiana polled only 40,000. Because both states had equal representation in Congress, a Louisiana voter had three times the power of one in Michigan. North Carolina polled only two-thirds the vote of Michigan, but had twice the number of Representatives. Virginia polled only 30,000 more votes than Michigan, but had eleven more Representatives. At least six of Virginia's Representatives existed because of the counting of slaves.<sup>27</sup> The Grand Rapids Eagle reversed the situation by arguing that the Founding Fathers included the 3/5 clause as an inducement for the South to emancipate its slaves, which would consequently increase its representation. But instead of taking the bait, slaveholders had come to look upon their slaves as property, rather than human beings, as exemplified by their demand that they be allowed to carry their slave property into the common territories just as if they were horses, cattle, or household goods. Shrewdly, the Eagle asked, if slaves were property, not human beings, how could they claim three-fifths of that property as a

basis of congressional representation, when the Constitution clearly referred to persons? It was apparent, the editorial concluded, "that the slaveocrats present and urge whatever view may best subserve their present purposes."<sup>28</sup>

Northern Republicans most feared the Slave Power because it threatened their cherished free labor society. Michigan Republican papers rarely spoke of the social problems confronting the North, but rather continually lauded its positive aspects. One paper opposed the spread of slavery to allow "free labor, free homes, and free men...extend themselves over the land, to subdue and adorn it."<sup>29</sup> Another paper observed that unlike slave labor, free labor was diversified, capable of being employed in many branches of industry. It did not have to be used just on large tracts of land, but could occupy small parcels which could be continually renovated and used by successive generations of the same family.<sup>30</sup> The Michigan State News urged laboring men to render "themselves at least partially independent of the capitalists of the country by accepting the assistance of a strong party which had pledged itself to the interests of Free Labor." Republicans, it continued, pledged to oppose the extension of slave monopolies into the territories, thus preventing the degradation of free white labor. The free white man as much as the slaveholder must have the "right to life, liberty and the proceeds of his own toil."<sup>31</sup> The virtue

of free labor, which "has a tendency to elevate man in the scale of moral being,"<sup>32</sup> was exemplified in the career of Abraham Lincoln. His father, a forelorn and wretched poor white, lived in a slave community. He had no education because poor whites had no access to it. But Lincoln moved out of a slave state and improved himself.<sup>33</sup> Ultimately, "once the day laborer," he was elected President.<sup>34</sup>

Republican papers also emphasized that slavery degraded southern society. Virginia, once a wealthy and powerful state, observed Republican journals, was reduced by slavery to one of the poorer states in the Union because "slave labor deteriorates the soil, and leaves behind it sterility and waste." Slavery required large plantations, limiting the land available to small farmers. Having little incentive for improvement, these people added nothing to the national wealth. Meanwhile, the slaveholding aristocrat acquired riches uncommensurate with his own labor.<sup>35</sup> This type of society where white men were reduced to "a state of vassalage" could not be allowed to extend beyond its present bounds, observed one editor. A typical Republican view of southern society had it consisting of "slave marts, auctions of men, women and children, the gags, thumbscrews, paddles, slave cofles, prisons and whips, its practical amalgamations, its children-selling, fathers jealous and heart-broken wives, clay-eating whites, dilapidated houses and fences, edgy

and neglected fields, lazy and thriftless population."<sup>36</sup> Michigan Republican editorials confirm Eric Foner's analysis of the party attitude towards the South. He noted that influential party members believed that the Negro lacked incentive because he was in bondage, and the white man stagnated because he saw no chance to rise into a non-existent middle class. Moreover, slavery with its plantation economy ruined the soil, requiring the ruling class to seek more territory. Republicans opposed this necessity for expansion because it threatened the existence of its free labor society.<sup>37</sup>

The contest between free and slave labor was for many Republicans what the "irrepressible conflict" was all about. A writer to the Eaton County Republican, appropriately calling himself FREE LABOR, observed that the Democratic party advanced the interests of slave labor while discouraging free labor. He inquired, "does not this state of things create naturally an "irrepressible conflict...?"<sup>38</sup> The Slave Power, declared one editor, not only threatened free labor by its control of the Federal government but by its desire to expand. It was the sacred duty of "every man who respects free labor," to oppose it for "it is no longer a 'nigger' question, but a white working man's question."<sup>39</sup> For the Ingham County News, as many other Republican papers, the real issue of the campaign was whether the territories would be consecrated to free labor or cursed with slavery. Slavery was an evil

that could not constitutionally be touched in the states but could be banned in the territories. This had to be done because "slavery completely crushed out free labor." It established a despotism, endangered free speech, and kindled sectional strife.<sup>40</sup> Spokesmen of the Slave Power, Republican papers observed, by placing slave labor above free labor, were arguing that free society was a failure, the "mudsills of the North being worse off than the slave because they belonged to society rather than a single man."<sup>41</sup> The Detroit Daily Tribune provided an anecdote illustrating this Republican belief that slaveholders associated all labor with servility. A Yankee mechanic on a Mississippi steamboat asked a planter if he wanted to employ a carpenter. The planter replied, "No; I bought a couple of carpenters yesterday." "It is impossible," concluded the editorial, "for intelligent and skilled labor to thrive where labor is degraded."<sup>42</sup>

While Michigan Republican papers unanimously condemned slavery for being evil or threatening freedom and free labor, only a few Democratic sheets discussed the institution aside from warning of the dangers of agitating the issue and the perils of abolition. Nationally, a segment of the northern press, chiefly on the east coast, mounted a vigorous defense of slavery. The most vitriolic defender of slavery, John H. Von Evrie's New York Day-Book, supported Breckinridge, opposed southern concessions to the North, and became a full-fledged Copperhead paper





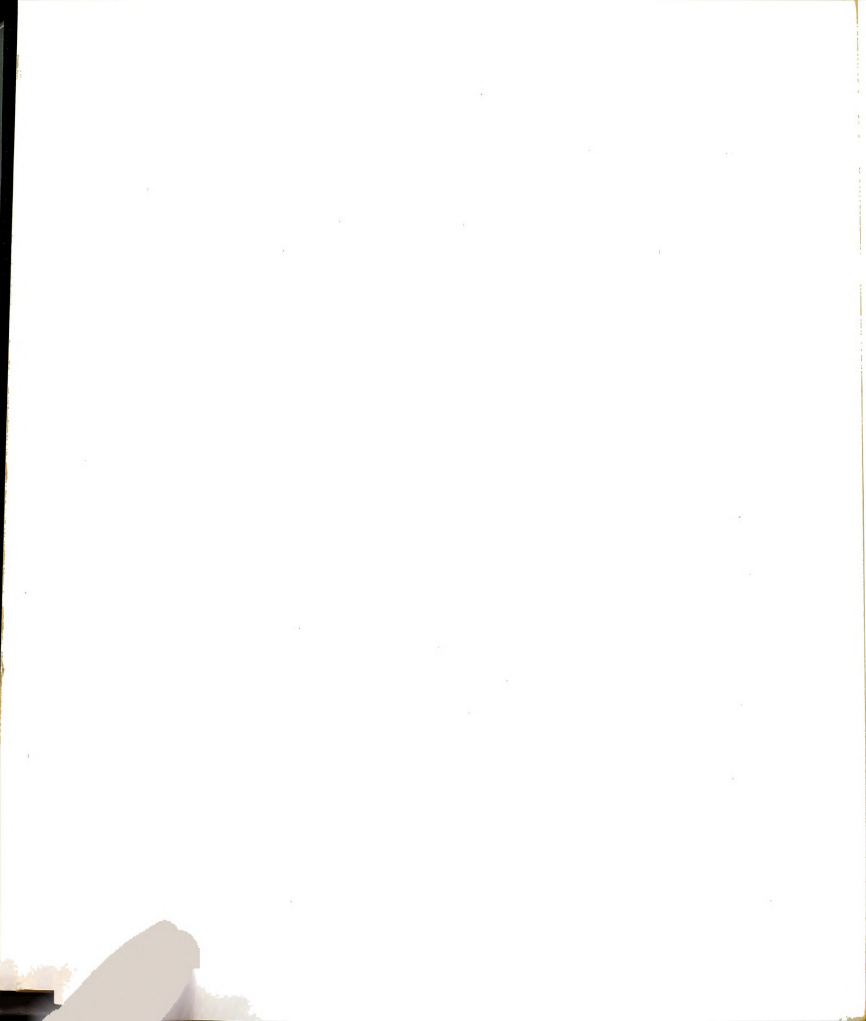
during the war. Perhaps a more influential apologist for slavery was the New York Herald, edited by James Gordon Bennett. Other New York papers that supported slavery were the Daily News, Morning Express, Daily Eagle, Free-man's Journal and Catholic Register, and the Observer. In addition to these papers, and others on the Atlantic coast, Howard Perkins located only seven other pro-slavery newspapers in the North: The Chicago Times, the Cleveland Plain Dealer, the Hamilton Telegraph of Ohio, the Niles (Democratic) Republican of Michigan, the New Albany Ledger of Indiana, the Peoria Democratic Union of Illinois, and the Muscatine Review of Iowa. These papers were Douglas organs, generally less militant or persistent in their defense of slavery than the eastern journals. The northern case for slavery was less sophisticated than the southern version, lacking the latter's plea that the institution was necessary to preserve a type of civilization. Pro-slavery newspapers were less than 2 percent of the northern total, being truly formidable only in New York City.<sup>43</sup>

A few Michigan Democratic papers argued directly for slavery as a moral good, most finding it expedient to avoid the issue. Only the Niles (Democratic) Republican unqualifiedly embraced the institution. On January 12, 1860, it endorsed a sermon of the Reverend Henry J. Van Dyke of Brooklyn who provided "a powerful and unanswerable argument in favor of slavery...." He put to flight "ungodly abolition priests" who urged civil discord, civil

war, and treason. The Republican hoped that the masses would help to save the nation from dissolution by purging from the pulpit these "fanatical demagogues" who were sapping the foundation of Christianity. In a later editorial, it elaborated upon its defense of slavery, charging that the Republican party was based upon the false belief that all men are born free and equal, construing the passage in the Declaration of Independence to include Negroes. Such a belief was absurd for it made the Founding Fathers appear as hypocrites for they never "aimed to make their slaves equal to themselves." They founded the government for the benefit of white men, not inferior races. Republicans also erred in claiming that slavery was a moral sin which cursed the nation. The Republican noted that when the nation was born slavery existed in every state. If slavery were ungodly, how could God "establish such a government as this, when he knew a portion of it would be dedicated to slavery?" Obviously it was not unholy. God's purpose was to Christianize the African race, provide it with civilization, and prepare it "for the coming of the King of Kings." Moreover, American slavery was the mildest that ever existed in history.<sup>44</sup>

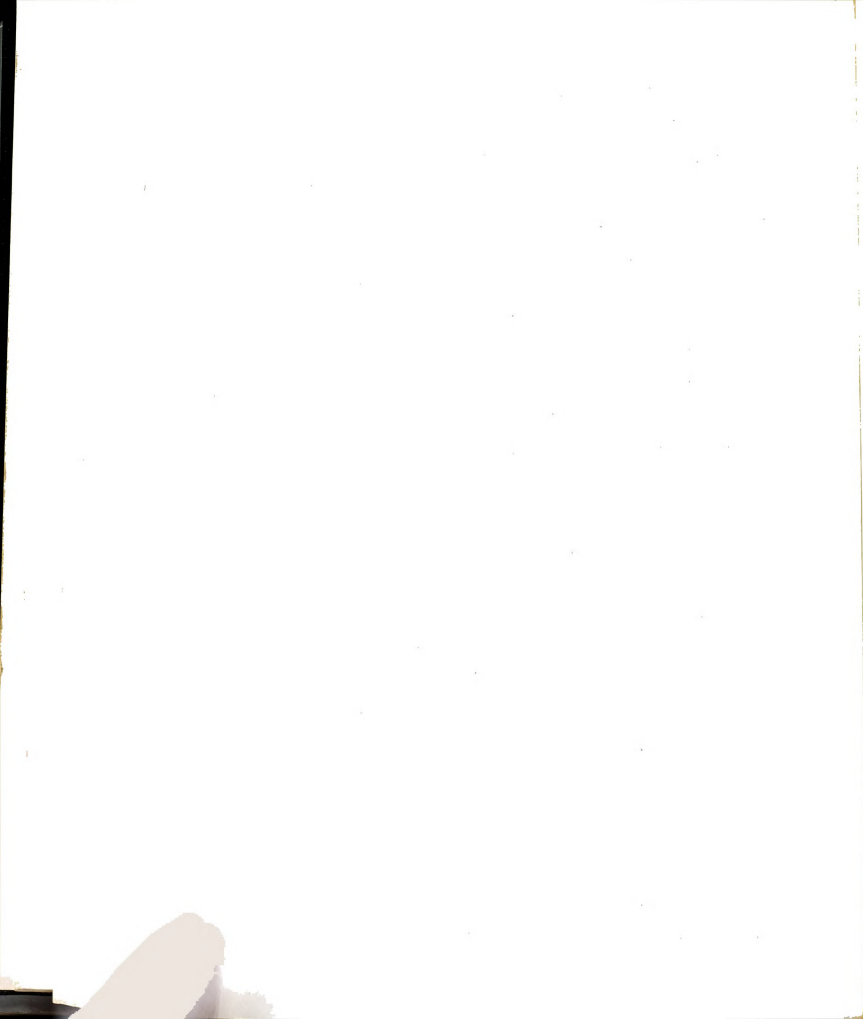
The Grand Rapids Daily Enquirer answered criticism of its refusal to preach against slavery by stating, that while the paper had no sympathy with an institution that was disastrous to the southern economy and injurious to the free labor system, it could not be condemned for it was

not sinful or immoral. Indeed, it was recognized and sanctioned by the Scriptures.<sup>45</sup> A more moderate position was taken by the editor of the Adrian Daily Watchtower who argued that the right of property in slaves was not like the right of property in animals. The master's right was to the slave's labor, "just as the father had the right of property in his minor child." He also argued that slavery restriction was more inhuman than the diffusion of the institution. If slavery cursed the white man, as Republicans claimed, it made no sense to prohibit the diffusion of slaves, for their numbers would be no greater, and fewer white men would be exposed to their affliction. This policy, advocated by Jefferson, "is the only sensible view." Colonization was impractical and would lead to "cruel consequences" for the blacks because they would perish when removed from proximity to whites.<sup>46</sup> Volney Hascall, editor of the Kalamazoo Gazette, was the most outspoken Democratic critic of slavery. He declared, "I am no friend of African slavery. My education, observations, instincts, are all opposed to it." He also realized that sentiment against slavery was growing not only in the North, but "throughout the Christian world." The anti-slavery movement, he shrewdly observed, "has acquired a momentum, from various circumstances, of late years, that no prudential resolves can stay, and no legal determinations or statutes can more than temporarily resolve." The South felt it necessary to secede to postpone, if not



avert, the "final hour." Yet he could not condemn the southern people because their system was being driven to the wall.<sup>47</sup> No consensus existed among Michigan Democratic journals regarding slavery as an institution. They did agree, however, that there should be no Federal interference with it, either in the states or the territories.

While not all Democratic papers continually played up racist themes, some did it to the fullest, specifically the Detroit Free Press, the Niles Republican, and the Grand Rapids Daily Enquirer. They warned of the danger of free Negroes to northern society and the perils of granting equality to inferior beings. The Free Press led the crusade against the free Negro, cautioning Northerners that if abolitionism were successful their section would be overrun with freedmen. Free blacks were presently a nuisance, but "how will they be regarded when they shall form one-fourth of the whole population?" Antipathy towards the blacks, amongst all classes, was exemplified by many states excluding or expelling them. Michiganders did not want slavery and certainly did not desire free Negroes in their midst. Slavery was banned in the state not for any moral reasons but "on the basis of dollars and cents, and it has been settled on that basis in every State." If the climate and soil were ideal, Michigan would have been a slave state. Not only was the physical presence of Negroes offensive, but undoubtedly they would attempt to gain political and social equality and most likely succeed



if Republicans remained in power. Indeed, the Free Press pointed out, at the last session of the Legislature the Republicans came close to carrying a bill which would have allowed Negroes to vote upon the accumulation of a certain amount of property.<sup>48</sup> Free Negroes, the Niles Republican suggested, should be sent to Massachusetts where the laws of the nation were defied, not to Michigan where they would lower the price of white labor. It facetiously proposed an anti-abolition party to protect the interests of free laborers, landowners, and manufacturers. Abolition would ruin them by raising the price of lands in the South, lowering the price in the North, destroying the southern trade for northern manufactures, and overrunning the North with free Negroes. It would culminate in the pauperization of white labor, even to a lower level than the poor whites in the South.<sup>49</sup>

Of the newspapers surveyed, the Grand Rapids Daily Enquirer was the most racist in Michigan. It argued that Massachusetts was a pacesetter in establishing Negro equality by passing a law that a black could vote after one year's residence, a much shorter waiting period than for adopted citizens. Foreigners should require the Republicans to "repudiate such a monstrous and fatal error." Unfortunately, this policy of Massachusetts, advocating political and social equality of the black man with the white native born American, was steadily being adopted by Republicans throughout the country. This dogma

of Negro equality, "which possesses not a spark of divinity," was the Republican idol before which they "bow down and worship." Republicans should disenthral themselves "from the stupefying influence of this horrible negro-worship" and "re-assert your pre-eminence over all other races of the Earth." If Lincoln were elected, the Enquirer predicted, the Union would be threatened because the South could not tolerate an administration based upon Negro equality, a doctrine hostile to the spirit of the Constitution. Moreover, it was inconceivable that the Republican party with such beliefs would not attack slavery in the states. In summarizing the Republican position, the Enquirer argued that its basis was that Negroes under the Constitution enjoyed equal political rights with white men, including citizenship. And if they enjoyed political rights, they could not by law be denied equal social rights. Violation of such rights would be unconstitutional. Whereas slavery recognized no such rights, Congress had the duty to abrogate the institution, consequently ruining the southern states, compelling them to dissolve the Republic. The Democracy, on the other hand, opposed this doctrine, holding that the Constitution guaranteed no such equality to black men. Indeed, the Constitution recognized slavery and denied citizenship to Negroes, as had been decided by the Supreme Court. The Enquirer's solution was for "ye lovers of America, priceless coronet of liberty,...disown this degrading, beastly





doctrine of Negro Equality," by rallying "to the cause of Popular Sovereignty, and the rights of WHITE MEN."<sup>50</sup>

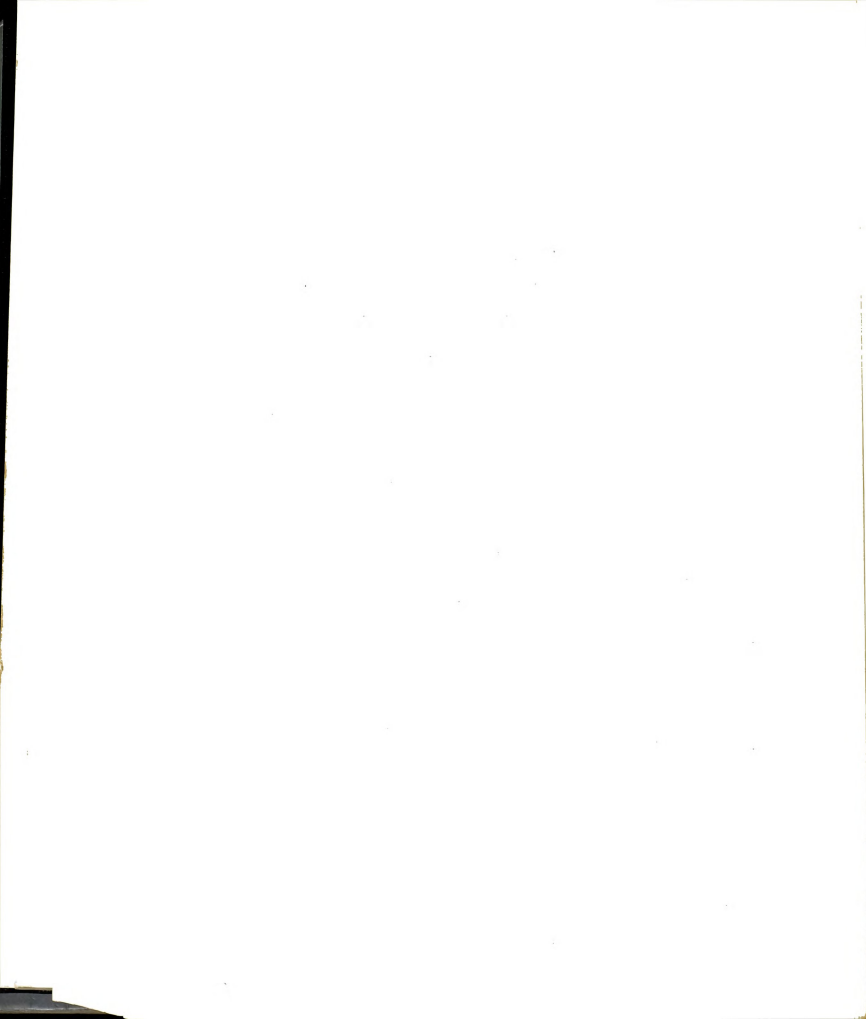
The root of the racist argument was the belief that Negroes were inferior. Democrats delighted in presenting examples of Negroes failing to survive in freedom, thus proving their inferiority. One journal pointed to the experience of the West Indies after emancipation as the "most crushing argument against the feasibility of abolition in a financial as well as humanitarian point of view." Before emancipation, the West Indies had thrived on the production of sugar, cotton, and coffee. Now the islands were ruined; England was forced to seek these products elsewhere. The demise was "attributable to the indolence and shiftlessness of the negroes after their emancipation." Refusing to work because wages meant nothing to them, they had relapsed into barbarism. Abolition of slavery in the South would culminate in the ruin of its economy because the blacks would not work and whites could not endure the severe labor in a tropical climate. To avoid throwing "the world back centuries in the scale of civilization," slavery had to be maintained.<sup>51</sup> The Free Press denounced the free Negroes in Canada. While they enjoyed virtually all the rights of native born Canadians, they were "constantly ungrateful" and continually abused their freedom. It was a "fact" that there was "not a more worthless, lazy, ignorant, shiftless, dishonest, good-for-nothing set of beings in existence than the runaway negroes



of the Province." They had good opportunities to acquire property, but only one in five thousand became comfortable. They preferred ignorance to education, heathenism to religion, and never thought or acted except to devise means to get their next meal.<sup>52</sup> The same paper described the plight of the black man in New York City. In contrast to the South where Negroes were cared for from birth to death, in New York many of them were destitute. Out of a black population of 10,000 approximately half were dependent upon public or private charity. Another eighth survived by thieving, leaving only a third who maintained themselves honestly. Only one in twenty were taxpayers, representing less than \$300,000 of real estate. Very few took advantage of acquiring a freehold of \$250 which would have allowed them to vote. The New York example "does not argue in favor of free negroes, either as a blessing to themselves or to the whites."<sup>53</sup> Those who urged Negro colonization, the Free Press stated, assumed that the blacks would "maintain a condition of civilization." The facts, however, were to the contrary as exemplified by the failures of free Negro civilizations in Haiti, Jamaica, and the British West Indies. Experience had proved that "the African has never attained to any degree of civilization except in slavery, and he had never failed to relapse into barbarism when left to himself." Masters and servants was the only possible relationship between whites and blacks.<sup>54</sup> The Grand Rapids Daily Enquirer echoed this

view by declaring that the Negro "race is an inferior one, and by the laws of reason and Providence, under the domination and cultivation of the superior races of the Earth." Blacks were incapable of self-government; and when coming under the influence of a superior race, they must submit to its rules and regulations.<sup>55</sup>

While all Democratic papers were thoroughly imbued with racism, the two major dailies indulged in it more than others. Implicit, and often explicit, in their arguments was the belief that the Negro could not survive out of slavery. Their appeals were to a racial prejudice that was latent, if not overt, in most Northerners. They cleverly tried to turn the Republican free labor argument to their own advantage by claiming that abolition would destroy the free white laborer. Indeed, Democrats focused on the great ambiguity of the Republican outlook. As Foner has noted, Republicans never made clear whether they considered the Negro race or the institution of slavery as the element that degraded white labor.<sup>56</sup> Democratic papers argued that it was the black man, an inferior creature. Attempting to scare Michiganders into believing that Republicans were scheming to raise these inferiors to social equality with them, Democratic journals urged them to vote for Douglas and the party of white superiority. Interestingly, Michigan Democratic papers did not resort to warning about the perils of amalgamation, as did, for example, the New York Day-Book. On the whole, they



confined themselves to citing the dangers of Negro equality to the economic welfare of white people.

Racism was rampant among all elements in northern society. As has been shown, several Democratic papers tried to exploit this sentiment. The Republican party throughout the nation also subscribed to the doctrine of white supremacy. Yet, as Eric Foner has shown, the Republicans, or at least their leadership, were markedly less racist than their Democratic counterparts. Some areas in the North of great Republican strength were noted for their support of Negro suffrage and opposition to exclusion. Many Republican leaders had taken pro-Negro positions at the expense of political gain. Generally, most Republicans were willing, based on the premise that Negroes were human beings and American citizens, to grant them their natural rights: life, liberty, and property. Fewer Republicans were willing to grant legal equality, especially political rights, and even fewer social equality. Those opposing social equality argued that such relationships were determined by custom and could not be changed by law. This ambivalence in the attitude of Republicans usually resolved itself in their allowing the Negro the right to prove to the world that he could make a success of himself when given the chance. That is, in accordance with their free-labor ideology, Republicans tended to ignore the social prejudice against the Negro and expected that the removal of economic barriers established by law would

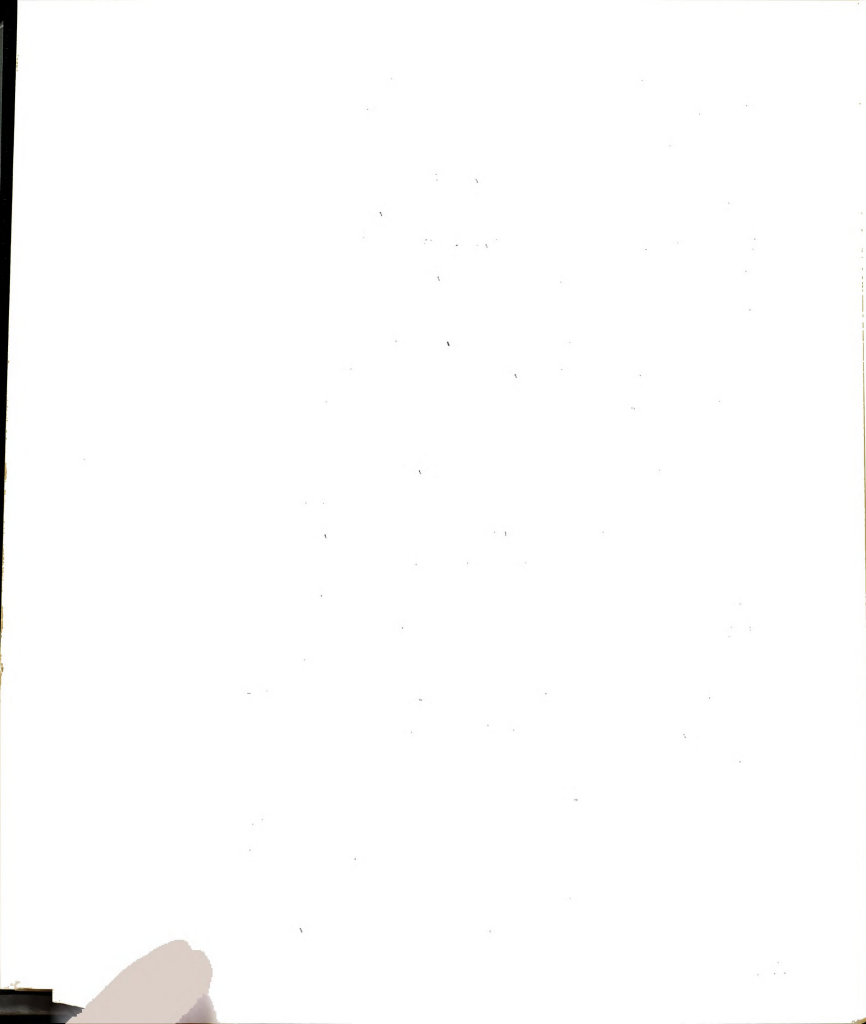
alone provide a true test of the Negro's place in American society.<sup>57</sup>

Foner's analysis of the Republican attitude toward race is borne out by an examination of the editorial opinion of the Michigan Republican press. It was marked by a scarcity of racist appeals; most papers completely ignoring the issue. Racist attitudes were not totally lacking, but only the Detroit Daily Advertiser made them explicit and then only infrequently and with much less virulence than the Democratic press. The Advertiser, in January, 1860, answered the charges of the New York Express that the Republicans were a pro-Negro party by asserting that the Republican party was the true white man's party. Founded to guarantee free soil for free man, it was determined that the territories would be secured for free white labor. Abhorrence of black slave labor gave the party its dominance in the North. The Republican position, so the Advertiser claimed, was that the South should not attempt to extend the "nigger" into the territories or the free states, hence not making the "'nigger' supreme in the land." It declared: "look at us who are called 'black,' because we go for the white man, while they are considered white when they go for the black man." It did not oppose, however, propositions allowing Negro suffrage to be submitted to the people for their decision. Those whites who felt secure in their position would not be alarmed by Negro suffrage. Only those who equated the



right to vote with Negro equality would be concerned with the issue. The paper pointed out that in states where Negroes could vote they occupied the same social position as where they could not. Indeed, "it is only such men as the editors of the Grand Rapids Enquirer, of the Slave Press Detroit Free Press here,...who apprehend that negro suffrage would create negro equality, as it might with them."<sup>58</sup>

The Eaton County Republican, although much more sympathetic to the black man, also exhibited underlying racist attitudes. It observed that slave revolts would be more likely "as the negroes of the South receive into their veins the blood of the white man, and thereby become imbued with his intelligence and aspiration...."<sup>59</sup> It felt that "blackness" was inherently inferior, and only through the infusion of "white" blood could the Negro advance. Colonization was proposed by the Republican as a possible solution to the "black problem." It correctly observed that the prejudices of many Northerners stood in the way of the Negro receiving justice. Even among anti-slavery men, prejudice was considerable. Blacks were assigned the lowest positions in society and denied social and political equality. The establishment of a colony in Central or South America would provide them an opportunity to develop their powers and enjoy full rights. Free institutions would be extended while the Negro would be elevated through the ownership of land. But the Negro, the Republican urged, should not be forced to leave the

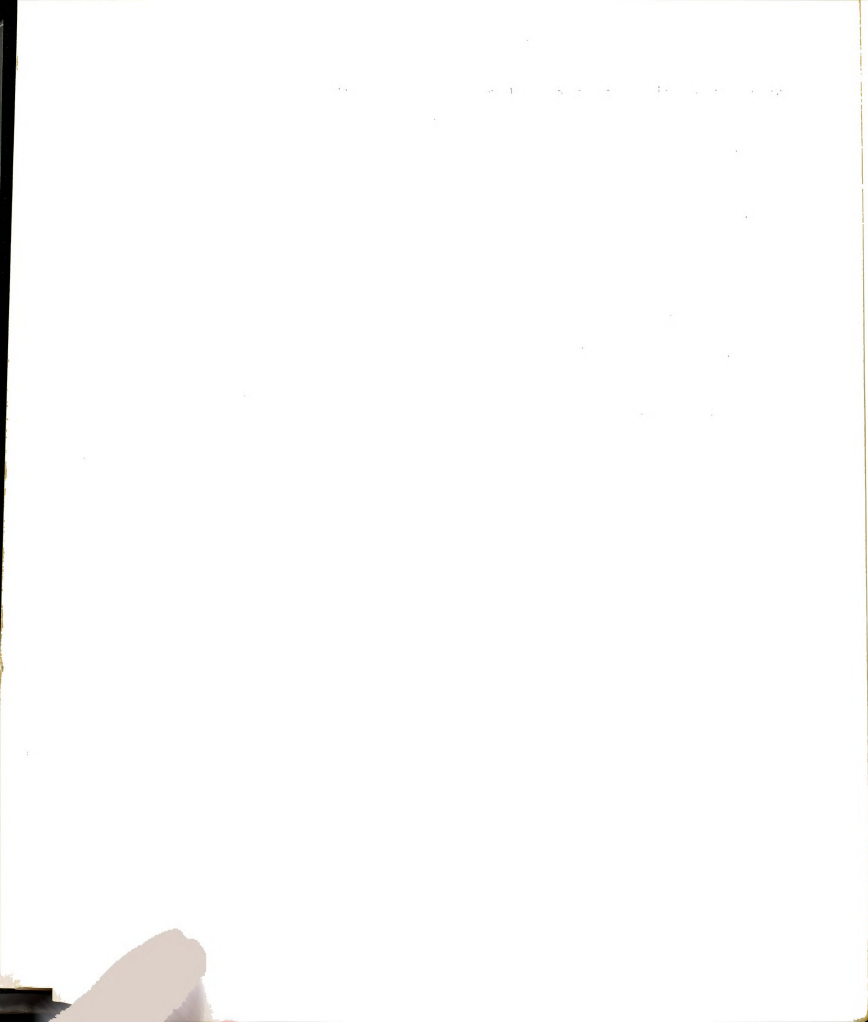


country, but rather made to see that the plan was "for his interest and happiness." It did not sympathize with a spirit, frequently exhibited in the North, "which would crush and spurn the negro...." After all, "the race so long subject, has claims upon those who have oppressed them, and these should be recognized and complied with."<sup>60</sup> The Constantine Mercury and Advertiser also endorsed colonization, especially in Haiti, observing that it would offer the black man perfect political and social freedom.<sup>61</sup>

In summary, most Michigan Democratic papers avoided the issue of the morality of slavery, very few openly condemned it as immoral, and almost all felt that the black man could not be civilized in any other capacity than servitude, whether formalized by slavery or informally maintained by menial positions. All were thoroughly imbued with racism, some poisonously so. Republican journals, on the other hand, conveyed a more ambiguous and complex set of values. The same papers, such as the Detroit Daily Advertiser, could condemn slavery as immoral while asserting that the Republican party was for the sole benefit of white men. Sympathy for the oppressed was never totally reconciled with revulsion at the black man's color and the economic threat that he represented. Other journals exhibited genuine empathy with the black man himself. In addition, the free labor argument was used in two ways, i.e., that slavery as an institution degraded free labor,



or at other times that the black man himself did the degrading. Such a hazy attitude probably helped the party politically because it appealed both to those primarily concerned with the threat to free labor and those who were genuinely concerned about the plight of the black man. In the denouement of Reconstruction the racist aspect of Republican thought allowed the party to abandon the black man with a minimum of guilt at the betrayal of sacred ideals. Those still interested in the future of the black man could not resist the pressure of those Republicans who felt that the time had come to forge an entente with the South on the basis of white supremacy.



## CHAPTER V NOTES

<sup>1</sup>For a discussion of Revisionist views see Thomas J. Pressly, Americans Interpret Their Civil War (New York: The Free Press, 1962), Chapter 7.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., Chapter 5.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., Chapter 4. Modern historians that have emphasized the role of slavery in the coming of the Civil War have been Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., "The Causes of the American Civil War: A Note on Historical Sentimentalism," Partisan Review, XVI (1949); Peter Geyl, "The American Civil War and the Problem of Inevitability," New England Quarterly, XXIV (1951); Allan Nevins, Ordeal of the Union, 4 v. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1947-1951); Eugene Genovese, The Political Economy of Slavery (New York: Vintage Books, 1965); and Eric Foner, Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970). These historians agree only in that slavery must be considered in any discussion on the causes of the war. They markedly differ as to exactly what role it played, and why it offended Northerners.

<sup>4</sup>see Leon F. Litwack, North of Slavery: The Negro in the Free States, 1790-1860 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961).

<sup>5</sup>Eugene H. Berwanger, The Frontier Against Slavery (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1967), pp. 30-50.

<sup>6</sup>V. Jacque Voegeli, Free but Not Equal: The Midwest and the Negro during the Civil War (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967), passim.

<sup>7</sup>Russel B. Nye, Fettered Freedom: Civil Liberties and the Slavery Controversy, 1830-1860 (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1963), pp. 282-315; Larry Gara, "Slavery and the Slave Power: A Crucial Distinction," Civil War History, XV (March, 1969).

<sup>8</sup>Foner, Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men, pp. 11-72, 301-317.

<sup>9</sup>Eaton County Republican, November 2, 1859;  
November 16, 1860.

<sup>10</sup>Grand Rapids Eagle, November 25, 1859.

<sup>11</sup>Hillsdale Standard, December 27, 1859.

<sup>12</sup>Niles Inquirer, February 8, 1860.

<sup>13</sup>Marshall Statesman, April 11, 1860.

<sup>14</sup>Battle Creek Journal, August 3, 1860.

<sup>15</sup>Ingham County News, June 14, December 27, 1860.

<sup>16</sup>Detroit Daily Advertiser, July 26, 1860.

<sup>17</sup>Grand Traverse Herald, November 2, 1860.

<sup>18</sup>Marshall Statesman, June 20, 1860.

<sup>19</sup>Major L. Wilson, "The Free Soil Concept of Progress and the Irrepressible Conflict," American Quarterly, XXII (Winter, 1970).

<sup>20</sup>Grand Rapids Eagle, November 25, 1859.

<sup>21</sup>Allegan Journal, January 16, 1860.

<sup>22</sup>Battle Creek Journal, February 3, September 28,  
1860.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., February 3, 1860.

<sup>24</sup>Marshall Statesman, March 28, 1860.

<sup>25</sup>Detroit Daily Tribune, April 9, 1860.

<sup>26</sup>Detroit Daily Advertiser, August 29, 1860.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., January 10, 1860.

<sup>28</sup>Grand Rapids Eagle, January 30, 1860.

<sup>29</sup>Eaton County Republican, October 29, 1859.

<sup>30</sup>Battle Creek Journal, October 5, 1860.

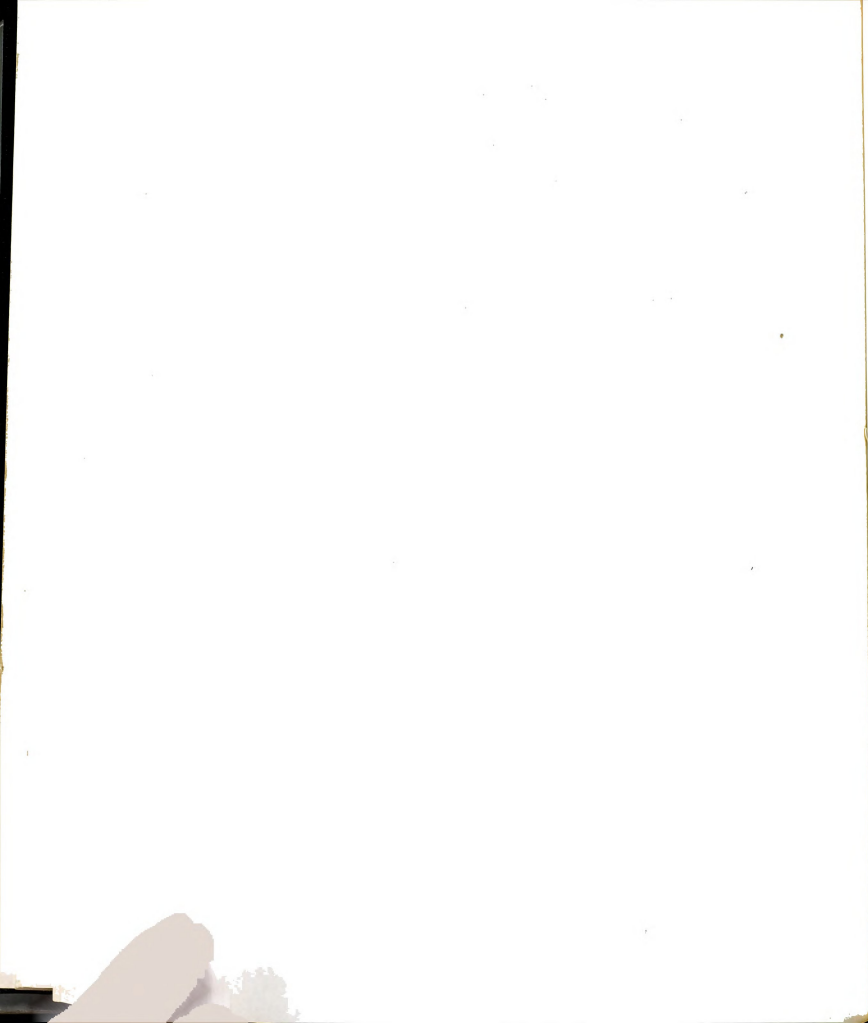
<sup>31</sup>Michigan State News, October 2, 1860.

<sup>32</sup>Marshall Statesman, September 26, 1860.

<sup>33</sup>Lansing State Republican, August 8, 1860.



- <sup>34</sup>Detroit Daily Tribune, March 4, 1861.
- <sup>35</sup>St. Joseph Traveler, January 25, 1860; Battle Creek Journal, October 5, 1860.
- <sup>36</sup>Marshall Statesman, March 28, September 26, 1860.
- <sup>37</sup>Foner, Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men, pp. 40-51.
- <sup>38</sup>Eaton County Republican, June 29, 1860.
- <sup>39</sup>Flint Wolverine Citizen, January 14, 1860.
- <sup>40</sup>Ingham County News, June 7, 1860.
- <sup>41</sup>Detroit Daily Tribune, January 7, 1860; Constantine Mercury and Advertiser, September 27, 1860.
- <sup>42</sup>Detroit Daily Tribune, November 13, 1860.
- <sup>43</sup>Howard C. Perkins, "The Defense of Slavery in the Northern Press on the Eve of the Civil War," The Journal of Southern History, IX (November, 1943).
- <sup>44</sup>Niles Republican, March 30, 1861.
- <sup>45</sup>Grand Rapids Daily Enquirer, January 30, 1861.
- <sup>46</sup>Adrian Daily Watchtower, July 10, 12, 1860.
- <sup>47</sup>Kalamazoo Gazette, December 14, 1860; January 18, 1861.
- <sup>48</sup>Detroit Free Press, November 18, 1859; February 28, March 11, September 30, 1860.
- <sup>49</sup>Niles Republican, January 14, February 11, 18, 1860.
- <sup>50</sup>Grand Rapids Daily Enquirer, October 3, 10, 11, 12, 20, 25, 1860.
- <sup>51</sup>Marshall Democratic Expounder, November 24, 1859.
- <sup>52</sup>Detroit Free Press, November 29, 1859.
- <sup>53</sup>Ibid., April 8, 1860.
- <sup>54</sup>Ibid., January 15, 1860.



<sup>55</sup>Grand Rapids Daily Enquirer, October 10, 1860.

<sup>56</sup>Foner, Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men, p. 266.

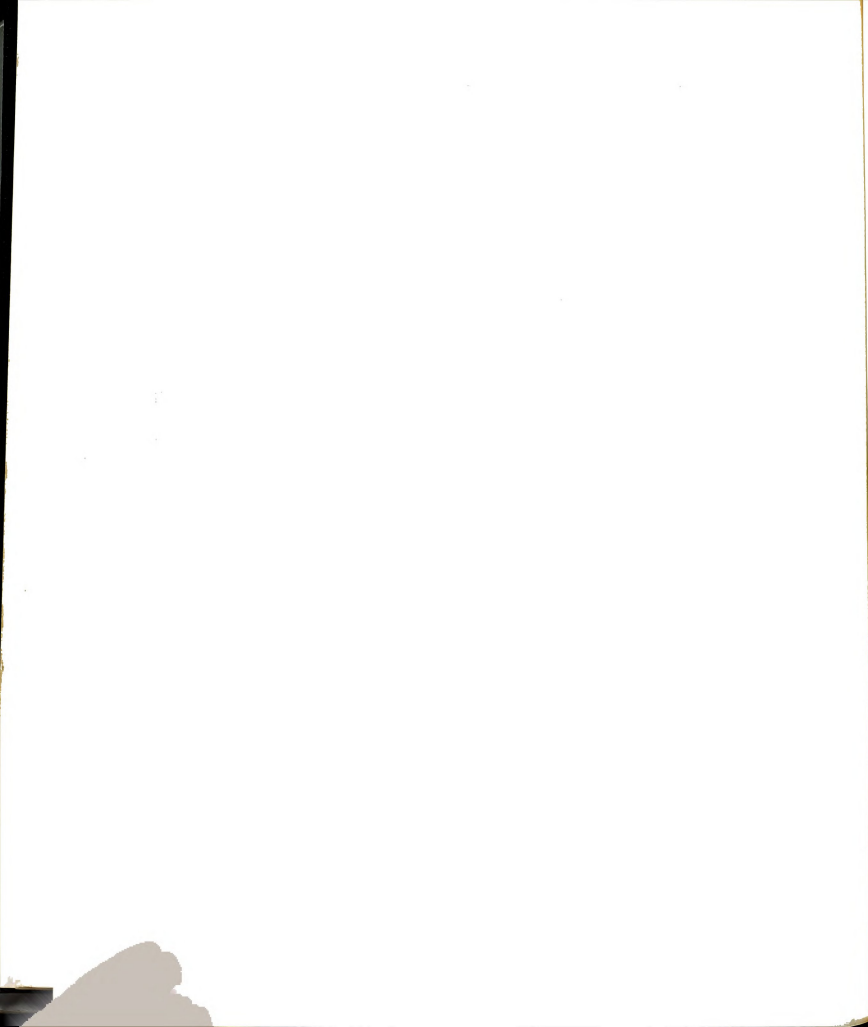
<sup>57</sup>Ibid., pp. 280-300.

<sup>58</sup>Detroit Daily Advertiser, January 10, 16, June 29, September 24, October 15, 1860.

<sup>59</sup>Eaton County Republican, November 2, 1859.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid., February 24, 1860.

<sup>61</sup>Constantine Mercury and Advertiser, April 18, 1861.



## CHAPTER VI

### REACTION OF THE MICHIGAN PRESS TO SECESSION DURING THE LAST MONTHS OF THE BUCHANAN ADMINISTRATION

Soon after Lincoln's election, the states of the lower South began to secede from the Union. Although southern opinion was not unanimous that this was the best course of action, extremists urged secession, not so much that they believed Lincoln was an immediate threat to southern institutions, but because they feared a mounting campaign from the North to divide the slaveholders against the non-slaveholders. They also cautioned that the upper South was rapidly becoming divested of slaves, raising the specter that the lower South would be left in an even more inferior, minority position. Finally, they argued that Lincoln's policy would be unconciliatory and geared towards eventual emancipation.<sup>1</sup> One group of Southerners, however, beseeched the section not to secede until the new Administration committed an overt act.<sup>2</sup> Many Republicans depended upon these "Unionists" to keep the South in the Union. Reflecting their distorted perception of the South, they misjudged that group's influence.

As events unfolded, immediate secessionists chose the method of separate state action.<sup>3</sup> Within three weeks

after Lincoln's election, South Carolina, Mississippi, Georgia, Alabama, and Florida had called for conventions to consider secession. These states had various degrees of Unionist sentiment, but by the beginning of December secessionist strength clearly overpowered the opposition in every state except Georgia.<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, on January 19, 1861, over the opposition of Alexander Stephens and Herschel V. Johnson, the Georgian convention voted for immediate secession, 166 to 130.<sup>5</sup> The entire lower South had seceded by February 1. In all these states secession ordinances were passed by substantial, frequently overwhelming majorities. These states sent delegates to a convention to form a new confederacy. A provisional government was established on February 8.<sup>6</sup>

Coincidental with the secession of the southern states, national interest focused on the policies pursued by the Buchanan Administration. The President's Cabinet was sharply divided between pro-southerners consisting of Secretary of War, John B. Floyd, Secretary of the Treasury, Howell Cobb, and Secretary of the Interior, Jacob Thompson, and those opposed to any concessions to secession; namely, Secretary of State, Lewis Cass, Secretary of the Navy, Isaac Toucey, Attorney General Jeremiah S. Black, and Postmaster General Joseph Holt. Buchanan failed to unite the Cabinet because he consistently took the advice of the Southerners.<sup>7</sup> But his affirmation that secession was illegal and his determination not to surrender Fort

Sumter eventually alienated his southern supporters and drove him to rely on the Unionists in the Cabinet. Shortly after Lincoln's election, Major Robert Anderson with a small garrison took possession of Fort Moultrie on Sullivan's Island in Charleston harbor. Anderson requested reinforcements; but Buchanan vacillated, first ordering aid, then revoking it under pressure from his southern advisors. The President agreed not to send support when South Carolina promised not to seize Federal property. Most northern cabinet ministers became deeply embittered by the President's backdown. Black and Cobb became irreconcilable enemies.<sup>8</sup>

Buchanan's reluctance to take a firm stand manifested itself in his Fourth Annual Message to Congress, delivered on December 3. The sectional crisis, he observed, arose from "the long-continued and intemperate interference of the Northern people with the question of slavery in the Southern States...." The most immediate danger was that the agitation had inspired slaves with "vague notions of freedom." Southerners no longer felt secure. The slavery question could easily be solved, the President continued, if Southerners were allowed to control their domestic institutions. He cautioned the South that since Lincoln had been constitutionally elected it should refrain from "revolutionary resistance" until the new president committed "some overt and dangerous act." In addition, the South should remember that with the

possible exception of the Missouri Compromise, Congress had passed no act impairing the South's right to property in slaves. On the other hand, if the northern states did not redress southern grievances, such as through the repeal of the personal liberty laws, the South would be justified in revolutionary resistance. Buchanan used the expression "revolutionary resistance" because he considered secession unconstitutional, "wholly inconsistent with the history as well as the character of the Federal Constitution." But he concluded that neither Congress nor the President, outside of enforcing Federal laws, had the power to coerce a state, i.e., make war upon it. Even if the Federal government possessed such a power, it would be foolish to exercise it, because war, although it would preserve the Union, "would vanish all hope of its peaceable reconstruction." The Union, he maintained, rested upon public opinion and could not be held together by force. To avoid catastrophe, he urged Congress to enact constitutional amendments guaranteeing most of the southern demands, including a slave code for the territories.<sup>9</sup>

Although Buchanan's Message had supported the basic demands and aspirations of the South, many Southerners resented its affirmation of the integrity of the Union. It also failed to stop the secession of the lower South.<sup>10</sup> Nor did the Message solve the problem of the Federal forts. On December 10, in reply to four South Carolina Congressmen who had told him that the forts would not be



molested until secession, Buchanan informed them that although he was not making a formal agreement, he had no current plans to reinforce the forts.<sup>11</sup> On December 8 Cobb resigned and was replaced by the Southerner Philip F. Thomas. Cass resigned on December 13 because of the President's refusal to reinforce the Charleston forts. Black became Secretary of State, and Edwin M. Stanton replaced him as Attorney General. Buchanan's Cabinet was now substantially more Unionist.<sup>12</sup> South Carolina seceded on December 20 and sent delegates to Washington to negotiate with the Government. The night they arrived, December 26, Major Anderson on his own volition moved his troops from Fort Moultrie to the more defensible Fort Sumter. This action prompted South Carolina to confiscate all Federal property in the state, including Fort Moultrie. The South Carolina commissioners demanded that Buchanan order Anderson to return to Moultrie. Buchanan wavered, but Black convinced the President to resist the demand. On December 29, Floyd resigned, partly due to his connection with a scandal.<sup>13</sup> Buchanan then ordered an expedition to reinforce Sumter. On January 9 the relief chief, Star of the West, was driven out of Charleston, unable to relieve Anderson, who continued to hold out. Buchanan, now willing simply to maintain the stalemate, waited eagerly for the end of his term.<sup>14</sup>

David Potter has observed that prior to Lincoln's election most Republicans discounted the threat of

secession as nothing more than an attempt to frighten the North.<sup>15</sup> The Michigan press reflected this attitude. One

paper accused the Democracy, no longer fearful of General Jackson, of using secession threats to gain victory.<sup>16</sup>

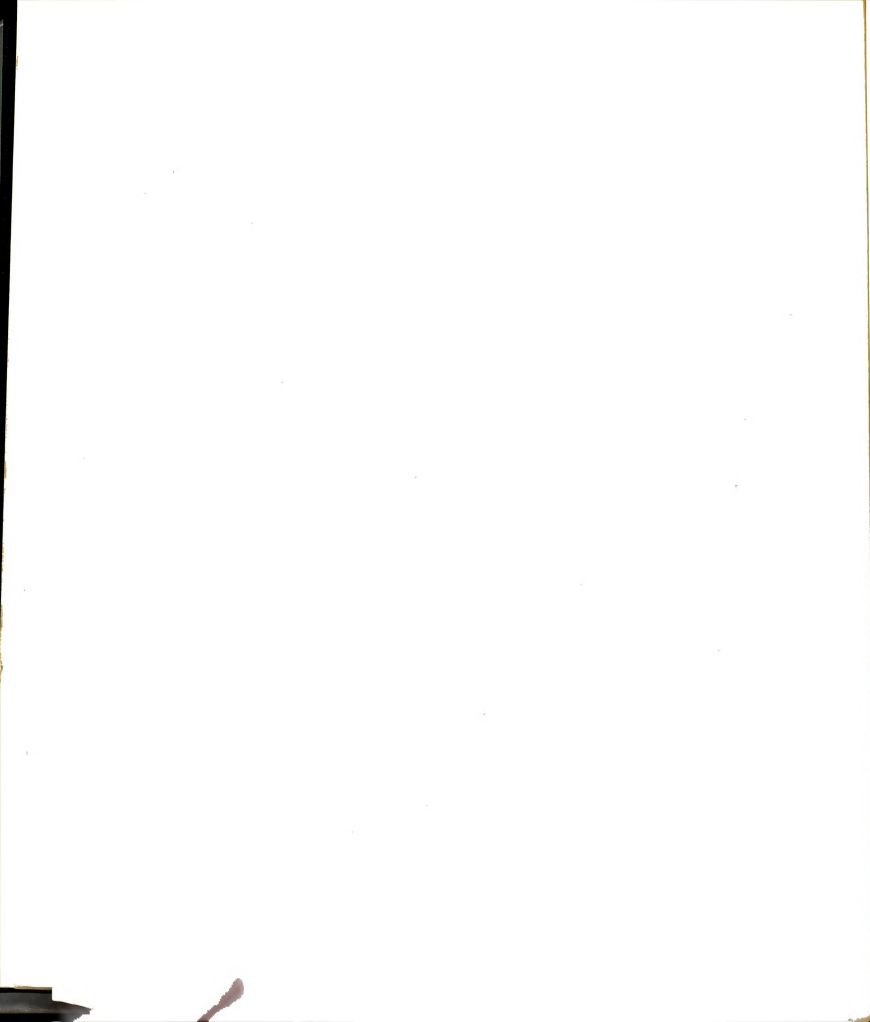
The Detroit Daily Advertiser thought the southern people had no desire to secede. Intelligent Southerners, it concluded, supported Lincoln and the Republicans, who, though opposed to the extension of slavery into free territory, would protect the constitutional rights of the South.<sup>17</sup>

The Niles Inquirer dismissed secession as the "most absurd of political humbugs." Such sentiment, it contended, would disappear before the end of Lincoln's Administration.<sup>18</sup> The Detroit Daily Tribune also viewed the disunion

furor as nonsense. The South did not want Lincoln elected, but it did not consider his election reason for withdrawal. Loyal to the Union, it would seek redress of grievances within it.<sup>19</sup> The South would not secede,

argued the Marshall Statesman, because if she "can not live in the Union she cannot live out of it." If the South dissolved the Union, slavery agitation would not cease. On the contrary, it would be magnified a hundred times. Fugitive slaves would not be returned. The territories would remain with the Union, the South not being allowed to take a square foot of ground. If the South opted to achieve secession by war, it would leave itself open for a servile insurrection. Thus, war would be futile because it would mean the end of slavery.<sup>20</sup>

In the weeks immediately after Lincoln's election, Michigan Republican papers continued to minimize the possibility of a southern secession. But by the end of November, some journals were forced to concede that at least South Carolina was not bluffing. Unless the Southerners seceded, stated one newspaper, nobody would ever again take their threats seriously. But they would not, the paper declared, for although fire-eaters would continue to bluster and threaten, the Union men of the South would restrain them. There was no need for a "moment's alarm."<sup>21</sup> Another journal was heartened by the results of the presidential contest in Virginia, Kentucky, and Tennessee. The issue in those states carried by Bell was union or disunion. Treason would no longer be taught there because it was "overthrown by the people." The South would not secede, it further commented, on the mere apprehension of danger. Only actual injury would drive them out.<sup>22</sup> The Detroit Daily Tribune portrayed the secession movement as "ephemeral" because it was not supported by the large slaveholders. The only danger was "that the politicians may lead the people too far astray, before the second sober thought shall come." But the Tribune was confident that the Unionists would win.<sup>23</sup> By November 14, however, the Tribune began to exhibit faint signs of doubt about Georgia and South Carolina's loyalty to the Union. Union sentiment, it admitted, in both states "is overborne and voiceless in the present carnival



of disunion...." But it still held that Union sentiment would eventually prevail, stimulated by the conservative sentiment in the border slave states. Yet it implied that South Carolina was, indeed, going to secede. The Palmetto state, it observed, would not be able to survive alone without the support of other slave states, nor could she break the Union. The Tribune had not changed its position, but it grew less confident that secession could be avoided.

By the fourth week of November Republican papers began to take secession more seriously, though many continued to regard it as a hollow threat. Conceding that two or three states were apparently determined upon secession, the Lansing State Republican recommended to let them go for their actions would create a powerful southern party which would rally around the Lincoln Administration. Patriotic and moderate Southerners would not tolerate treason as they saw the Republicans guaranteeing their rights.<sup>24</sup> The perpetuation and extension of slavery was at the root of the secession movement, declared the Adrian Daily Expositor. The North considered the institution a great evil that should be gradually extinguished. Most of all, "to its further spread, we say--NEVER. If that is the price, and the only price, at which South Carolina, and her sister States will stay in the Union, let them go! There are evils greater than a dissolution of the Union of these States immeasurably great and deplorable as that



would be."<sup>25</sup> Another journal conceded the secession of South Carolina when it contended that other Cotton states would not join "her passionate caprice."<sup>26</sup> The Constantine Mercury and Advertiser, on the other hand, still discounted secession. The South, it argued, would choose the protection of the Federal government over the uncertainties of disunion. The planters would not allow "an absolute free line" extended south from Canada to the Ohio River. In addition, secession could not be successful "unless aided and abetted at Washington."<sup>27</sup>

By the beginning of December, most Republican papers could no longer deny that South Carolina and probably several other states were going to pass ordinances of secession. Several journals attempted to show the great burden that would rest upon the seceding states. A confederacy of the Cotton states, one editorial argued, would cost twenty-five million dollars annually. Such funds would have to be raised by direct taxation because of their desire for free trade, or by reopening the slave trade, thus reducing the average price of a slave.<sup>28</sup> When the people of South Carolina realized the cost of secession, another paper stated, they would be more than eager to rejoin the Union. Indeed, as it seemed that the Palmetto state would still pay revenue to Washington after secession, the editorial speculated that the state felt it could not go it alone.<sup>29</sup> The Ingham County News mocked South Carolina for fancying that her 50,000 militia force

could "coerce" the northern people into submission by the act of secession. Such a threat was "like the fly upon the horn of the ox in the midst of the great drove, she can say 'what a dust I am raising.'"<sup>30</sup>

Other papers concentrated on the effect of secession on slavery. The Hillsdale Standard, one of the first Republican papers to foresee a bloody conflict, persuasively argued that the secession of the South was hastening to a climax the irrepressible conflict between slavery and liberty. The coming struggle might very well entail "brother butchered by the hand of brother" in a war between slavery and freedom. Yet, "the sooner the battle is fought, the better--if nothing but fighting will close the controversy."<sup>31</sup> Disunion would mean the end of slavery, argued the Detroit Daily Advertiser, not by civil war, but by the slaves themselves. With no general government to protect the slaveholders, a servile insurrection would be likely. The death of slavery would at least partially compensate for the tragedy of the breakup of the Union. Secession would also motivate the people of Canada to be annexed by the United States after the country had rid itself "of a few troublesome, factious slave breeding States."<sup>32</sup>

Although most Republican papers finally accepted South Carolina's secession as reality, some differentiated that act from disunion. South Carolina, the Detroit Daily Advertiser predicted, would merely withdraw her



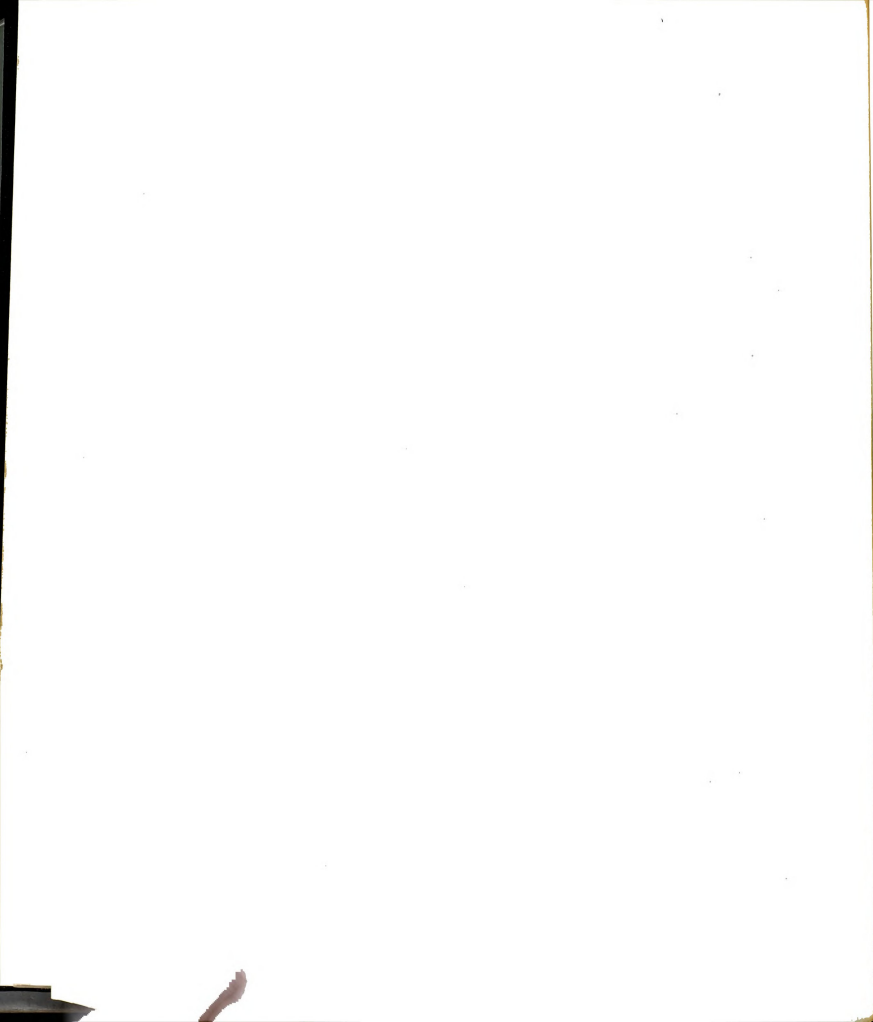
representatives from Congress and compel Federal officials to resign. She would not suspend the benefits of the Post Office, nor resist the collection of the revenue. If the state resisted the latter, she would be forced into submission. In other words, the state would claim to be out of the Union only to force the North to submit to her demands. If the North remained firm, South Carolina would not take the final plunge of resisting the enforcement of the laws.<sup>33</sup> Passing an ordinance of secession, another journal contended, was only the first step in revolution. The state not only had to defy the Union, but to conquer it. South Carolina had not yet proved she could do that.<sup>34</sup> The Palmetto state could not last six months out of the Union, declared the Allegan Journal. She would be like a ship in mid-ocean, "without rudder, compass or sails, with a supply of water and food capable of keeping soul and body together for three days...."<sup>35</sup> All South Carolina wanted, the Tribune again claimed, was new constitutional guarantees which in effect would make the Republican party unconstitutional. Such proposals should be defeated, it urged, for "there is just as much slavery in the constitution now as the Northern public sentiment can stand, and a little more we might almost say...."<sup>36</sup>

Other papers took the ordinance of secession more seriously, although some considered South Carolina still in the Union until she resisted the laws. Secession, declared the Ingham County News, was rebellion, the

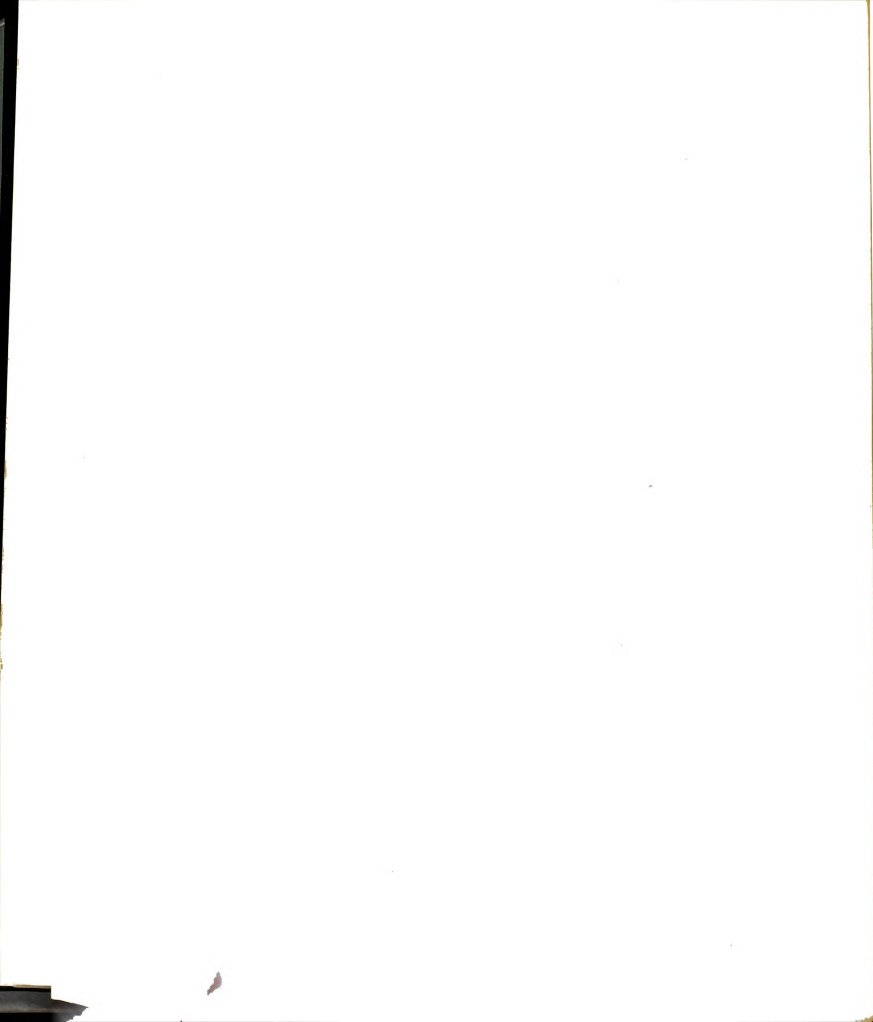
equivalent of a declaration of war. Armed hostility was inevitable if South Carolina continued in her foolish ways. If the state refused to carry out the laws, armed force would be the only alternative.<sup>37</sup> The Battle Creek Journal endorsed a speech of Senator Benjamin F. Wade in which he characterized secession as revolution. The right of revolution cannot be denied a people, continued the editorial, but it was the right of the Government to compel obedience.<sup>38</sup> South Carolina, the St. Joseph Traveler thought, would follow up her secession by usurping the powers of the Federal government by refusing to collect the revenue, taking possession of the forts, and massacring the garrisons. Such treasonous acts could not be settled by compromises or concessions. Rigid enforcement of the laws was the only alternative.<sup>39</sup> By January 9 the Advertiser had come to realize that South Carolina's secession was in earnest, but it believed that within the state a reaction to it was developing.

As the Cotton states withdrew from the Union in January and February, several Republican papers leaped upon any event that gave the least bit of hope of southern reaction against the secession movement. The secession of Mississippi, one journal concluded, would "not prevent the inevitable termination to which all this treason is hastening."<sup>40</sup> The Eaton County Republican discussed the secession of several southern states, their seizure of Federal forts and arsenals, and the firing on the Star of

the West, and then without taking a breath somehow reasoned that "signs of a reaction are appearing." Its argument was based on the vague notion that the southern people no longer wished to continue the strife.<sup>41</sup> A large part of the southern portion of Alabama, another editorial noted, was opposed to secession and had to be coerced into it.<sup>42</sup> The Detroit Daily Advertiser continued to downgrade the permanency of secession. The real danger to the Union, it thought, was less than at the end of November. More and more Southerners were coming to realize that the Lincoln Administration intended no aggressions upon their rights. By the end of February the Advertiser concluded that secession was finally checked by the refusal of Maryland, Kentucky, Missouri and Arkansas to secede.<sup>43</sup> Other papers also argued that the action of the border states indicated that secession was doomed.<sup>44</sup> The Hillsdale Standard was the only Republican paper surveyed that did not view the lull after the abortive attempt to reinforce Sumter as an indication that secession was being reversed. It viewed southern strategy as one of gaining time to gather strength while the Administration was paralyzed by indecision. When the moment was right the secessionists would attack the capital or some other point. "War," it concluded, "does then seem to be inevitable and just before us."<sup>45</sup> Several Republican papers, desperately hoping for a reaction, called for strong action against the secessionists to prove that the North was not impotent.



Although most papers denied the validity of peaceable secession, several, on occasion, flirted with the possibility. As indicated earlier, the initial impulses of the Lansing State Republican and the Adrian Daily Expressor were to let South Carolina go.<sup>46</sup> The Hillsdale Standard echoed this sentiment. It termed secession madness because it invited a servile insurrection. Yet, perhaps it was best to "say affectionately good-bye" to South Carolina. But the paper cautioned that the Palmetto state would not be allowed to imperil the national good and public safety.<sup>47</sup> A writer to the St. Joseph Traveler urged negotiations to effect a peaceful withdrawal of the southern states. Secession, he argued, would greatly outweigh the horrors of civil war. With the South gone, the North would no longer have a drag on its industry and no longer be taxed to support slavery. Peaceful separation was the only way to terminate the "irrepressible conflict."<sup>48</sup> If Northerners agreed that the two sections could no longer live together, the Washington correspondent of the Detroit Daily Tribune suggested that perhaps it was wise to devise a plan of separation. But it had to be done by constitutional means. The doctrine of secession, per se., had to be repudiated. However, if the South were allowed to withdraw while the trade relations between the sections were maintained, the North would gain because it would be "relieved from the responsibility and sin of slavery...."<sup>49</sup> Finally, the Tribune conjectured that many



Northerners, "holding in great horror a civil fratricidal war, would be willing to adjust terms of peaceable separation." But the seceded states would not be allowed to seize Federal property, for this would mean anarchy. The Constitution must be maintained "until the people decree in their primary capacity it shall be no more."<sup>50</sup> Most Republican papers (and their correspondents) did not consistently advocate peaceable secession. Those that conceded the possibility usually hedged their remarks with many qualifications; such as, separation having to take place by constitutional means. Indeed, the whole conception of peaceable secession was a minor theme in Republican papers. Most Republican journals called for strong action by the Buchanan Administration to maintain the Union, although some did not feel that peaceable separation and strong action were mutually exclusive.

Buchanan's handling of the secession crisis has generally been sympathetically treated by those twentieth-century historians who have explored his policy in depth. Writing in 1926, Philip G. Auchampaugh described Buchanan's policy as an overwhelming success. He avoided the opening of hostilities, gave no recognition to the seceding states, and did not burden his successor with any commitments. In other words, he skillfully pursued a peace policy hoping that time and compromise would prompt a reconciliation of the sections.<sup>51</sup> Buchanan was the last national president, concluded Frank W. Klingberg, because

he attempted to balance the rights of a minority against the will of an electoral majority.<sup>52</sup> Allan Nevins qualifiedly praised Buchanan's policy by stating that his "resolve to explore every reasonable path toward reconciliation was sagacious statesmanship."<sup>53</sup> But he also characterized the President as weak, vacillating, and timid. He let himself be dominated by the pro-southern members of his Cabinet and did not take the necessary steps to stave off secession. A major failure was his refusal to reinforce Anderson at an early moment.<sup>54</sup> Kenneth Stamp, while conceding that Buchanan could not rally national support, noted that the President did nothing which gave any support to the principle of secession. Indeed, even after the firing on the Star of the West, he did not rule out the possibility of another expedition to Sumter if Anderson requested one. To the end of his administration, he remained true to the Union.<sup>55</sup>

In contrast to historians, Republicans throughout the nation bitterly and continually condemned Buchanan's policy as sanctioning and abetting treason.<sup>56</sup> The Michigan Republican press was no exception. Within two weeks after Lincoln's election, editorials appeared criticizing Buchanan's policies. The Detroit Daily Tribune charged him with winking at secession.<sup>57</sup> The President was fomenting disunion, argued the Allegan Journal, by not coming to the aid of the garrison at Fort Moultrie which was undermanned, insufficiently supplied, and commanded by





a declared secessionist, Colonel John L. Gardner.<sup>58</sup> The Detroit Daily Advertiser, however, was willing to give Buchanan a chance to close his Administration with "a degree of lustre." His impending Message, it hoped, "would convince everybody that the first of those ring-leaders who commits actual treason will be hung...."<sup>59</sup>

The Advertiser was bitterly disappointed by the President's Message, which, it concluded, had done little to restore the confidence of the nation "or to relieve his badly shattered reputation." Instead of objecting to secession, he simply opposed it for public effect. His Message, the paper charged, was marked by inconsistencies. On the one hand he stated that the South would be justified in revolutionary resistance if the North did not repeal its Personal Liberty laws. On the other hand he proclaimed that such laws had never interfered with the implementation of the Fugitive Slave Law. Another inconsistency was that he attributed the Federal government with sovereignty, but stated that it had "no power to prevent a State from destroying the Government." Although he characterized secession as revolution, he denied the President or Congress the power to enforce the law. The Message illustrated Buchanan's dishonesty and incompetence. He had, in effect, condoned the dissolving of the Union by placing all the blame on the North. The chances of disunion had increased tenfold since the deliverance of the Message. His proposals for conciliating the South

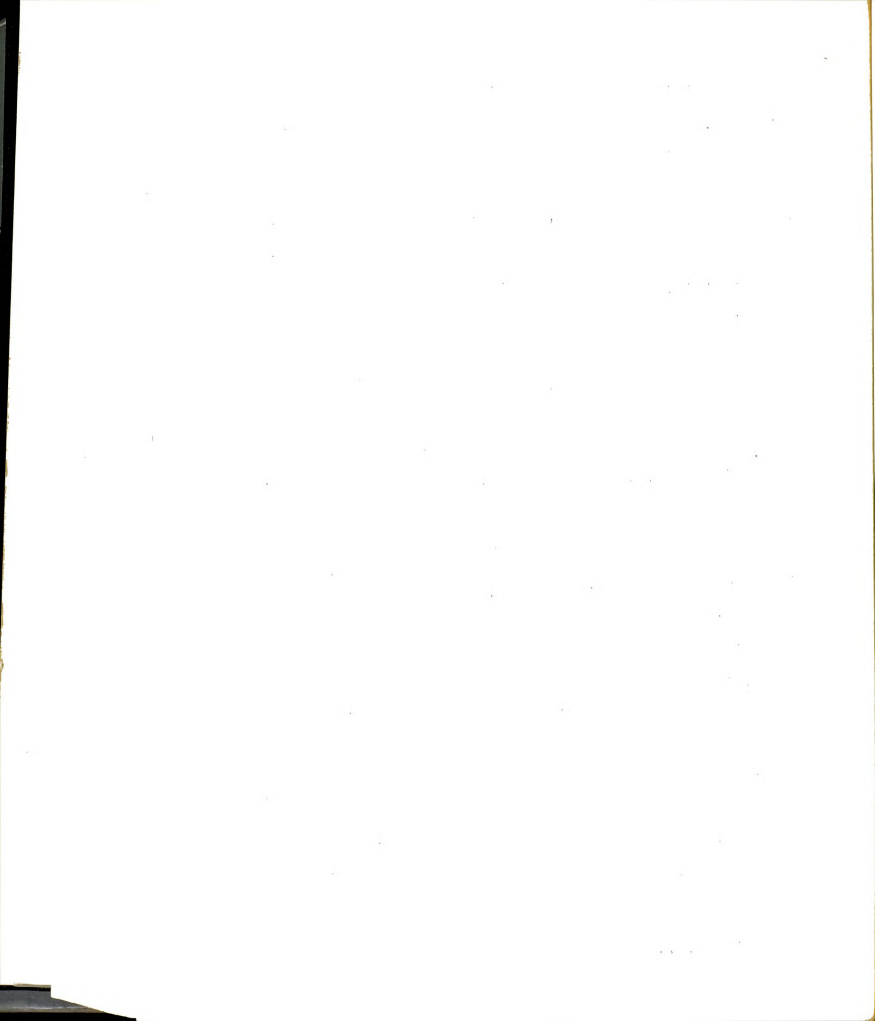


were unacceptable, the paper observed, because they would nationalize slavery and tie the hands of the North.<sup>60</sup>

Other Republican papers were equally critical of the President's performance. The Detroit Daily Tribune, while noting Buchanan's opposition to the right of secession, declared that by denying the Government's right of coercion he had played "into the hands of the secessionists, and will be used by them to fortify themselves." The North would never consent to his call for a slave code for the territories nor accept his contention that the North's interference with slavery in the southern states created the crisis. Such statements could only inflame the passions of the South by providing it justification for its actions. He also proved himself a hypocrite by denying the Government power to deal with secession, while investing it with plenty of power to deal with the unconstitutional Personal Liberty laws.<sup>61</sup> The Constantine Mercury and Advertiser denounced the President for degrading the northern people to a level of heathens who defied the laws while elevating the southern people to the rank of "meek, innocent, and self-denying" Christians. The Message did not "restore harmony between sections far alienated by the falsehood and villainy of men like him, but rather encouraged the activities of the disunionists."<sup>62</sup> One editor castigated the President's proposal of a slave code as "the shame of the age" because it placed freedom and slavery upon equal planes when the latter

should be eliminated by the unanimous consent of all Christians. To place a man "on the level with a brute," directly conflicted with the desires of the Founding Fathers who had based the Republic on the inalienable rights of man.<sup>63</sup> Buchanan's handling of secession, commented a writer to the Jonesville Independent, was "certainly insipid, if not contemptible." His demands for concessions to the South only proved that he was a poor, imbecilic old man, whose "southern residence has rendered him effeminate."<sup>64</sup> In sum, the Michigan Republican press viewed the Message as a betrayal of the North to the South. It particularly resented the placing of the entire blame for the crisis on the North's hostility to slavery. It could not understand how the President could deny the Government the right to protect and maintain its sovereignty over its domain. Finally, it argued that if the President's conciliatory proposals were enacted the Republican victory in the election would be rendered useless. Indeed, it felt he was really out to destroy the party that was inimical to the interests of the South.

Throughout December the Republican press continued to criticize Buchanan for his failure to take a strong stand against the disunionists. One journal denounced him for refusing to garrison fully Fort Moultrie. People "expect the President to protect the public property, and the lives of the officers and men in charge, at whatever cost or sacrifice...." If anything happened to Anderson and



his men, Buchanan would be damned to infamy."<sup>65</sup> The Adrian Daily Expositor considered General Cass' resignation significant. If he, not known for his strength of character, could denounce the President for being weak, Buchanan must deserve impeachment.<sup>66</sup> After the secession of South Carolina, Republican papers reiterated the necessity for the Government to collect the revenue; but many doubted that Buchanan had the will to do it. Buchanan desired to abandon everything to the secessionists, resign, and throw the crisis upon Lincoln, one editor conjectured. But even if Fort Moultrie were surrendered, he continued, peaceable secession would hardly be achieved. Problems beyond the President's control, such as inter-state regulations, the possibilities of several Unions, and control of the Mississippi would have to be settled.<sup>67</sup> Out of cowardice or treason Buchanan would do nothing, thus betraying the Government, another paper predicted. Unfortunately Congress could not act independently of the President since he was commander-in-chief.<sup>68</sup> Not even General Cass' resignation would prompt the President to do anything "towards checking the Disunion spirit," lamented the Allegan Journal.<sup>69</sup>

By the end of December many Republican papers began openly to characterize the President as a traitor and a conspirator. Buchanan and part of his Cabinet conspired with the traitors to humble the North, forcing it to make degrading concessions to the South, charged the editor of

the Detroit Daily Tribune. Indeed, Buchanan had been the instigator of the plot.<sup>70</sup> His treason was proved, declared the St. Joseph Traveler, by his refusal to take General Scott's advice to send reinforcements to Anderson at Moultrie.<sup>71</sup> By the turn of the year, however, Republican papers became somewhat more ambivalent toward "Buck" as it appeared that his position had firmed. Sometimes they denounced him as a traitor, but at other times they praised him for his new-found resistance to the demands of the disunionists. After Anderson removed to Sumter and the South Carolina commissioners demanded that Buchanan order Anderson back to Moultrie, the Advertiser feared that the President would accede to their request, while a real man would order their arrest for treason.<sup>72</sup> But the Tribune was heartened when the President did not order Anderson back and got rid of Secretary of War Floyd. Astonished, the editor wrote that "the President has done so well for a start, after having done so ill up to this time, that we do not dare to hope he will continue to do anything as this in the future." Two days later, however, the Tribune once again condemned the President for dealing with the South Carolina commissioners.<sup>73</sup> The Battle Creek Journal also castigated Buchanan for his "treason, imbecility, and cowardice." For six months, it charged, he had been cognizant of the schemes of the secessionists, but did nothing to thwart their activities. There could be little doubt of his guilt in "aiding and abetting

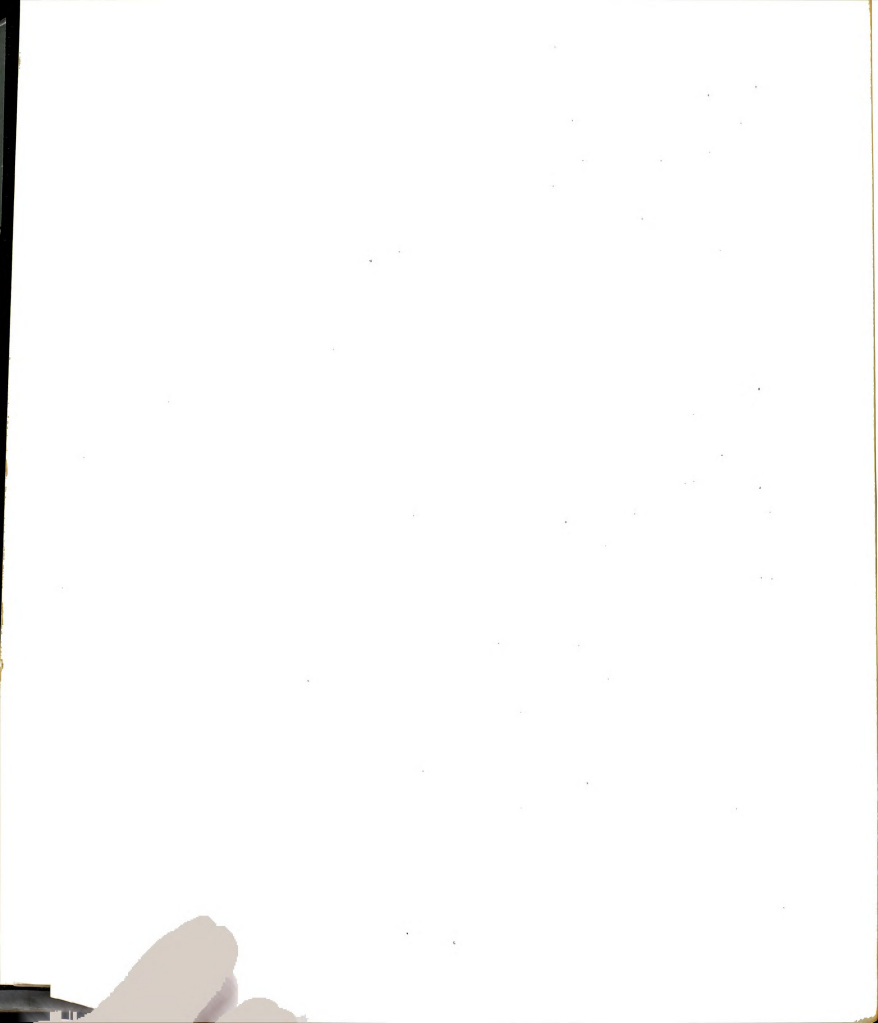


treason."<sup>74</sup>

For approximately a week, from January 5 through January 12, 1861, Buchanan probably received more praise from the Michigan Republican press than at any other time during his Administration. Prompted by his rejection of the South Carolina commissioners and his sending of an expedition to relieve Fort Sumter, Republican papers hoped that at last the President was taking firm steps to stem the tide of secession. The country had gained from the President surrounding himself with a new set of advisors and from his seeming intention to enforce the laws and support the Constitution, claimed the Tribune on January 5. The nation, irrespective of party, would support him, it announced. On the 12th, after the firing on the Star of the West, the paper stated it would tolerate the President blaming the crisis on the Republicans as long as he continued to "protect the public property, maintain the constitution and the laws, and punish treason...." The Detroit Daily Advertiser, upon hearing that an expedition was being sent to Sumter, was willing to forgive the President for all past wrongs.<sup>75</sup> The Jonesville Independent also cheered the Administration's firm stand as "a welcome surprise." The President's actions saved him "from the halter of the hangman for treason" and could conceivably relieve "him of the detestation now felt for him through the whole North, for his past misconduct."<sup>76</sup> Some papers, however, could still not say a good word for the

President. The Lansing State Republican considered him "a traitor at heart," ascribing his actions to the pressure of public opinion.<sup>77</sup> Yet, on the whole, most Republican papers seemed genuinely willing to forget the past and support the President as long as he followed up his initial actions in the drive to crush secession.

As the crisis at Sumter passed into a stalemate, the Republican press resumed its condemnation of Buchanan, but his Administration received much less editorial comment. Those papers that did discuss him attacked his idleness which had allowed the secession movement to gain strength.<sup>78</sup> Throughout the whole secession period, however, Republican papers had called for strong action against the disunionists. There was no unanimity as to exactly what the action should be, but they agreed that waiting around for a reaction to secession was not good enough. The nation was being plunged into anarchy and nothing was being done to save it, lamented the Detroit Daily Tribune after the secession of South Carolina. The Government had to "make such an exhibition of Federal authority as shall compel the traitors in South Carolina to respect that authority." After the firing on the Star of the West the paper suggested the blockading of Charleston as a means to exhibit the Government's strength while not provoking violence. Such an action (whether called enforcement of the laws or coercion) was imperative to preserve the Constitution and the Union.<sup>79</sup> The Government

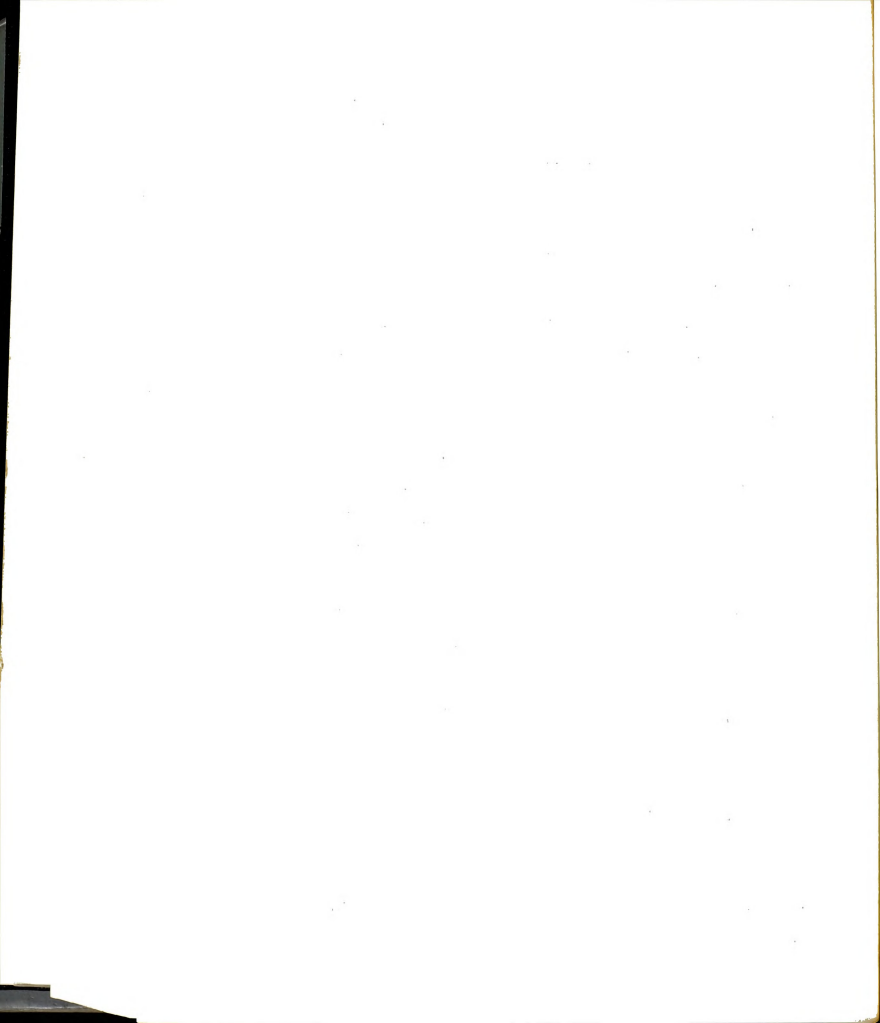


had to enforce its own laws or it was no government at all, asserted the Detroit Daily Advertiser.<sup>80</sup> Secession, declared the Michigan State News, could be strangled in ninety days if the mails were stopped in the seceded states, the laws making their harbors ports of entry repealed, and the revenue collected by warship.<sup>81</sup> To put down secession, argued the Allegan Journal, a million men could be raised within sixty to ninety days. Civil war, it thundered, was preferable to "anarchy, to the re-opening of African Slave trade and to the Nationalization of Slavery." Although such a conflict was horrible to contemplate, it might be necessary as a last resort.<sup>82</sup>

The Ingham County News argued that to save democracy in both the United States and Europe, the Union had to be preserved, even "if blood must flow in this conflict...." If there were a call to arms, Michigan would provide 50,000 men.<sup>83</sup> Perhaps the editor of the Marshall Statesman issued the most militant call for action among Michigan Republican papers. He urged "war, and WAR TO THE KNIFE, if need be to vindicate the supremacy of the law, and to preserve these blood-brought institutions of ours." The army and navy should be used, the editor continued, to regain possession of the forts, "even if it has to be done by heavy bombardments and immense loss of life," if a blockade should not achieve that purpose. Simultaneously, war vessels would collect the revenue. If the South achieved its independence, the editor further claimed, it

would hasten the emancipation of the slaves, i.e., unpaid labor. Such an event "would be a serious disaster to both slaves and white people...."<sup>84</sup> Apparently this editor greatly feared free blacks as competition to free white labor.

Throughout the waning months of the Buchanan Administration, most Republican papers reacted to secession in a twofold, somewhat contradictory manner. They continually de-emphasized the legitimacy and magnitude of the secession movement, while at the same time they called for a display of governmental power to show that the United States in no way recognized rebellion. Several papers were prepared for civil war, if necessary, to re-assert the authority of the Federal government. Certainly, with some exceptions, the Republican press underestimated the influence and determination of the secessionists, while overestimating the degree to which Unionist sentiment would come to the fore under circumstances acceptable to Republicans, i.e., unconditional acceptance of the Chicago platform. Most editors seemed to believe that a reaction would develop in the South with no concessions by the Republican party. Misunderstanding the nature of southern Unionism, they did not realize that their call for the enforcement of laws (which all Southerners labeled coercion) would alienate southern Unionists, most of whom were for the maintenance of the Union, but only at a price. In other words, Republicans deluded themselves into believing



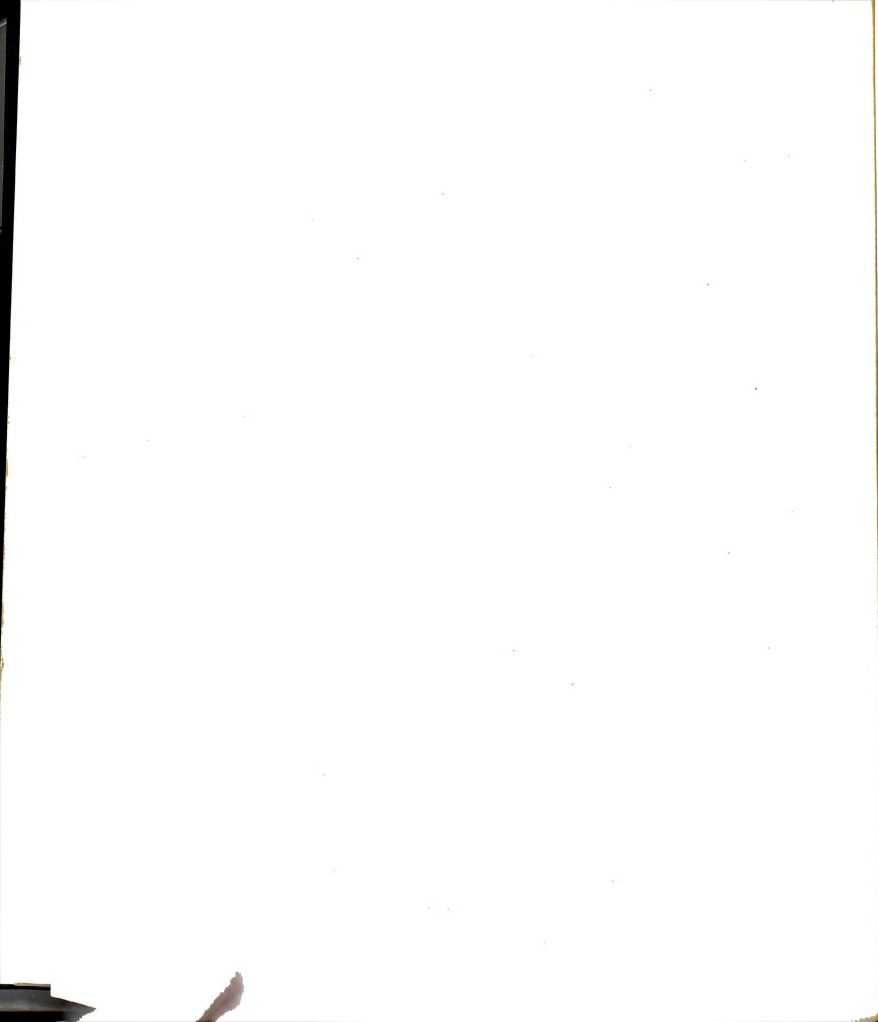
that the southern Unionists would win over the South while the Government was in one way or the other forcing its will upon the seceded states.

Republican editors truly considered Buchanan to be a traitor who had sold out his section. Yet, they hoped to make political gains out of the President's weakness. By identifying the whole of the northern Democracy, as well as Buchanan, with secession and rebellion, they tried to persuade the people that the Government was only safe in Republican hands. Indeed, this tactic was to serve the Republican party well for many decades after the guns had ceased. In reality, the Michigan Republican press was not quite as Unionist as it sometimes tried to appear; that is, several papers occasionally considered peaceable secession. None of them consistently advocated such a position because all desired the continuance of the Union. One suspects, however, that if either the national party leadership or public opinion accepted secession, most Republican papers would have seen enough advantage in it to concur, most likely on the grounds that the nation was at last freed from the taint of slavery and the Slave Power. But as events developed, peaceable secession never really had a chance because of the overwhelming Unionism of the northern people and the Republicans' revulsion at the arrogance of the secessionists. Republicans were so filled with hatred for the South that they offered it the Chicago platform or nothing. Nevertheless, Republicans

expected to see a revival of southern Unionism which would keep in the northern slave states, if not the Cotton states.

Prior to the election of 1860, several Democratic papers cautioned those planning to vote Republican that the South was seriously contemplating disunion. After John Brown's raid the Detroit Free Press warned of the danger to the Union due to the fanaticism of Northerners' supporting the infamous deed.<sup>85</sup> The "Hotspurs of the South," the same people who had plotted the bolts at the Democratic conventions, observed the Free Press as the campaign of 1860 got into full swing, were planning the secession of the South. By late October, convinced that Lincoln's election would force three or four states into disunion, the only hope the paper held for the Union was that the House of Representatives would be conservative. If the South saw that the Congress would stave off the anti-slavery onslaught upon it, "possible the impending revolution may be stayed." In any case, a conservative House would give the southern Union men a powerful weapon in the fight for the Union.<sup>86</sup> The Grand Rapids Daily Enquirer also viewed the South as "volcanic ground," ready to erupt at a Republican victory. Unfortunately the election of a sectional president would culminate in "the horrors of civil war, brothers, fathers, husbands, and friends, fighting against each other...."<sup>87</sup> The irrepressible conflict had come, stated the Marshall





Democratic Expounder. Civil war was a real possibility, and its readers were informed that "you...may in a very short time be called on to shoulder your musket, and you will have only to decide on which side you will range yourself."<sup>88</sup> The Expounder's implication of a civil war not fought solely on a sectional basis would, near the culmination of the secession movement, be forcefully argued by the Detroit Free Press.

In the weeks immediately after the election, while Republican papers were dismissing secession as an empty threat or bluff, Democratic journals explained the secession movement as a real and imminent threat to the Union. The Grand Rapids Daily Enquirer considered secession likely but felt that Lincoln's promise not to interfere with southern institutions and to enforce the Fugitive Slave Law, the success of the Bell ticket in several states, and the fact that most Southerners were conservative might calm the disunion agitation.<sup>89</sup> The Niles Republican, on the other hand, confident that "the South are arming for the contest," had no doubt that at least five states would secede.<sup>90</sup> "No two nations in the world are more hostile to each other than are the two sections of our common country at this moment," declared the Marshall Democratic Expounder. Dissolution and civil war were imminent because neither side wanted to compromise or make concessions.<sup>91</sup> Another journal did not consider it strange that the South would secede after years of being denounced by

Republican leaders.<sup>92</sup> The Michigan Argus, in contrast, thought fanaticism in the North and South combined was "powerless to break up the Union." Conservative influences in the South, moderation in the North, and firmness by the Administration would allay the crisis.<sup>93</sup>

While Democratic papers predicted secession as a reality that could not be ignored, they unanimously condemned it as unwise, unnecessary, and unconstitutional. The Niles Republican urged Democrats "to remain true to their principles." They must uphold the Union while soothing sectional differences. The South should not secede because it would be worse off outside the Union. Nor should there be any attempt to interfere with Lincoln's inauguration. Powerless to do harm, he would have to follow the Democratic program of executing all the laws, including the Fugitive Slave Act. Should Lincoln violate his official oath, the northern Democracy would unite with the South to fight those who would destroy the Constitution.<sup>94</sup> The South had "not yet any occasion or excuse," for secession, another paper observed. Not until the new Administration committed some overt act could there be even "a shadow of excuse" for secession.<sup>95</sup> The right of revolution was inherent in every people, stated the Detroit Free Press, but should only be undertaken when "the existing government has committed grievous wrongs." Until Lincoln should commit a wrong, secession would be unjustifiable revolution.<sup>96</sup> While reiterating that

secession was unjustified without an overt act, another editor urged compromise and concession to save the Union.<sup>97</sup> The Kalamazoo Gazette considered secession calamitous because it would "embroil the whole land in a contest such as the civilized world never yet has witnessed."<sup>98</sup> The Grand Rapids Daily Enquirer, hoping that Lincoln would be inaugurated peaceably, noted that the Democrats still controlled the House and Senate. The Democratic party united could "hurl the 'negro worshippers' from power in four years without the least trouble."<sup>99</sup> Finally, the Niles Republican facetiously proposed an ancient Greek method for settling the dispute. One hundred men from Massachusetts led by William H. Seward and one hundred men from South Carolina led by Lawrence Keitt would meet on the field of battle. These men, all extremists, of course, would fight until one man was left.<sup>100</sup>

Not only did the Democratic papers disapprove of secession, but they also urged strong governmental action to prevent it. Indeed, until the middle of January, 1861, Democratic papers were as strong or stronger than the Republican press in their call for the maintenance of the Union. Immediately after the election, the Free Press called upon the Administration "to execute the Federal laws in every state." The Founding Fathers, it observed, did not contemplate a Union so weak that it could be broken by any state choosing to disrupt it. There should be

twenty years of war before a state would be allowed to secede "until the right of revolution had accrued."<sup>101</sup> The Grand Rapids Daily Enquirer considered it absolutely impossible for a state to secede, although individuals within the state might commit treason by refusing to allow the laws of the United States to be executed. These people "might as well claim the right to commit murder as treason with impunity."<sup>102</sup> Repudiating the idea that the Government had no means to protect itself from dissolution, the Marshall Democratic Expounder emphatically stated that "better than a million of men should perish rather than that the Union of these States be dissolved...."<sup>103</sup>

To a large degree the early reaction of the Democratic press to secession can be ascertained from its analysis of Buchanan's policy. Days after the election, the Free Press confessed that it had no confidence in the President's ability, integrity, or patriotism. If he should do his duty, however, the American people would "forget all his transgressions."<sup>104</sup> The Michigan Argus was dismayed that while the sections were heading toward a collision the general government did not deny the right of secession or intimate "that the laws must be obeyed and the Union preserved." Buchanan's silence could indicate, the paper felt, that he favored secession.<sup>105</sup>

The President's Message of December 2 was generally denounced by the Democratic papers, although they subscribed to certain aspects of it. The Grand Rapids

Enquirer while "disappointed by the absence of the Jacksonian spirit....," agreed with the Message that the crisis was due to twenty-five years of slavery agitation, but denied the South the right of revolutionary resistance if the North did not repeal its unfriendly legislation, such as the Personal Liberty laws. No excuse for such action existed as long as the Federal government enforced the Fugitive Slave Law. The paper further objected to the President's contention that South Carolina could "peacefully revolutionize" itself out of the Union. In contrast to the Free Press and even some Republican papers, the Enquirer denied the right of revolution, a meaningless term in a system where state governments guaranteed people their rights and privileges. The President had chosen the route of complicity, the paper lamented, rather than meeting the question of secession boldly and honestly.<sup>106</sup> The Free Press also had few good words for the Message. It agreed with the President on the role of slavery agitation and the unconstitutionality of secession but denounced him for denying the Federal government the right to preserve itself. In effect, Buchanan had told the South that it could do whatever it wanted without Federal interference. Indeed, "one might almost swear," that part of his Message was written by "some cunning revolutionist." Although the Free Press did not advocate force, it declared it the duty of the government "to uphold the constitution and laws in every state." The people of a state should not be forced

to have post-offices if they did not want them, it stated, but they could not be allowed to establish post-offices of their own. The only way a state could leave the Union was by a constitutional amendment.<sup>107</sup> The Message fell "short of the emergency," declared the Michigan Argus. While condemning the President for denying the right of the Government to prevent a state from seceding, it also castigated him for arguing that the Constitution carried slavery into the territories, "and that the territorial legislatures could not restrain or prohibit it."<sup>108</sup> The Marshall Democratic Expounder offered the usual objections to the Message, feeling that it was not satisfactory to any section of the Union, and concurred with the Argus in denouncing the President for proposing the incorporation of the Breckinridge platform into the Constitution.<sup>109</sup>

As December deepened, many Democratic papers became even more critical of Buchanan's policies. The Grand Rapids Enquirer blamed Buchanan and his southern allies, as well as the Republicans, for the crisis.<sup>110</sup> Both the Detroit Free Press and the Michigan Argus welcomed General Cass' resignation. His protest against Buchanan's refusal to reinforce Anderson would highlight to the nation the imbecility of the President's policies. The Free Press also suspected the President of "moral treason" for not taking a strong stand in favor of the Union. His only desire seemed to be that the "house" "shall not tumble until he shall have got out of it." It praised, however, the

President's refusal to order Anderson back to Moultrie.<sup>111</sup>

Another paper, at the end of December, denounced the President for criminal neglect of his constitutional duties and his refusal to take any action to halt the secession conspiracy.<sup>112</sup> But after his attempt to reinforce Sumter, one editor praised him for finally acting.<sup>113</sup>

After the middle of January, Democratic papers discussed Buchanan less as public attention turned towards Congress.

The secession of South Carolina stiffened the Democratic press' resistance to disunion. South Carolina was not really out of the Union no matter what she claimed, the Free Press declared. But something had to be done to stem the tide of revolution to prevent six other states from seceding. By January the paper called on the Government "to hold possession of all the forts and public property in South Carolina and every other seceding State." Such an action would not be coercion because seizing public property of the United States was an act of war against the nation. The Government would be sustained by a united North, it added, for South Carolina deserved no sympathy. Her goal was to drag the rest of the South into revolution by provoking a bloody contest.<sup>114</sup> By the first week in January, the Grand Rapids Daily Enquirer had concluded that the peaceful settlement of difficulties was impossible. The Government had to be sustained at all costs. South Carolina's actions could not be defended. The people should "prepare themselves for a long,



sanguinary, terrible, civil war...."<sup>115</sup> The Union "must assert its commanding power over those who would rend it asunder and lay it in ruins," thundered the Kalamazoo Gazette.<sup>116</sup> In sum, by the middle of January the Democratic press had reached the peak of its Unionism.

Beginning in January the Free Press and the Enquirer underwent a complete transformation in their attitudes toward secession. Reversing their strong stands against it, they argued that any form of governmental action would be coercion and could not be tolerated because it would lead to war. The reasons for this change of viewpoint are not clear, but it appears that they grew out of frustration over the Republican refusal to make any compromises that would reconcile the South and a growing awareness of the horrors of war. The Union could not be held together by force, the Free Press stated as early as January 5. Three or four states could be coerced, but never fourteen or fifteen. On January 17, just five days after demanding the re-taking of all Government property, the paper, implying that it disapproved of any form of coercion, observed that whether Lincoln adopted a policy of peaceful coercion (blockading ports, collecting revenue on warships, not executing the Federal laws in the seceded states) or aggressive coercion (the use of military power to execute Federal laws in the states), the South would fight. It was folly to talk of coercing the South, it stated two days later, because it could not be

accomplished. The paper hoped that the Union could be preserved "but, better by far a separation in sorrow than in anger--better by far a separation in peace than in war,--better anything than internecine strife." On January 26 the Free Press castigated the Republican party in Michigan for not repealing the state's Personal Liberty Laws and denounced Republicans everywhere for making no concessions to the South. If troops were raised to invade the South, it declared, "a fire in the rear will be opened upon such troops which will either stop their march altogether or wonderfully accelerate it." In other words, if "war should be waged, that war will be fought in the North." Tens of thousands of Northerners would oppose an invasion of the South, it predicted. Two weeks later the paper re-affirmed its prediction of "a fire in the rear." It warned Republicans that if they launched an anti-slavery war an army of northern men would oppose them. The war would be more than one between sections, but also a war of opinions. Peaceful separation was bad enough, but violent separation would be "the greatest calamity that has ever befallen mankind." The Union might still be saved, it thought, by a fair division of the territories, the faithful observance by the North of the constitutional rights guaranteed the South. If the Union could not be saved, separation had to be peaceable. It repeated, "ABOLITION REPUBLICANISM SHALL NOT PRESS ON THE ISSUE BEFORE THE COUNTRY TO A BLOODY END."<sup>117</sup> Still later, the Free Press

called upon the United States government to recognize the seceded states. If it attempted to subjugate the southern confederacy "a scene of horror would be presented which we shrink from contemplating." On the other hand, recognizing secession would diminish southern hostility to the North. In time, after fanaticism disappeared, the sections might once again be re-united.<sup>118</sup> Thus, by the middle of February, the Free Press had completed a major transformation in its attitude. Peace at any price had replaced the Union at all costs.

By January 19 the Grand Rapids Daily Enquirer began to exhibit a similar change in viewpoint. Declaring it still desired the upholding of the laws and the use of "force if necessary," it feared that a civil war would mean the extermination of one of the parties. Resentments would last for a generation. Conciliatory gestures would be the North's best policy. Ten days later, cautioning that coercing obedience to the laws would mean civil war and should be used only as a final remedy, it urged the North to consider the grievances of the South. The strength of the Union, it noted, rested on a spirit of amity and fellowship. War would destroy that spirit and create a despotism. Coercion was not a workable policy, it later stated, because it would drive even more southern states out of the Union. Compromise, it urged, not with the traitors, but with the loyal southern states. If their demands were met, they would use their moral leadership to

bring the seceding states back into the Union. If necessary, it hoped that the sections could live apart amicably. It concluded by declaring, "we do not want WAR first, and Peace afterwards; but PEACE first, and then if necessary, WAR."<sup>119</sup> Just days after Lincoln's inaugural, the paper proclaimed the policy of the Democracy to be "for PEACE in any and every probable contingency...." Regardless of theory, it was fact that the seceded states were out of the Union. Re-taking the forts occupied by the Confederacy would accentuate southern hatred and enmity against the North. Proposing that the North should recognize the seceded states and compromise for their return, it conceded that three months before "stringent and effective measures" could have subdued the crisis. Now it was too late.<sup>120</sup> Thus, the abhorrence of war convinced the Enquirer, like the Free Press, that peaceful separation was preferable to war.

Other Democratic papers also changed their positions. The Marshall Democratic Expounder, while condemning secession, warned that "'blood-letting' will not save the Union." The only solution was either to compromise or recognize secession as a successful revolution.<sup>121</sup> To re-take the forts and hang the leaders of the rebellion, declared the Kalamazoo Gazette, would "lead to the bloodiest and most disastrous civil war the world ever saw...." The ultimate result would be the end of liberty and the establishment of a military despotism. But it rejected the

Free Press' prediction that northern Democrats would militarily oppose an invasion of the South. Such "immoderate language" would not allay popular sentiment. It urged editors to discuss current issues with moderation.<sup>122</sup> The Michigan Argus, on the other hand, was the only Democratic paper surveyed that after the middle of January did not adopt a peace-at-any-price policy. It might prefer peaceful secession to war, it conceded, but argued that the Federal government had to enforce the laws. It also expressed regret at the Free Press' fire-in-the-rear editorial. Not wishing to make war on South Carolina, it had "as little disposition to war with our fellow citizens and neighbors in Michigan, and can endorse no threat that 'a fire in the rear will be opened upon such troops'...."<sup>123</sup>

Thus, during the last months of the Buchanan Administration, most Michigan Democratic papers went through two phases in regard to secession. At first they were as thoroughly Unionist as the Republican press. Indeed, they discussed peaceable secession less than the Republican papers. They castigated Buchanan for not taking a firm stand against South Carolina. Although they did not say exactly how it should be done, they urged the Government to enforce the laws. At times they endorsed the use of force. Then, in the middle of January, their attitude began to change. It dawned on them that secession was for real, and the dire predictions of civil war that they had made during the campaign might come true. They also

became frustrated at the Republican refusal to compromise. These conditions jolted the Democratic papers into a genuine fear of war. Although they still condemned secession as unwise, many concluded that a Union cemented together by the threat of force was not worth bloodshed. If a compromise could not be achieved, they thought it best to let the South go. Above all, peace had to be maintained. In essence, Republicans were ready to accept civil war to preserve liberty. Democrats rejected it out of fear that it would destroy liberty.

## CHAPTER VI NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Dwight L. Dumond, The Secession Movement, 1860-1861 (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1931), pp. 117-120.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 122-123.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 134-135.

<sup>4</sup>Allan Nevins, The Emergence of Lincoln, Vol. II (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1950), pp. 322-325.

<sup>5</sup>Dumond, The Secession Movement, pp. 205-207.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., pp. 140, 189-212. The secession votes were: Florida, 62-7; Texas, 166-8; Louisiana, 113-17; Mississippi, 83-15; Alabama, 61-39.

<sup>7</sup>Nevins, Emergence of Lincoln, Vol. II, pp. 342-346.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., pp. 349-350; Kenneth M. Stamp, And the War Came: The North and the Secession Crisis, 1860-1861 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1950), p. 53.

<sup>9</sup>James D. Richardson, A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents, Vol. V (Washington, 1897), pp. 625-638.

<sup>10</sup>Stamp, And the War Came, p. 57; Nevins, Emergence of Lincoln, Vol. II, p. 351.

<sup>11</sup>Stamp, And the War Came, pp. 59-60; Nevins, Emergence of Lincoln, Vol. II, p. 357.

<sup>12</sup>Nevins, Emergence of Lincoln, Vol. II, pp. 358-359.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., pp. 364-379; Stamp, And the War Came, pp. 71-79.

<sup>14</sup>Stamp, And the War Came, pp. 84-85, 103.

<sup>15</sup>David M. Potter, Lincoln and his Party in the Secession Crisis (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1942), p. 16.

<sup>16</sup>Hillsdale Standard, November 22, 1859.

<sup>17</sup>Detroit Daily Advertiser, August 7, September 11, 1860.

<sup>18</sup>Niles Inquirer, August 22, 1860.

<sup>19</sup>Detroit Daily Tribune, October 29, 1860.

<sup>20</sup>Marshall Statesman, October 24, 1860.

<sup>21</sup>Lansing State Republican, November 7, 1860.

<sup>22</sup>Detroit Daily Advertiser, November 9, 13, 1860.

<sup>23</sup>Detroit Daily Tribune, November 10, 1860.

<sup>24</sup>Lansing State Republican, November 21, 1860.

<sup>25</sup>Adrian Daily Expositor, November 27, 1860.

<sup>26</sup>Detroit Daily Advertiser, November 29, 1860.

<sup>27</sup>Constantine Mercury and Advertiser, November 22, 29, 1860.

<sup>28</sup>Detroit Daily Advertiser, December 1, 1860.

<sup>29</sup>Detroit Daily Tribune, December 11, 1860.

<sup>30</sup>Ingham County News, December 6, 1860.

<sup>31</sup>Hillsdale Standard, December 4, 1860.

<sup>32</sup>Detroit Daily Advertiser, December 11, 1860; the same theme was endorsed by the Battle Creek Journal, December 21, 1860.

<sup>33</sup>Detroit Daily Advertiser, December 14, 1860.

<sup>34</sup>Detroit Daily Tribune, December 17, 1860.

<sup>35</sup>Allegan Journal, December 17, 1860.

<sup>36</sup>Detroit Daily Tribune, December 24, 1860.

<sup>37</sup>Ingham County News, December 27, 1860.

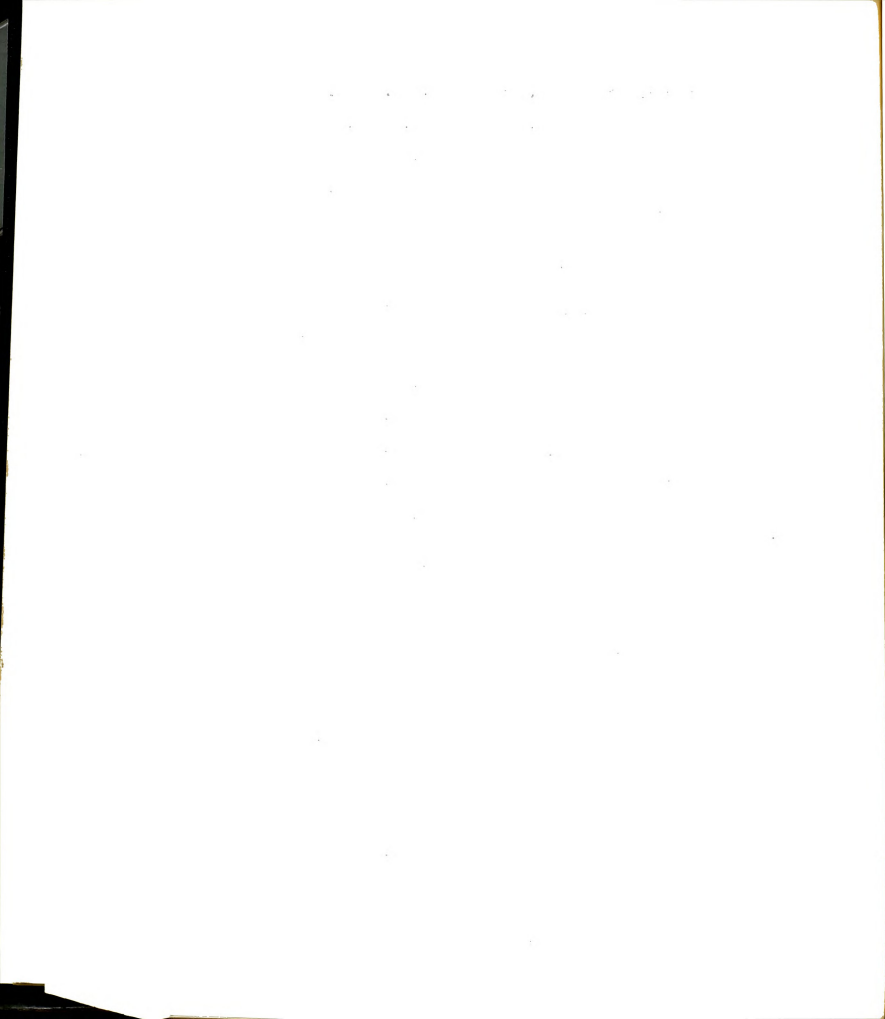
<sup>38</sup>Battle Creek Journal, December 28, 1860.



- <sup>39</sup>St. Joseph Traveler, January 2, 1861.
- <sup>40</sup>Detroit Daily Advertiser, January 11, 1861.
- <sup>41</sup>Eaton County Republican, January 18, 1861.
- <sup>42</sup>Jonesville Independent, January 24, 1861.
- <sup>43</sup>Detroit Daily Advertiser, January 25, February 22, 1861.
- <sup>44</sup>Michigan State News, February 19, 1861; Detroit Daily Tribune, February 23, 1861.
- <sup>45</sup>Hillsdale Standard, January 22, 1861.
- <sup>46</sup>Lansing State Republican, November 21, 1860; Adrian Daily Expositor, November 27, 1860.
- <sup>47</sup>Hillsdale Standard, January 1, 1861.
- <sup>48</sup>St. Joseph Traveler, January 2, 1861.
- <sup>49</sup>Detroit Daily Tribune, January 14, February 2, 1861.
- <sup>50</sup>Ibid., February 11, 1861.
- <sup>51</sup>Philip G. Auchampaugh, James Buchanan and His Cabinet on the Eve of Secession (Boston: J. S. Canner & Co., 1926), pp. 177, 190-191.
- <sup>52</sup>Frank W. Klingberg, "James Buchanan and the Crisis of the Union," Journal of Southern History, IX (November, 1943), pp. 472-473.
- <sup>53</sup>Nevins, Emergence of Lincoln, Vol. II, p. 341.
- <sup>54</sup>Stampp, And the War Came, pp. 99-109.
- <sup>55</sup>For example see Jersey City Daily Courier and Advertiser, December 5, 1860; Philadelphia North American and United States Gazette, December 5, 1860; New Haven Morning Journal and Courier, December 6, 1860; Boston Daily Advertiser, December 7, 1860; Quincy (Ill.) Daily Whig and Republican, December 10, 1860; Des Moines Iowa State Register, December 12, 1860; in Howard C. Perkins, ed., Northern Editorials on Secession (New York; 1942), Section III.
- <sup>57</sup>Detroit Daily Tribune, November 17, 1860.
- <sup>58</sup>Allegan Journal, November 26, 1860.
- <sup>59</sup>Detroit Daily Advertiser, December 4, 1860.

- <sup>60</sup>Ibid., December 5, 6, 7, 10, 1860.
- <sup>61</sup>Detroit Daily Tribune, December 5, 7, 1860.
- <sup>62</sup>Constantine Mercury and Advertiser, December 13, 1860.
- <sup>63</sup>Battle Creek Journal, December 14, 1860.
- <sup>64</sup>Jonesville Independent, December 20, 1860.
- <sup>65</sup>Detroit Daily Tribune, December 13, 17, 1860.
- <sup>66</sup>Adrian Daily Expositor, December 17, 1860.
- <sup>67</sup>Detroit Daily Tribune, December 21, 22, 1860.
- <sup>68</sup>Adrian Daily Expositor, December 21, 1860.
- <sup>69</sup>Allegan Journal, December 24, 1860.
- <sup>70</sup>Detroit Daily Tribune, December 26, 27, 1860.
- <sup>71</sup>St. Joseph Traveler, December 26, 1860.
- <sup>72</sup>Detroit Daily Advertiser, December 31, 1860.
- <sup>73</sup>Detroit Daily Tribune, December 31, 1860, January 2, 1861.
- <sup>74</sup>Battle Creek Journal, January 4, 1861.
- <sup>75</sup>Detroit Daily Advertiser, January 8, 10, 1861.
- <sup>76</sup>Jonesville Independent, January 10, 1861.
- <sup>77</sup>Lansing State Republican, January 9, 1861.
- <sup>78</sup>Ingham County News, January 31, 1861; Detroit Daily Tribune, January 16, 1861; Hillsdale Standard, January 22, 1861.
- <sup>79</sup>Detroit Daily Tribune, December 29, 1860; January 11, 24, 1861.
- <sup>80</sup>Detroit Daily Advertiser, February 9, 1861.
- <sup>81</sup>Michigan State News, February 12, 1861.
- <sup>82</sup>Allegan Journal, January 7, 21, 1861.
- <sup>83</sup>Ingham County News, January 31, 1861.

- <sup>84</sup>Marshall Statesman, January 9, 16, 1861.
- <sup>85</sup>Detroit Free Press, December 10, 1859.
- <sup>86</sup>Ibid., July 26, October 28, 30, 1860.
- <sup>87</sup>Grand Rapids Daily Enquirer, October 13, 14,  
November 1, 1860.
- <sup>88</sup>Marshall Democratic Expounder, November 1, 1860.
- <sup>89</sup>Grand Rapids Daily Enquirer, November 9, 1860.
- <sup>90</sup>Niles Republican, November 10, 17, 24, 1860.
- <sup>91</sup>Marshall Democratic Expounder, November 15, 22,  
1860.
- <sup>92</sup>Kalamazoo Gazette, November 30, 1860.
- <sup>93</sup>Michigan Argus, November 16, 1860.
- <sup>94</sup>Niles Republican, November 17, 24, 1860.
- <sup>95</sup>Michigan Argus, November 16, 1860.
- <sup>96</sup>Detroit Free Press, November 8, December 12,  
1860.
- <sup>97</sup>Marshall Democratic Expounder, November 15, 1860.
- <sup>98</sup>Kalamazoo Gazette, November 16, 1860.
- <sup>99</sup>Grand Rapids Daily Enquirer, November 16,  
December 4, 11, 1860.
- <sup>100</sup>Niles Republican, December 15, 1860.
- <sup>101</sup>Detroit Free Press, November 8, 1860.
- <sup>102</sup>Grand Rapids Daily Enquirer, November 17, 1860.
- <sup>103</sup>Marshall Democratic Expounder, December 20,  
1860.
- <sup>104</sup>Detroit Free Press, November 11, 1860.
- <sup>105</sup>Michigan Argus, November 23, 1860.
- <sup>106</sup>Grand Rapids Daily Enquirer, December 7, 8,  
1860.
- <sup>107</sup>Detroit Free Press, December 7, 8, 1860.



- 108 Michigan Argus, December 14, 1860.
- 109 Marshall Democratic Expounder, December 10,  
1860.
- 110 Grand Rapids Daily Enquirer, December 9, 1860.
- 111 Detroit Free Press, December 16, 1860, January  
3, 1861; Michigan Argus, December 21, 1860.
- 112 Marshall Democratic Expounder, December 27,  
1860.
- 113 Grand Rapids Daily Enquirer, January 13, 1861.
- 114 Detroit Free Press, December 22, 1860; January  
3, 12, 1861.
- 115 Grand Rapids Daily Enquirer, January 6, 1861.
- 116 Kalamazoo Gazette, January 11, 1861.
- 117 Detroit Free Press, February 6, 1861.
- 118 Ibid., February 19, 1861.
- 119 Grand Rapids Daily Enquirer, February 7, 23,  
1861.
- 120 Ibid., March 12, 1861.
- 121 Marshall Democratic Expounder, February 28,  
1861.
- 122 Kalamazoo Gazette, February 15, March 8, 1861.
- 123 Michigan Argus, February 1, 1861.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE FAILURE TO COMPROMISE

Public attention focused not only on the course of secession, but on the efforts in and out of Congress to preserve the Union by the time-tested method of compromise. A multitude of proposals were brought forth. None was implemented due to Republican reluctance to sacrifice the principles of the Chicago platform and the determination of the secessionists to carry through their withdrawal from the Union. The most seriously discussed compromise was offered by Senator John J. Crittenden. It provided that in all existing or future territories slavery would be prohibited north of 36°30' and protected south of it. Masters would be compensated by the Federal government for slaves lost by violence. This unamendable amendment to the Constitution also stated that Congress would be denied the right to ban slavery in the states.<sup>1</sup> The compromise received its death blow on January 16, 1861, when by a 25 to 23 vote the Senate refused to consider it.<sup>2</sup> Douglas proposed an amendment which stated that the status of slavery in the existing territories would remain unchanged. New territory could be acquired only by treaty, requiring a two-thirds approval of each

house. The status of the territory in regard to servitude would remain what it was at the time of acquisition. This compromise was also rejected by the Republicans.<sup>3</sup>

The Washington Peace Conference that gathered in February, 1861 provided another ray of hope for those desperately seeking a compromise. Upon the invitation of Virginia twenty-one states sent delegates who hammered out a proposed unamendable thirteenth amendment to the Constitution. It provided that slavery would be forbidden north of 36°30', protected below it. The approval of two-thirds of Senators from both the slaveholding and non-slaveholding states would be necessary to acquire new territory.<sup>4</sup> On March 4 the Senate killed the proposal. The Michigan legislature had refused to send delegates to the conference. But on February 11, Zachariah Chandler with the collaboration of Senator Kinsley Bingham sent a telegraph message to Governor Austin Blair requesting him to send "stiff-backed men" to the Convention to buttress the radical effort to kill any compromise proposal.<sup>5</sup> He concluded by stating that "without a little blood-letting this Union would not be worth a rush." Democrats managed to get hold of the message and use it against the Republicans. But even with Blair's urging, the legislature by a 40 to 34 vote defeated a resolution permitting the Governor to appoint delegates.<sup>6</sup>

The Republicans blocked any compromise which had the remotest chance of placating the South because the

President-elect opposed any scheme which would have given recognition to slavery in the territories. He was willing to concede the repeal of the Personal Liberty laws and to guarantee slavery where it already existed, but on the territorial issue he was adamant. He, like many others, was convinced that the future of slavery would be decided in the territories. With his recruitment of Seward as his chief lieutenant to oppose compromises of the Crittenden type, Lincoln effectively killed any compromise sentiment that might have been nurturing in the Republican ranks.<sup>7</sup>

The attitude of the Michigan press towards compromise was clearly divided along party lines. Republican papers rejected virtually every proposal while Democratic papers were willing to accept almost anything that had a chance of easing the crisis. The principal tactic of the Democratic journals was to implore the Republicans to compromise while condemning them for not doing it. The Detroit Free Press urged the northern states to accept a compromise and to repeal their Personal Liberty laws. The Republican refusal to do these things was weakening the strength of the southern Unionists and playing directly into the hands of the disunionists.<sup>8</sup> The nation was on the verge of anarchy, commented another journal, because of the triumph of the sectional Republicans. To save the Union, they had to realize that their principles were not suited to govern a nation that recognized both free and slave states. But the paper feared that the Republicans



would stay true to their beliefs because they had been taught to hate the South and its evil institution, slavery.<sup>9</sup> The northern Democrats were not to blame for the crisis, declared the Marshall Democratic Expounder. The difficulty was due to Mr. Lincoln's determined opposition to compromise and his adherence to the Chicago platform. The only solution was amendments to the Constitution that would save the South from abolition fanaticism. Yet it was unlikely that Republican leaders would consent to them since they preferred to see the Union collapse.<sup>10</sup> Nothing positive had been accomplished by slavery agitation, contended the Niles Republican. The condition of the slave had in no way been ameliorated. Those whose consciences hated slavery were willing to "look upon the dead bodies of their fellow countrymen, upon the burning of their dwellings, and say it is God's work to rid the nation of slavery." If the Republicans stuck to their platform, it warned, civil war would ensue, resulting in the deprivation of the people's liberties, the establishment of a military despotism, the blotting out of Christianity, and the setting back of civilization by hundreds of years.<sup>11</sup> The Kalamazoo Gazette urged all Americans to cast aside partisan prejudices and unite to find some honorable settlement to the nation's problems. It particularly called on conservative Republicans to submit no longer to the "radical, impracticable and bigoted men who have seized the party reins...." If they should unite

with the Democracy, peace would result.<sup>12</sup>

Although the Democratic press generally despaired that any compromise would ever be enacted because of Republican resistance, it constantly lauded the various compromises that were proposed. The Detroit Free Press once again led the Democratic ranks in a futile cause. It tried to show the opposition that their refusal to compromise the principle of no more slavery in the territories was not a practical question. All the South claimed was the abstract right to bring their property into the territories and have it protected there. No new slave states would be formed because "it is impossible that slavery can be extended beyond its present limits, whatever privileges of emigration may be given to it." Moreover, the North could send ten settlers into the territories for every one from the South. But even if one or two new slave states were formed, it would not be significant because neither the black nor white race would be any worse off. Hence, the Republican acceptance of a compromise could save the Union without hurting any northern interests.<sup>13</sup> Specifically, it felt that if the Republican leaders accepted the Crittenden compromise or the Border State compromise (which was similar to Crittenden's except that it did not mention the disposition of territories acquired in the future), the Union still could be saved. These compromises, it argued, were acceptable to the border slave states, including North Carolina, Tennessee, and Arkansas, and were



acceptable to Robert Toombs of Georgia and Jefferson Davis of Mississippi.<sup>14</sup> The paper refuted the Republican contention that the Crittenden propositions were identical with the Breckinridge platform. The latter, it noted, called for protection of slavery in all the territories while the former only protected it south of 36°30'. In addition, the territory south of the Missouri Compromise line would be only nominally slave.<sup>15</sup> The Free Press also endorsed the amendment composed by the House Committee of Thirty-Three which would have forbidden any constitutional amendment authorizing Congress to abolish or interfere with slavery in the states. It noted, however, that almost two-thirds of the Congressional Republicans opposed the amendment. Concluding that the Republicans were unwilling to make the smallest concessions to the South, it reasoned that they were waiting for the day when the North would be strong enough to amend the Constitution to abolish slavery. Finally, it implored the Michigan legislation to ratify the amendment.<sup>16</sup> As late as the end of March, the Free Press was still grasping at straws as it endorsed the proposal of the Virginia convention. It consisted of five unamendable amendments to the United States Constitution including one that prohibited the acquisition of territory without the consent of a majority of Senators from both slaveholding and non-slaveholding states.<sup>17</sup>

Other Democratic papers also argued the virtues of the various compromise proposals. The Grand Rapids Daily



Enquirer was disappointed when the Republican members of the Senate Committee of Thirteen helped scuttle the Crittenden proposals. The Republican policy was "no concession, no compromise," it concluded. Yet it felt that if the amendment had been passed it would have hindered the efforts of the deep South to sever all ties with the Union.<sup>18</sup> The Enquirer saw a chance for peace in the Border State proposals. These recommendations, it hoped, would come to be known as the "Compromise Measure of 1861." The Gulf states, it expected, would dissociate themselves from South Carolina as they would desire to remain in the Union. They would not oppose the Administration's forcing South Carolina to obey the laws. But even if South Carolina succeeded in staying out of the Union, it "would be less important than a German province, [and] would have far less influence among nations than the Sandwich Islands."<sup>19</sup> In the middle of January, the Enquirer endorsed the idea of a convention of the people to work out a compromise settlement. It did not want it organized on a partisan basis because parties did not always represent public sentiment. But, by April the paper rejected the idea of a national convention as useless. Such a gathering could not convene for at least a year, it noted, and would undoubtedly be dominated by Republicans who would be opposed to any concessions to the South. Nor would it, or should it, recognize the constitutionality of secession. Under these circumstances "a National

convention would be a mere mockery."<sup>20</sup>

The political destinies of the nation were in the hands of demagogues, lamented the Niles Republican. Calling upon the people to repudiate the politicians, it urged them to "resolve to do justice to the South" by striking out unconstitutional statutes. The paper also castigated the Republicans for not allowing the Border State propositions to be submitted to the people. It was convinced that "they will decide in favor of peace, and in favor of the Union." In addition, Congress was criticized for ignoring the numerous petitions that supported the Crittenden propositions. By February, the Republican conceded that no compromise would be acceptable to the Cotton states. The border states, i.e., the upper South, however, would accept a settlement, and they had the power to unite the North and South. A responsible Republican leader such as Seward, the paper hoped, would offer a compromise satisfactory to all reasonable men.<sup>21</sup> The passage of an honorable compromise "would restore peace to the distracted country," commented another journal. The Crittenden compromise would undoubtedly be endorsed in every state. But because the country was controlled by men "destitute of statesmanship or patriotism," it seemed inevitable that "the sun of America must be set in blood...."<sup>22</sup> The Marshall Democratic Expounder found the Virginia propositions "fair and honorable." If the North accepted them, it argued, the border slave states would

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secede, resulting in the permanent division of the nation.<sup>23</sup>

The failure of the Michigan legislature to send delegates to the Washington Peace Conference outraged the Detroit Free Press. It was "absolutely awful" that Michigan had put herself in the position of endorsing the dissolution of the Union which was sure to take place without some adjustment. Such an action did not reflect the popular sentiment of the state but only that of the abolitionists who controlled the legislature, supported by an abolitionist governor.<sup>24</sup> The Grand Rapids Daily Enquirer also castigated the legislature for rejecting the courteous invitation of Virginia. It was clear that "the Republican party in Michigan desires disunion just as much as South Carolina...." The paper warned Republicans that if they resorted to coercion before peaceful appeals had been exhausted the Democracy would contest them "both by speech and act."<sup>25</sup> The Marshall Democratic Expounder denounced the legislature's refusal to send delegates as "the crowning act of infamy and disgrace."<sup>26</sup> After the Governor requested the legislature to send delegates the Free Press charged him with deliberately conspiring "to stimulate the renewal of the southern revolution...." Although the paper realized that the present Congress would do nothing with the Conference's proposals, it judged them as "eminently a just plan of settlement." If accepted, they would rally Union men, North and South, and could be

used by the incoming Administration as a basis for adjusting the national difficulties.<sup>27</sup> Thus, to the end the Free Press and other Democratic papers continued to place their hopes on one compromise proposal after another in the futile dream that one of them would be acceptable to all sides. Reflecting their all-consuming drive to avoid war, Democrats grasped at straws as it became more and more apparent that compromise did not stand a chance.

Democrats justified their eagerness for compromise on the grounds that the South had real grievances that deserved to be rectified. Both the Detroit Free Press and the Niles Republican agreed that the South was not asking for concessions but only for its constitutional rights. These included no interference with slavery in the states, that fugitive slaves should be delivered up, "that southern citizens may enter the common Territories with their property in the same manner that northern citizens may enter with their property, and that the same protection shall be given to one as to the other during the Territorial condition," and that new states shall enter the Union with or without slavery as their constitutions dictate. In essence, all the South wanted was equality with the non-slaveholding states in the territories. Indeed, the South was willing to compromise its position by its willingness to accept equality with the North only in the territory south of 36°30', just one-fifth of the common territory.<sup>28</sup> In their desire to achieve a compromise and



avoid war, two Democratic papers, at least, abandoned what Douglas himself had given up, i.e., the principle of non-protection of slavery in the territories. During the campaign northern Democrats continually denounced the Breckinridge demand for a congressional slave code. Now Democratic papers were proclaiming that slavery protection was a legitimate constitutional right of the slaveholder! Although they claimed that in practice the territories could never become slave, they had, in effect, conceded to the South that its territorial doctrine was correct and all that the Douglasites had stood for was wrong. The sentiment reflected by the Free Press' position further indicates how some Northerners pursued a policy of peace-at-any-price rather than face the horrors of fratricidal warfare.

Another remarkable change in the position of the Democratic press was in its attitude towards William H. Seward. Throughout the election campaign he had been characterized as the arch Black Republican and leading abolitionist. During the secession crisis he almost became a Democratic hero, the last hope for compromise and peace. Although he had voted against the Crittenden compromise and had offered the South no meaningful propositions,<sup>29</sup> the Michigan Democratic press did not stop praising him. Through a series of speeches, Seward convinced the Democratic press that he was sincere for compromise. The Grand Rapids Daily Enquirer argued that

because Seward had achieved his object of placing his party in power, he realized that there was nothing to be lost by concession. He would "sink all party considerations and influences when they are obstacles to the maintenance and integrity of the Federal Union," the paper contended.<sup>30</sup> The Michigan Argus was heartened that Seward had reformed his way and hoped that the South would grasp the olive branch that he was tendering.<sup>31</sup> In the middle of January, the Free Press admonished Seward for not rising to meet the crisis. Yet it rejoiced that he had retreated on his anti-slavery views. By February, although reluctant to forgive him, the Free Press was satisfied that Seward would exert all his powers for peace. It applauded his statement that slavery had ceased to be a practical problem because it could not spread to the territories. Hope revived that all was not lost.<sup>32</sup> The Marshall Democratic Expounder cheered that Seward seemed to be breaking away from partisan influences. It agreed with him that party platforms had to be swept away.<sup>33</sup> "Hope is dawning," commented the Niles Republican in response to a Seward speech. He and Lincoln, it argued, could build sufficient support in the Republican party to save the Union. If they agreed to make concessions to the border states, the leaders of the Cotton states would soon be thrown from power, and the Union would be restored.<sup>34</sup> Finally, the Kalamazoo Gazette announced its faith in Seward's conservative intentions and no longer questioned

that for him "the UNION is the pole-star of his hopes for Freedom...." Repudiating narrow fanaticism and dogmatic creeds, he had become a statesman toiling for the Union. For the Gazette there was no "more astute civilian living than Mr. SEWARD."<sup>35</sup> This adulation for Seward is another indication of how desperate some Democrats were for any sign that the darkening crisis could be miraculously relieved by Republicans accepting a compromise that repudiated their principles. Blinding themselves to the realities of the situation, Democrats never ceased looking for the panacea that would suddenly reverse decades of festering hate and thus maintain for them a Union they considered near perfect.

The Republican press, on the whole, continued to defend Seward from the charge that he was softening on compromise. All he wanted to do was calm the apprehensions of the South, commented the Detroit Daily Tribune. He was not advocating the overthrow of Republican principles. All he meant by saying that partisan interests had to be abandoned was that no party alone could solve the nation's problems.<sup>36</sup> All Seward proposed, the Eaton County Republican observed, was that the South's constitutional rights, such as freedom from interference with slavery, should be guaranteed. In addition, he was perfectly right in urging the repeal of all unconstitutional legislation.<sup>37</sup> "Mr. Seward is a statesman, and a man of peace," commented the Lansing State Republican. It was

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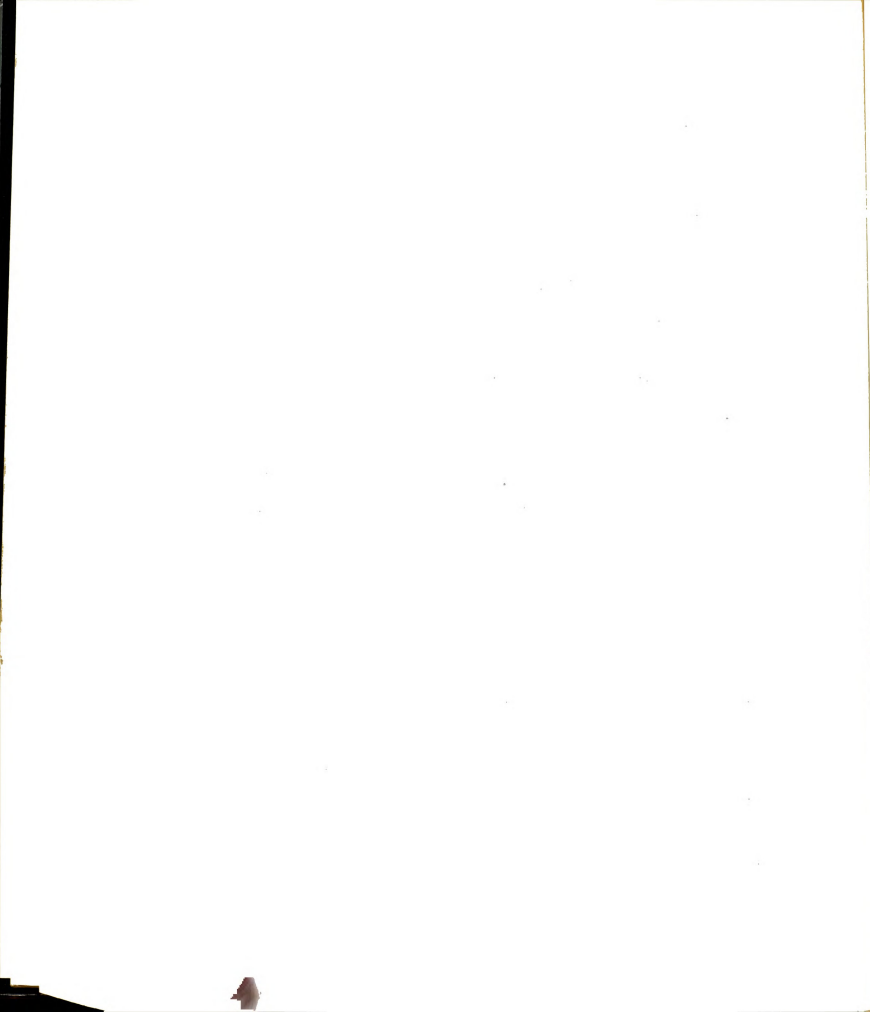
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commendable that he was endeavoring to save the Union without war.<sup>38</sup> The New York Senator did not support the right of secession nor did he retreat on his opposition to the extension of slavery into the territories, stated the Detroit Daily Advertiser. His willingness to grant the South its constitutional rights did not mean he was willing to sacrifice the Union.<sup>39</sup> The Ingham County News, on the other hand, felt betrayed by the Senator's seeming willingness "to sell the Republican party, in order to gain a more prominent position in the politics of this country." His pronouncements that the spread of slavery into the territories was no longer a threat indicated that he was ready to betray liberty. The Democrats were praising him, it noted, because his actions foretold the downfall of the Republican party. But the paper warned him that what happened to Webster, Cass, and Douglas could happen to him also.<sup>40</sup>

While most Michigan Republican papers refused to abandon their hero, they were almost unanimous in their opposition to any of the compromise proposals that the Democratic press had found acceptable, believing it a breach of faith to sacrifice any of the party principles. The Detroit Daily Tribune consistently fought against the major compromise measures that were brought to public attention. The northern people would be considerate and temperate to the South, the paper stated, but they would not forget their own rights. For years the North had





submitted without question to the rule of slaveholding presidents who had thwarted northern interests such as a tariff, homestead bill, and internal improvements. Now, in the moment of victory, these interests would not be sacrificed. Compromise, the Tribune believed, would not lead to a lasting peace if it made the South appear less pro-slavery or the North less anti-slavery than they really were. A workable compromise, the paper realized, would be extremely difficult because "it is impossible for a victorious party, which has acted upon the solemn popular conviction that Slavery must not be extended into the free territories, to abandon an iota of that principle...."

On the other hand, the Republicans would carry out their constitutional obligations. But, they would never accede to what the South really wanted: a slave code for the territories. If there were to be any chance for a successful compromise, the South had to make concessions also. These included repealing laws imprisoning Negro seamen visiting southern ports, repealing a Charleston ordinance requiring a northern visitor to state his business, repealing laws rejecting northern steerage passengers, and amending the Fugitive Slave Law to grant the accused the rights of habeas corpus and trial by jury. Finally, Southerners had to guarantee the right of free speech in the South and promise northern citizens protection from violence.<sup>41</sup>

The Detroit Daily Advertiser also vigorously spoke

out against any compromise that would have sacrificed principle. Yet, it would support the repeal of Michigan's Personal Liberty Laws, it stated, if the South would agree to amend the Fugitive Slave Law. But the North would not allow the South to dictate its own terms, nor would it buckle to the southern tactic of scaring the North with threats of disunion. Not only the Northwest but the eastern cities opposed any further concessions to the Slave Power, the Advertiser claimed. The commercial interests of the East realized that business could not prosper in a country constantly threatened by discord and distraction. In summary, "it is firmness, not timidity, that is needed now to secure a peace that will be permanent." In defense of its stand, the Advertiser attacked those Republicans who seemed to be succumbing to compromise sentiment. It was amazed at the "unfortunate truth" that some Republicans were willing to make "another contract between slavery and freedom...." Under the pressure of the secessionists they were prepared to sacrifice the fundamental principles of the party. But the majority of Republicans, it was convinced, would not retreat from the party banner.<sup>42</sup>

Other Republican papers denounced compromise. The northern people had enough of southern bullying, declared the Adrian Daily Expositor. Compromises were "cheats and shams, and intended to be so by their framers." Principle would not be surrendered; but if it be done, "woe to the

men who shall again betray us!"<sup>43</sup> To compromise with the South would only nationalize slavery and sectionalize freedom, stated another journal. The time for a final adjustment with the South had arrived. To postpone the moment would only mean agitation and excitement in the money market and commercial affairs. To retain liberty at home and abroad, "we demand that the books be now posted, and a final settlement made."<sup>44</sup> Fear was the lever of southern power, observed the militant Hillsdale Standard. Rather than risk "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness," for over thirty years Northerners "crawled in the very dust" before the "scorpion" Slave Power. To stifle reason and blunt moral sensibilities in the name of compromise would be a sham and an evasion. The North had the choice to accept the carnage of war or else wash its hands "of the violence of our fellows in bondage."<sup>45</sup> Both the Ingham County News and the Constantine Mercury and Advertiser warned the Republicans in Congress against weakening. If the party did not stand firm, the News cautioned, it had achieved its last victory. If any Republican repudiated party principles, he would be considered a traitor. The Mercury and Advertiser realized that there were a "few weak-kneed and frail backed brothers in our camp," but they were exceptions to an almost united front against compromise.<sup>46</sup>

Several Republican papers warned that the Slave Power was a threat to freedom and democracy. The Lansing

State Republican, after noting that a Republican acceptance of compromise would mean the end of the party, commented that "the stake we lately played for, was for free labor--free speech--free men. Have we won or lost?" If the southern demand for a slave code were granted, the Slave Power would become dictator of the nation.<sup>47</sup> The moral sentiment of the North, the Allegan Journal thought, would not permit the triumph of slavery over free labor. Rejecting the suggestion that the "Moloch of human bondage" should be given the territory south of 36°30', the paper reminded its readers that only monarchial Spain and the United States had not abolished slavery. The country had to keep pace with the progress of the age; for if it did not, before long freedom would sacrifice everything to the Slave Power.<sup>48</sup> The only concession that would satisfy the 350,000 slaveholders who despised democracy would be recognition of the nationalization of slavery, declared the Eaton County Republican. It had to be decided once and for all, the paper stated, whether the Slave Power was stronger than the Union. The "majesty" of law had to be asserted over the "Mexican system of rebellion." Finally, the paper hoped that Congress did not contain "another bunch of Northern 'flunkeys'" who would yield to the aggressive and treasonable Slave Power.<sup>49</sup> The principles of justice, humanity and liberty proclaimed in the Declaration of Independence was at stake, wrote the Michigan State News. The problem confronting the nation was whether

those principles would be vindicated or deserted. To enslave the prosperous North, based on free institutions, was the Slave Power's goal. Indeed, the ultimate question was not whether slavery should spread its "slimy length" into a few thousand acres in the territories, but whether slavery would destroy the "brilliant mission of this free people." As terrible as civil war would be, it would be "right and expedient" to preserve freedom.<sup>50</sup> The Republican press considered compromise a betrayal of the Republican principle of the non-extension of slavery, a threat to the party's existence, and a further abandonment of the enslaved Negro. Even more significantly, they believed that any further concession to the Slave Power would mean the end of freedom throughout the entire nation.

Republican papers criticized in detail the various compromise measures. The Adrian Daily Expositor attacked the compromise proposal that had appeared in Thurlow Weed's Albany Evening Journal. Weed had suggested the restoration of the Missouri Compromise line. The Expositor considered it "wholly impracticable." Foiled in its attempt to wrest more territory through the repeal of the Missouri Compromise, the South should not be given back what she had given up. More importantly, the proposal nullified the eighth resolution of the Chicago platform which had proclaimed the normal condition of the territories to be freedom. Finally, Weed's proposal would not satisfy the South which wanted unlimited slavery

extension and the re-opening of the African slave trade. The paper rejected the border state compromise for similar reasons to Weed's. Restoration of the Missouri Compromise line would give all territory south of it to slavery. As other compromises, it was not a final settlement, but would only create an interlude before the South made new demands.<sup>51</sup> The Detroit Daily Tribune found Douglas' compromise also unacceptable because it called for restoration of the 1820 line. The paper mocked the Illinois Senator for his change of position from 1854 when he was in the forefront of the drive to repeal the Missouri Compromise and have it replaced by popular sovereignty. The underlying Democratic assumption, the paper concluded, was "that the South can do no wrong." A national convention, however, was acceptable to the Tribune as the only "authoritative tribunal" to settle the national difficulties. But unfortunately the only way the Cotton states could be represented would be if the southern people inaugurated a counter-revolution.<sup>52</sup> Of the Republican papers surveyed, only the St. Joseph Traveler found any of the major compromise proposals acceptable. It did not see how the Border State propositions conflicted with Republican doctrine. As it understood the proposal, slavery would neither be protected or established below 36°30'. For the sake of peace, it stated, these concessions should have been granted to the South.<sup>53</sup>

The Republican press attacked the Crittenden

1. The first part of the document is a letter from the author to the reader, explaining the purpose of the study and the methods used. The letter is dated 1998 and is addressed to the reader.



Compromise more than any other proposal. As the Tribune noted, that measure was as unacceptable as all the others that had proposed restoration of the Missouri Compromise line. If it had any hope of northern acceptance, the paper asserted, it should have allowed popular sovereignty south of 36°30'. In any case, even if the compromise were acceptable to the border states, the seceded states would still be out of the Union. In other words, the Crittenden Compromise would settle nothing while Republicans desired a final agreement. It was up to those urging compromise "to show the public how it will put an end to disunion and impending civil war." Two days before the firing on Sumter, the Tribune reiterated that even if the Republicans were disposed to accept the Crittenden plan, which they were not, it would solve nothing because it would not save the Union.<sup>54</sup> What made the Crittenden proposal repugnant, commented both the Tribune and the Detroit Daily Advertiser, was that all future territory acquired south of 36°30' would be slave. That provision, the Advertiser feared, would open the way for agitators to lead the country into a policy of territorial aggrandizement that would give slavery "almost illimitable territory."<sup>55</sup> The status of territory acquired in the future also disturbed the Eaton County Republican. It feared the "Africanization" of Mexico and possibly Central America. The provision was, in effect, "an attack upon humanity itself," and a declaration of war "against people who have not offended

us."<sup>56</sup> The "one fatal objection" to the Crittenden Compromise, declared another journal, was that it gave "ALL FOR SLAVERY AND NOTHING FOR FREEDOM!" The freest government ever devised by man, it hoped, would not "be transformed into one vast slave oligarchy...."<sup>57</sup> Both the Hillsdale Standard and a writer to the Jonesville Independent who signed his statement with the initial "W", considered the compromise a disguised version of the Breckinridge platform. "The antagonism is between two forms of civilization, and no patchwork of palliation will reconcile it," observed the writer to the Independent.<sup>58</sup>

Although the Republican press devoted little editorial attention to the results of the Washington Peace Conference, it vigorously debated whether Michigan should have sent delegates to it. The emergency required Michigan to respond to the Virginia invitation "in the spirit of which it is given," thought the Lansing State Republican.<sup>59</sup> Another journal recommended the sending of commissioners on the grounds that Michigan could not appear indifferent to the preservation of the Union. Yet, it did not think that the North would accept the terms proposed by Virginia.<sup>60</sup> The St. Joseph Traveler was convinced that the Conference was composed of able and patriotic men. Michigan should not be accused of avoiding any chance for peace.<sup>61</sup> The Battle Creek Journal saw no harm in sending delegates, although it did not see what good it would do for the Conference did not have the "entire confidence of

any Free States...."<sup>62</sup> Other papers were completely against sending representatives. Michigan was not in favor of further guarantees to the South, declared the Adrian Daily Expositor. It was possible that the North might be sold out, and Michigan should have no part of it.<sup>63</sup> The Hillsdale Standard characterized the Conference as "suspicious, rotten, and nationally offensive." The legislature was wise not to accept Virginia's invitation.<sup>64</sup> Legislating for the country should remain in Congress, argued the Marshall Statesman. The Conference, it felt, was a device to allow the Slave Power to do whatever it wanted.<sup>65</sup> Only the Detroit Daily Advertiser commented on the recommendation of the Conference. It found them unacceptable because they proposed the restoration of the Missouri Compromise line,<sup>66</sup> Protection of slavery in any of the territories was simply repulsive to the overwhelming majority of Michigan Republican editors.

Closely associated with the compromise controversy during the secession crisis was the problem of the Fugitive Slave Law and the Personal Liberty laws. The Fugitive Slave Law of 1850 placed the authority for the capture and return of fugitives in Federal hands. A runaway was not allowed a jury trial and could not testify in his own behalf.<sup>67</sup> Northern opposition to the act prompted many legislatures to pass Personal Liberty laws to protect the rights of free Negroes. In 1855 the Michigan legislature passed two such laws. Prosecuting attorneys had to defend

fugitives and see that they got the benefits of habeas corpus and trial by jury. State jails could not be used to house alleged fugitives.<sup>68</sup> The constitutionality of Personal Liberty laws was decided by the Supreme Court in 1859 in the case of Abelman v. Booth. The decision upheld Federal over state authority. State courts, the Tribunal ruled, could not issue writs when the petitioner was held by Federal authorities. In effect, there was no way that state authorities could hinder the Fugitive Slave Law through Personal Liberty laws. Yet, many abolitionists and some anti-slavery Republicans continued to argue their worth. During the secession crisis only Rhode Island repealed its Personal Liberty Law outright. Austin Blair publicly defended Michigan's two laws.<sup>69</sup>

The Michigan Republican press defended the state's Personal Liberty laws on the grounds that they were constitutional and helped palliate the noxious Fugitive Slave Law. The Marshall Statesman characterized the Fugitive Slave Law as "a foul blot--a disgrace to the age--an insult to the character of a free nation, and a glaring reproach to the civilization of the nineteenth century." Abhorrent because it denied the slave the natural right to be free, it trampled the sacred guarantees of habeas corpus and trial by jury.<sup>70</sup> Another journal resented the Act because it made men lose their self-respect by becoming slave hunters. A provision of the Act giving the U.S. commissioner ten dollars when finding for the claimant and

only five for finding for the defendant was a bribe and morally repugnant.<sup>71</sup> More frequently Republican papers went to great lengths to show that the Personal Liberty laws did not conflict with the Constitution. No state law of Michigan nullified the Fugitive Slave Law, declared the Detroit Daily Tribune. After reviewing the provisions of the Personal Liberty laws, it concluded that only the section denying the use of state jails for fugitives was unnecessary. It further noted that after five years no case had been tried under the laws.<sup>72</sup> All the Michigan acts did, claimed the Detroit Daily Advertiser, was to assure that no man would be dragged from the state until it was proved before a jury that he was fugitive. The object of the laws was to protect the citizens of Michigan within the state's own borders.<sup>73</sup> Personal Liberty laws were passed because "many who were entitled to freedom have been enslaved," commented another journal. Indeed, the purpose of the laws was to equalize human rights with property rights. They were also constitutional because the Constitution guaranteed the right of habeas corpus.<sup>74</sup>

Until February, 1861, the Republican press was united in opposition to repealing the Personal Liberty laws. The Detroit Daily Tribune informed the South that it had no right to tell Michigan what her constitution should be. Even if the Personal Liberty laws were repealed, that would not repeal public sentiment.<sup>75</sup> Their repeal would not satisfy the South for it would clamor as

loudly as ever for secession, stated another journal. In addition, the Republican party would be reproached for its cowardice. Michigan should not back down before southern threats.<sup>76</sup> The repeal of the Personal Liberty laws, one

editor claimed, was only one demand of the South. It also wanted a more effective fugitive slave law and a guarantee for slave property in the territories.<sup>77</sup> The Lansing

State Republican urged Republicans of Michigan not to hand over to traitors all they had fought for. If Republican legislators weakened, the party of freedom would be destroyed.<sup>78</sup> Repeal of the Liberty laws would not in the

least satisfy the South, commented the Constantine Mercury and Advertiser. It would be content only if leading Republicans and abolitionists bought and held slaves.<sup>79</sup>

Most Michigan Republican papers were against repeal.<sup>80</sup>

Their attitude was a combination of intransigence and realism. Some opposed repeal simply not to give the South the satisfaction of forcing another concession out of the Republicans. They had reached the point where they were determined not to give the least satisfaction to the secessionists and their doughface allies. Others opposed repeal out of the realization that it would have done virtually nothing to calm the crisis. They knew that the secessionists would not have been satisfied with anything less than a slave code. And until that issue was settled, everything else was irrelevant.

In February, 1861 several Republican papers

underwent a change of attitude in regard to the wisdom of the state retaining its Personal Liberty laws. Many were influenced by the minority report of the House Judiciary Committee which had concluded that the Personal Liberty laws were unconstitutional. The Battle Creek Journal, for example, had at the end of January expressed great doubt that such laws were unconstitutional, but by the middle of February had decided that they were so and should be repealed.<sup>81</sup> On February 12 the Adrian Daily Expositor proclaimed the controversy over the laws unconstitutionality as "of not great practical importance" for it had never been enforced and its repeal would in no way satisfy the South. But on February 18, after reading the minority report, the paper's editor came out for repeal on the grounds that "it is right and for no other reason whatever." He still thought, however, that it would not have the slightest effect on allaying the sectional crisis. The legislature should repeal the laws as an act of duty, declared the Detroit Daily Tribune. It urged the legislature to place Michigan in the position that if the Union should fail, the state could not be blamed for helping to bring about its demise. In its request for repeal the paper realized that it was going against the sentiment of many Republicans. It reminded them "we labor for the same general ends. Why then should we fall out?"<sup>82</sup> The Detroit Daily Advertiser, on the other hand, sustained the majority report of the House committee. It was also heartened that

the legislature did not deem "to judge...the constitutionality of the acts of its predecessors." The Supreme Court, not the legislature, it stated, was the body to rule on the constitutionality of laws.<sup>83</sup>

The Democratic press, of course, defended the Fugitive Slave Act and castigated the Republicans for their defense of the Personal Liberty laws. Several papers showed how the latter conflicted with Fugitive Slave Act. The Personal Liberty laws called for a trial in state courts while the latter mandated a U.S. court. Clearly state authority was not superior to Federal authority. Equally important, the North's insistence on maintaining unconstitutional laws, highlighted its hypocrisy in condemning the South for passing unconstitutional laws.<sup>84</sup> Northern "nullification" was as dangerous as southern nullification, argued the Detroit Free Press, which declared that the Michigan laws struck down Federal authority and replaced it with state authority. The paper also denied that if the U.S. Commissioner decided against an alleged fugitive, he was automatically consigned to perpetual bondage. Rather, "IN EVERY SOUTHERN STATE THE LAW PROTECTS THE FREEDOM OF FREE NEGROES AS COMPLETELY AS IT PROTECTS THE FREEDOM OF WHITE PEOPLE." Moreover, the paper had the temerity to claim that it was not wise to give a fugitive a trial in the state where he was captured because it would put the claimant to great expense, equal to the value of the escaped slave. Finally, the Free



Press claimed that repeal of the Personal Liberty laws was not aimed at the militant disunionists but rather at the southern unionists who would then have an argument against secession to present to the southern people.<sup>85</sup> The Grand Rapids Daily Enquirer pledged the Democracy to help slaveholders overcome Republican opposition to the recovery of their property.<sup>86</sup> Finally, the Three Rivers Western Chronicle castigated Austin Blair as "a hot headed abolitionist" who condemned southern nullification but supported northern nullification of the Fugitive Slave Law by Personal Liberty laws.<sup>87</sup>

An analysis of the positions of the Republican and Democratic newspapers in regard to compromise sheds further light on the basic differences that divided the parties. Democratic papers applauded any compromise that held the least hope for re-uniting the nation. Although they frequently gave the impression that a compromise of the Crittenden variety would suddenly have halted and reversed the secession movement, in their more candid moments they conceded that at best it would have only satisfied the conservative Union men of the border states (upper South). Yet, they argued, with some cogency, that if the Unionists could hold the upper South in the Union, the lower South would be placed in a very untenable position. Their attitude toward compromise again illustrates their basic belief that the Union was perfect as then constituted and was being destroyed by the artificial issue of slavery.

They could not comprehend how Northerners would risk civil war to prevent the extension of slavery into the territories. Democrats played their last cards in the hope that one more compromise would put the slavery issue to rest, thus permitting the nation to continue as a perfect state.

Republican editors, on the other hand, were not willing to abandon the fruits of victory. To do so would have meant a betrayal of the Chicago platform and the destruction of the party. In contrast to Democrats, Republicans viewed slavery and the Slave Power as a deadly cancer which was poisoning the nation. To kill the disease, it had to be stopped from expanding. The death of slavery would come, Republicans believed, solely through constitutional means. Indeed, it was the Republican commitment to constitutionalism that prevented a direct attack on slavery in the states. Hence, the party did not accept any compromise which would have given slavery constitutional recognition in the territories. To do so would have ruined the Republican plan to destroy slavery. That many Republican papers were willing to repeal Michigan's Personal Liberty laws, which they considered a bulwark of freedom, further illustrates their commitment to the Constitution. In essence, Republicans opposed the Slave Power, not only because it enslaved blacks, but because it threatened the freedom of all people. They viewed the Slave Power as a despotism which threatened to quash

liberties in the North, as it did in the South. By containing it, Republicans hoped to preserve and extend freedom, the principle upon which the nation was founded.

## CHAPTER VII NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Kenneth M. Stamp, And the War Came: The North and the Secession Crisis, 1860-1861 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1950), p. 130.

<sup>2</sup>Allan Nevins, The Emergence of Lincoln, Vol. II (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1950), p. 402.

<sup>3</sup>Dwight L. Dumond, The Secession Movement, 1860-1861 (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1931), p. 161.

<sup>4</sup>Robert Gray Gunderson, Old Gentlemen's Convention: The Washington Peace Conference of 1861 (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1961), pp. 107-109.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 95.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., pp. 72-74.

<sup>7</sup>Stamp, And the War Came, p. 185; David M. Potter, Lincoln and his Party in the Secession Crisis (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1942), p. 16.

<sup>8</sup>Detroit Free Press, December 8, 9, 1860.

<sup>9</sup>Grand Rapids Daily Enquirer, December 14, 20, 1860.

<sup>10</sup>Marshall Democratic Expounder, January 3, 1861.

<sup>11</sup>Niles Republican, January 5, 1861.

<sup>12</sup>Kalamazoo Gazette, February 22, March 1, 1861.

<sup>13</sup>Detroit Free Press, December 29, 1860, January 13, 1861.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., January 25, 1861.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., February 15, 1861.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., March 10, 12, 1861.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., March 30, 1861.

- 18 Grand Rapids Daily Enquirer, December 27, 1860,  
January 24, 1861.
- 19 Ibid., January 10, 1861.
- 20 Ibid., January 11, April 6, 1861.
- 21 Niles Republican, December 15, 1860, January 20,  
February 9, 16, 1861.
- 22 Three Rivers Western Chronicle, January 31,  
1861.
- 23 Marshall Democratic Expounder, April 4, 1861.
- 24 Detroit Free Press, February 1, 5, 1861.
- 25 Grand Rapids Daily Enquirer, February 5, 1861.
- 26 Marshall Democratic Expounder, February 7, 1861.
- 27 Detroit Free Press, February 17, March 2, 1861.
- 28 Ibid., December 25, 1860, April 10, 1861; Niles  
Republican, December 29, 1861.
- 29 Potter, Lincoln and His Party, p. 170; Stampp,  
And the War Came, p. 172.
- 30 Grand Rapids Daily Enquirer, January 16, 1861.
- 31 Michigan Argus, January 18, 1861.
- 32 Detroit Free Press, January 16, February 3,  
1861.
- 33 Marshall Democratic Expounder, February 7, 1861.
- 34 Niles Republican, February 9, 1861.
- 35 Kalamazoo Gazette, March 15, 1861.
- 36 Detroit Daily Tribune, January 16, February 12,  
1861.
- 37 Eaton County Republican, January 18, 1861.
- 38 Lansing State Republican, February 20, 1861.
- 39 Detroit Daily Advertiser, January 16, 17, March  
7, 1861.
- 40 Ingham County News, February 14, 1861.

<sup>41</sup>Detroit Daily Tribune, December 4, 5, 11, 15, 1860.

<sup>42</sup>Detroit Daily Advertiser, December 5, 11, 18, 1860, January 22, February 4, 1861.

<sup>43</sup>Adrian Daily Expositor, December 3, 1860.

<sup>44</sup>Marshall Statesman, January 2, 1861.

<sup>45</sup>Hillsdale Standard, January 22, 1861.

<sup>46</sup>Ingham County News, February 14, 1861; Constantine Mercury and Advertiser, February 7, 1861.

<sup>47</sup>Lansing State Republican, December 12, 1860; January 16, 1861.

<sup>48</sup>Allegan Journal, December 17, 1860.

<sup>49</sup>Eaton County Republican, December 21, 28, 1860; February 2, 1861.

<sup>50</sup>Michigan State News, January 29, February 5, 1861.

<sup>51</sup>Adrian Daily Expositor, December 4, 1860, January 28, 1861.

<sup>52</sup>Detroit Daily Tribune, December 26, 28, 1860, March 23, 1861.

<sup>53</sup>St. Joseph Traveler, February 20, 1861.

<sup>54</sup>Detroit Daily Tribune, December 24, 1860, January 22, April 10, 1861.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid., January 11, 1861; Detroit Daily Advertiser, January 14, 1861.

<sup>56</sup>Eaton County Republican, January 18, 1861.

<sup>57</sup>Allegan Journal, February 4, 1861.

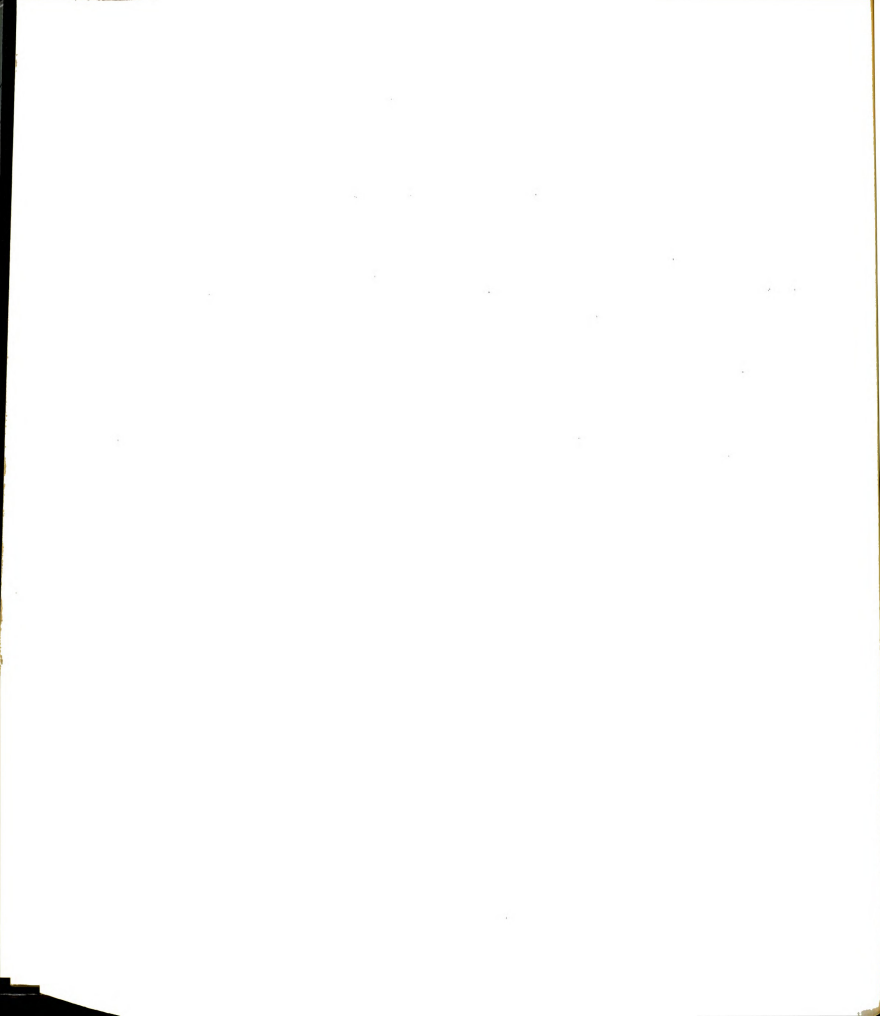
<sup>58</sup>Hillsdale Standard, February 12, 1861; Jonesville Independent, February 14, 1861.

<sup>59</sup>Lansing State Republican, January 30, 1861.

<sup>60</sup>Detroit Daily Tribune, February 15, 1861.

<sup>61</sup>St. Joseph Traveler, February 20, 1861.

- <sup>62</sup> Battle Creek Journal, February 22, 1861.
- <sup>63</sup> Adrian Daily Expositor, February 2, 11, 1861.
- <sup>64</sup> Hillsdale Standard, February 5, 1861.
- <sup>65</sup> Marshall Statesman, February 27, 1861.
- <sup>66</sup> Detroit Daily Advertiser, March 2, 1861.
- <sup>67</sup> J. G. Randall and David Donald, The Civil War and Reconstruction, 2nd ed., Rev., (Lexington, Mass.: D. C. Heath and Company, 1969), p. 89.
- <sup>68</sup> Floyd Benjamin Streeter, Political Parties in Michigan, 1837-1860 (Lansing: Michigan Historical Commission, 1918), pp. 202-203; Laws of Michigan (1855), pp. 413-415.
- <sup>69</sup> Norman L. Rosenberg, "Personal Liberty Laws and Sectional Crisis, 1850-1861," Civil War History, XVII (March, 1971), pp. 37-42.
- <sup>70</sup> Marshall Statesman, May 16, 1860.
- <sup>71</sup> Detroit Daily Advertiser, November 22, 1860.
- <sup>72</sup> Detroit Daily Tribune, November 13, 17, 1860.
- <sup>73</sup> Detroit Daily Advertiser, November 22, 1860.
- <sup>74</sup> Eaton County Republican, December 14, 1860, February 11, 1861.
- <sup>75</sup> Detroit Daily Tribune, November 20, 1860.
- <sup>76</sup> Detroit Daily Advertiser, November 21, December 10, 1860.
- <sup>77</sup> Adrian Daily Expositor, November 27, 1860.
- <sup>78</sup> Lansing State Republican, December 5, 1860.
- <sup>79</sup> Constantine Mercury and Advertiser, December 12, 1860.
- <sup>80</sup> On December 19, the Lansing State Republican listed fourteen Republican papers that had announced against repeal.
- <sup>81</sup> Battle Creek Journal, January 25, February 15, 1861.





<sup>82</sup>Detroit Daily Tribune, February 11, 14, 1861.

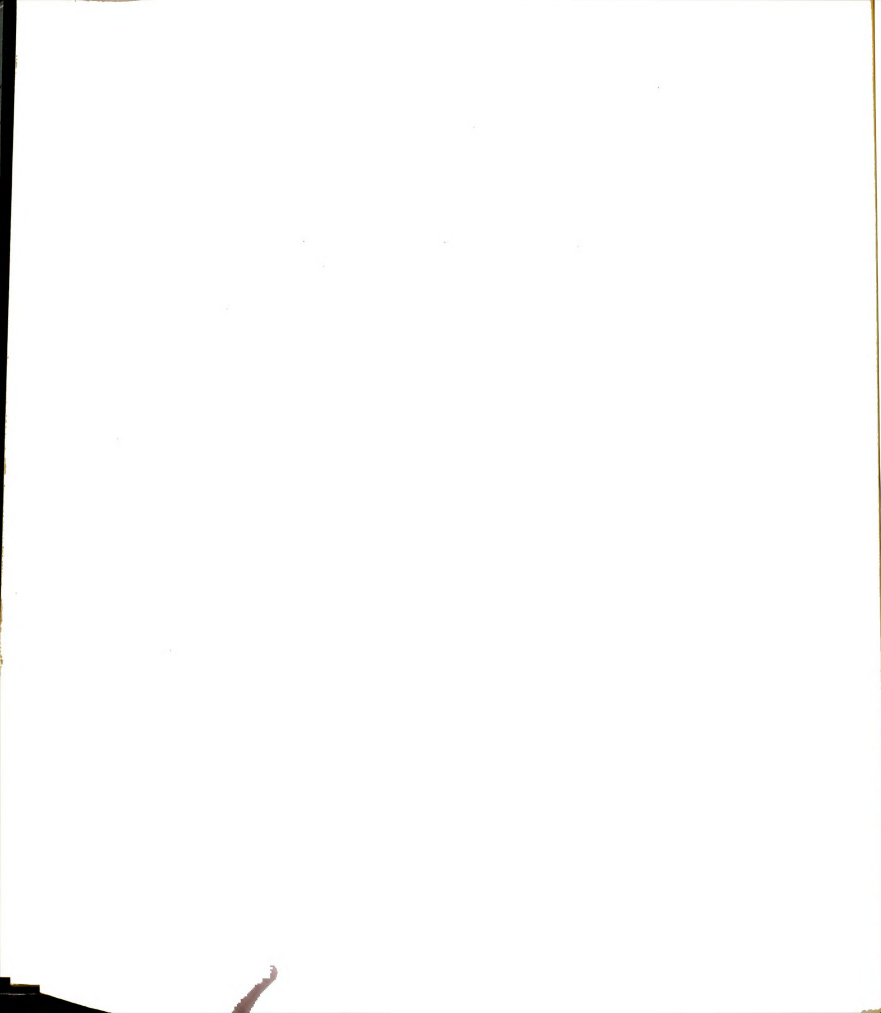
<sup>83</sup>Detroit Daily Advertiser, February 11, March 12,  
1861.

<sup>84</sup>Marshall Democratic Expounder, November 29, 1860.

<sup>85</sup>Detroit Free Press, December 14, 18, 1860.

<sup>86</sup>Grand Rapids Daily Enquirer, March 7, 1861.

<sup>87</sup>Three Rivers Western Chronicle, January 10, 1861.



## CHAPTER VIII

### LINCOLN AND SUMTER

When Abraham Lincoln assumed the presidency on March 4, he had no definite policy in regard to the seceded states; but he was convinced that both peaceful disunion and compromise were impossible. The laws would have to be enforced, including the collecting of the revenue and the holding of Federal property.<sup>1</sup> Naturally his attention turned towards the beleaguered forts, Sumter and Pickens. A week after the inauguration, General Winfield Scott informed the President that to supply and re-inforce Sumter a fleet of ships, 5,000 regular troops and 20,000 volunteers would be required. Lincoln did not accept this advice as final. He told Scott to order the troops on the ship Brooklyn, lying off Pickens, to land and re-inforce the fort.<sup>2</sup> The Secretary of State, William H. Seward, attempted to convince the President to evacuate Sumter on the grounds that it would stimulate southern unionism. He did argue, however, that a strong Federal presence should be made at Fort Pickens. In the hopes of maintaining peace, the Secretary frequently negotiated with southern commissioners and finally urged a foreign adventure to reunite the nation.<sup>3</sup> Ultimately, Lincoln rejected Seward's

proposals and his faith in southern unionism. On April 4, he formulated the final plans for the relief of Sumter. The President decided to inform openly Governor Pickens of South Carolina that he was merely sending provisions to the starving garrison and hoped that the Governor would allow the supplies to be landed unhindered. Lincoln told the commander of the Sumter expedition, Captain Gustavus Vasa Fox, that if the rebel batteries opened fire, he should blast his way to the fort.<sup>4</sup> On April 8, President Jefferson Davis of the Confederacy ordered General P.G.T. Beauregard not to allow provisions to be conveyed to Sumter. On April 12, when it became clear that Lincoln was planning to relieve Sumter by force and that Anderson would not surrender, the Charleston batteries fired on the fort. The Fox expedition arrived too late to help Anderson.<sup>5</sup>

From Lincoln's election to the firing on Sumter, the Michigan press speculated about his intended policy and advised him as to the best course to follow. During the months before the Inaugural, Democratic papers were divided as to whether Lincoln was for war or peace. The more radical papers, such as the Detroit Free Press and the Grand Rapids Daily Enquirer, generally condemned the President-elect while the more conservative papers, such as the Kalamazoo Gazette and the Michigan Argus, were willing to give him a chance. For two weeks after the election, the Democratic papers were not overly critical of Lincoln. Conciliation between the sections, the Free

Press observed, now rested with the Republican party. Lincoln had to drop the party's narrow sectional policy and grant the South its constitutional rights. The Fugitive Slave Law had to be enforced, the Dred Scott decision sustained, the Wilmot proviso dropped, and the Personal Liberty laws repealed. The paper optimistically anticipated that "LINCOLN will see that the law is faithfully executed." The presidency took the abolitionism out of a man, the paper noted, because it was impossible to simultaneously enforce the Constitution and remain loyal to the principles of the Republican party.<sup>6</sup> The editor of the Kalamazoo Gazette announced that he had never considered Lincoln an enemy to any section of the nation. Although the paper differed with Republican principles, it did not expect Lincoln to ask Congress to settle the slavery question. To the contrary, it thought he would be fair to the South because to do otherwise would be fatal to his Administration and the Union. The desire to administer the government on recognized constitutional principles, the paper believed, coincided with "Mr. LINCOLN'S personal and life-long predilections."<sup>7</sup> "Lincoln is powerless for evil," concluded the Niles Republican. He could do nothing without the consent of Congress. He would have to act for the good of the country as a whole or not act at all.<sup>8</sup>

Democratic papers, occupied by other matters, did not comment in December on Lincoln's probable policy.

From January to March, only the Detroit Free Press and the Grand Rapids Daily Enquirer extensively discussed the issue. The Free Press, reflecting its changed attitude towards secession, grew increasingly critical of the President-elect, although it occasionally saw some hope from the man. In early January, it warned him to conciliate the South or else he would never be president of the whole Union. By the middle of the month it thought that he would adopt a policy of coercion by land and sea.<sup>9</sup> "Mr. LINCOLN breathes war," declared the paper on February 13. The best hope of peace was that the great capitalists of the East would not lend the Government money. Unsympathetic to anti-slavery and civil war, they would not aid coercion. Two days later, however, the paper changed its mind. Lincoln had now "resolved to forego party and platform for the sake of saving the country." About a week later it was not quite so sure. Lincoln was "the sport of political factions," being pulled by both conservatives and radicals. The "puerility" of his speeches made it a matter of chance to what group he would ultimately fall.<sup>10</sup> Finally, on March 1, the paper thought events indicated that Lincoln would follow a conservative policy. The failure to oust Seward from the Cabinet meant that his proposals to make concessions to the Union sentiment of the border slave states would prevail. The Grand Rapids Enquirer followed a similar pattern. On February 19, it announced that Lincoln planned a rule-or-ruin policy.

Contemplating no concessions to the Union men of the South, his purpose was to implement the Chicago platform. His Administration was "to be made an engine of anti-slavery warfare." By March 1, however, it had changed its view, announcing that conservative sentiment had won over Lincoln's mind. There was still a chance Lincoln could bring "peace and concord" to the nation.

In the months before Lincoln's inaugural, Republican papers projected his policy as conciliatory, but not repudiating any party principles. The policy of the Founding Fathers would be restored, rejoiced the Jonesville Independent. No longer would "an encroaching oligarchy... fatten upon the labor of negroes."<sup>11</sup> Abraham Lincoln would be another Jackson, bragged another journal. The laws of the country would be equally enforced in every section of the Union.<sup>12</sup> Lincoln was not an abolitionist, declared the Detroit Daily Advertiser. The Democratic papers that spread this false rumor were treacherous because they aroused the South to a frenzied pitch. But, Lincoln would collect the revenue from all the ports of the nation. As long as the seceded states paid it, the Union would be intact. The Government would not force them to accept the benefits of the courts or post-office. If they resisted the collection of the revenue, a blockade of the secession ports would be established.<sup>13</sup> The St. Joseph Traveler stated that Lincoln would not propagate slavery by a Lecompton constitution or ballot stuffing. He would

simply do his constitutional duties. "The effect of such an administration," it predicted, "cannot fail to be tranquilizing."<sup>14</sup> The northern people and legislators would treat the South with respect, stated the Eaton County Republican, but would make sure their own rights were protected.<sup>15</sup> Finally, the Marshall Statesman, in the process of attacking the Free Press' fire-in-the-rear editorial, reiterated that Republicans did not propose to coerce the South. But if the rebels should seize Federal property, attack the national capital, or obstruct the Mississippi, the Government would defend itself with the army and navy.<sup>16</sup> Republican papers expected Lincoln to enforce the laws. They accepted the possibility of civil war but did not expect it. Most believed that if Lincoln proved to the South that all he planned to do was carry out his constitutional obligations, southern unionism would wax.

Lincoln's Inaugural was anxiously awaited by the nation for a hint of the policy he planned to pursue. He opened by denying that the Republican Administration had any plans to interfere with slavery in the states. He intended to enforce the Fugitive Slave Act but implied support of the Personal Liberty laws when he asked, "ought not all the safeguards of liberty known in civilized and humane jurisprudence...be introduced, so that a free man be not in any case surrendered as a slave?" For Lincoln, the Union was perpetual. He promised to defend the Union, but argued that there need not be bloodshed or violence.



Specifically, he stated: "The power confided to me will be used to hold, occupy, and possess the property and places belonging to the Government and to collect the duties and imposts; but beyond what may be necessary for these objects, there will be no invasion, no using of force against or among the people anywhere." He reminded the South that the Constitution provided sufficient safeguards for the rights of minorities. Moreover, he considered secession "the essence of anarchy;" because if one minority could secede, so could many others. He judged the decision of the Supreme Court final in regard to any particular suit, but not necessarily so for parallel cases. Ultimately, he believed, the only substantial dispute disrupting the nation was that "one section of our country believes slavery is right and ought to be extended, while the other believes it is wrong and ought not to be extended." He urged faith in the people to solve the nation's ills. "In your hands, my dissatisfied fellow-countrymen, and not in mine, is the momentous issue of civil war," Lincoln concluded. "The Government will not assail you. You can have no conflict without being yourselves the aggressors. You have no oath registered in heaven to destroy the Government, while I shall have the most solemn one to 'preserve, protect, and defend it.'" <sup>17</sup>

The Democratic papers differed greatly in their reactions to the Inaugural. The Free Press and Enquirer found little good to say about it. Lincoln dampened any

hope of a revival of Union sentiment in the border states, feared the Free Press. They would secede and there would be war. His statement that he would "hold, occupy and possess" Federal property meant that he planned to use force, i.e., coerce the South. This the whole South would resist. There will be "no compromise, no concession no any thing but coercion...."<sup>18</sup> By March 8, the paper conceded that some Democratic sheets did not interpret the Address as it did. But it was irrelevant, the paper contended, what the Democratic papers thought. The reaction of the border slave states was what counted. If they viewed it as a peace paper, secession would end. Then, retreating somewhat from its previous position in regard to reinforcing the forts, the Free Press thought that Lincoln might send aid to Sumter to which it had no objection, although he had no army to re-take it.<sup>19</sup> Finally, the Free Press attacked Lincoln for annihilating the Supreme Court by declining to enforce its decisions except in reference to each particular suit.<sup>20</sup> The Inaugural was a partisan harangue, declared the Grand Rapids Daily Enquirer. It consisted of "fallacies, continual quibblings, [and] petty argumentations." Lincoln planned to use force to retain and retake Government property. To recover Federal property in all the seceded states would require an enormous effort. It would ultimately "create a deadly and irreconcilable feud between the States, North and South." The paper admitted that it differed from Douglas who

considered the Inaugural a peace message. But it did not differ with Douglas' peace proposal, nor would it oppose Lincoln if he implemented such a policy.<sup>21</sup>

Other Democratic papers were much more moderate in their analyses. In Lincoln's Inaugural, "we find it all that could be hoped," stated the Kalamazoo Gazette. It was "direct, practical, prudent and eminently conservative." Any Democrat who divested himself of prejudice would not be ashamed to deliver the same speech, it declared. Lincoln rejected anti-slavery dogmas while promising to enforce the Fugitive Slave Law. He gave assurances that each state would have control over its own domestic institutions. Moreover, he re-affirmed the unity, endurance, and adhesiveness of the national government. The President was not for coercion and promised deference to the decisions of the Supreme Court. He also favored a national convention to amend the Constitution. In summary, the Gazette considered Lincoln "honest, frank and pacific in his intentions...."<sup>22</sup> The Inaugural was conciliatory, declared the Marshall Democratic Expounder. But his promise to hold, occupy and possess Federal property would be regarded by the South as coercion. His failure to announce a peace policy "will tend to augment, rather to diminish our troubles." Civil war was now more likely than ever.<sup>23</sup> The Michigan Argus also had mixed reactions to the Inaugural. The paper, not finding any proclamation of force in it, praised Lincoln for promising to

enforce the Fugitive Slave Act and not to interfere with slavery in the states. It approved of his support for a constitutional amendment forever guaranteeing slavery in the states against congressional interference. The Argus regretted, however, that Lincoln was silent in regard to the territorial question. The Address appealed "to all Union loving men North and South to stand by the Union...."<sup>24</sup> The Niles Republican criticized the Address but was not completely condemnatory. Lincoln's policy was coercive, it thought, and would drive out the border states, resulting in civil war. Although regretting that he did not raise himself to the level of a statesman, the Republican commended him for his pledge to enforce the Fugitive Slave Law and his vow not to interfere with slavery in the states. It promised to "support him in every just effort to restore the Union."<sup>25</sup> The Three Rivers Western Chronicle, while accepting the opinions of Douglas, Crittenden, and Andrew Johnson that the Address indicated a peace policy, qualified its approval by noting that Lincoln had attempted to placate both the radical and conservative elements in the Republican party. At the same time, he advocated both peace and coercion.<sup>26</sup> In summary, a considerable portion of the Michigan Democratic papers were willing to cast aside partisanship as long as they were convinced that Lincoln would follow a peace policy, i.e., sacrifice the Chicago platform and compromise with the South. The Inaugural Address was ambiguous enough that

many of the papers thought that he just might abandon party principles.

The Republican press was unanimous in its praise of the Inaugural Address. "It will thoroughly satisfy every loyal Union man in both sections of the Confederacy," claimed the Detroit Daily Tribune. Lincoln would adhere to his constitutional oath without reservation. He disavowed interference with the domestic institutions of the states. Although he would execute the laws by holding the forts and collecting the revenue, he was not for coercion. The South should be assured, it declared, by his desire to avoid bloodshed, his support of the proposed constitutional amendment forever guaranteeing slavery in the states, his promise to enforce the Fugitive Slave Law, his determination to suppress insurrection, his respect for Supreme Court decisions, and by "the fraternal kindness and sympathy that pervades every line of the inaugural...." He said nothing about territorial policy, the paper noted, because the last Congress had provided a government for the remaining unorganized domain. It would have been preposterous for him to speculate about future acquisitions. In addition, the plight of the Union was the paramount question at the moment.<sup>27</sup> Lincoln planned a defensive policy, stated the Adrian Daily Expositor. He disclaimed intentions of "needless irritation" but forthrightly denounced secession.<sup>28</sup> Lincoln advocated a conciliatory policy, commented one journal, but was

determined to enforce the laws, a constitutional duty. The Address, the paper reminded the Democrats, was devoid of recrimination and aimed at all the people.<sup>29</sup> His promise to preserve the constitutional rights of the South, thought the Eaton County Republican, would win Lincoln the support of many who voted against him.<sup>30</sup> Finally, the Michigan State News, noting the approval of the Address by Crittenden, Douglas, and Johnson, claimed that the Republican party was conservative with national views.<sup>31</sup> As previously, the Republican press spoke in vague generalizations about Lincoln's policy. It really had no firm idea of what he planned to do.

The thirty-nine day interlude between Lincoln's inauguration and the firing on Sumter was marked by speculation on the disposition of that fort. For much of March, discussion revolved around the repercussions of the rumored evacuation of Fort Sumter. These rumors, started by Seward,<sup>32</sup> for a time were accepted as fact by the Michigan press. For ten days after the inaugural, Democratic papers continued to beseech Lincoln to adopt a peace policy. A policy of force, the Free Press argued, would make reunion impossible. But it felt that Lincoln was now a conciliator. He could put his sentiments into action, it stated, by ordering the evacuation of Sumter. Although the paper admitted that abandoning the fort was "delicate and embarrassing," it would be a master stroke which would remove an irritant to the people of the seceded states

1. The first part of the document is a list of the names of the persons who were present at the meeting. The names are listed in alphabetical order.

while re-kindling their love of the Union. It would be interpreted as a voluntary peace measure because the Federal government felt it in its power to hold the fort. Specifically, Union sentiment in the border states would grow overwhelming, opening the way for ultimate reunion.<sup>33</sup> The Grand Rapids Daily Enquirer promised to support Lincoln if he adopted a peace policy, but if he opted for war it would demand his consignment to a "lasting infamy."<sup>34</sup>

The Democratic press reacted to rumors that Sumter would be evacuated with mixed emotions. The Michigan Argus considered it a wise move because it would give "the secessionists rope with which to hang themselves." A peace policy, it was convinced, offered the best hope for killing the disunion movement. The evacuation, it hoped, was being ordered as a matter of public policy rather than just out of military necessity.<sup>35</sup> The Grand Rapids Daily Enquirer applauded the rumored evacuation, but observed that it would not have much moral effect if it was to be implemented solely on the impossibility of relieving the fort. It also deplored the report that the evacuation would be followed up by an immediate blockade of the Charleston harbor.<sup>36</sup> The Free Press chided the Republican press for its disappointment at the rumored evacuation of Sumter as it commended the President for his seeming adoption of a peace policy. It expected him to agree to a compromise similar to the Crittenden plan and a reduction of the tariff. Only by doing these things could he avoid



either a peaceful dissolution of the Union or war.<sup>37</sup> By March 20, the Free Press began to question the motives of the Lincoln Administration. The Administration, it felt, was not grappling with the southern question in any practical way. Sumter, it argued, should have been evacuated as a peace measure or else held at any cost. It accused Lincoln of refusing to announce a policy in order to keep the Republican party together. Again, the Free Press announced that it preferred peaceable separation to war, but desired most of all a compromise that would avert the division of the nation. The next day the paper accepted a New York Times report that Anderson would be left to starve. The Administration, it lamented, had so far done nothing for peace. On the 22nd, it once again believed Sumter would be evacuated, but out of military necessity. There would have been honor in evacuating the fort as a peace measure, it stated, but out of military necessity it was a humiliation.

Other Democratic papers less reservedly cheered the rumored evacuation. The Marshall Democratic Expounder considered the motives for the evacuation of Sumter as unimportant. The policy was commendable because "it removes the chances of civil war."<sup>38</sup> The Kalamazoo Gazette, one of the more conservative Democratic papers, rebuked the critics of the Lincoln Administration. It accused both Democrats and Republicans of being "narrow, bigoted and partisan...." Noting that Lincoln had been only in power

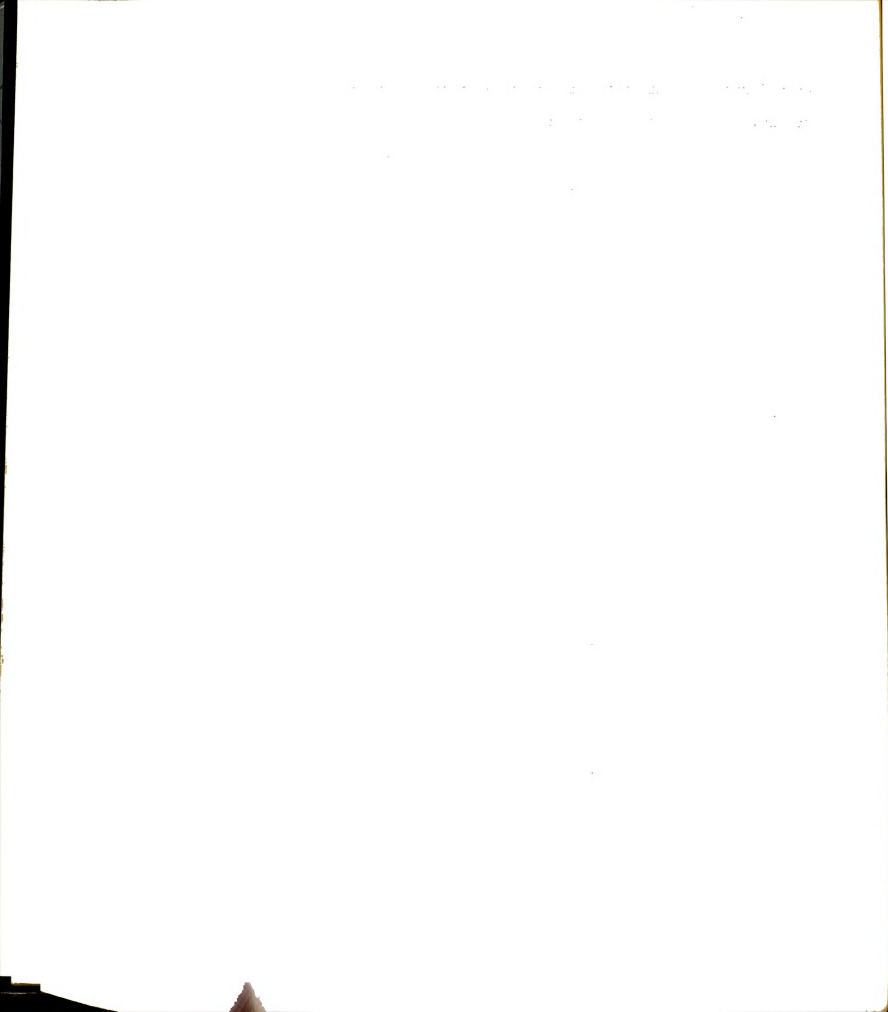
for three weeks, it urged them to give him time to develop a policy. A policy, it observed a week later, was slowly unfolding. Sumter, Pickens, and the collection of the revenue were to be given up. There were reports that the Lincoln Administration was contemplating letting the South go. The paper was pleased that Republican slogans such as "Free Soil" and "No concessions to traitors" were no longer to be heard. The Democratic program, it felt, was at last being vindicated.<sup>39</sup> In summary, as March drew to a close, all Democratic papers desired the evacuation of Sumter as a peace measure. There was virtually no mention of any constitutional necessity to enforce the laws. The more partisan Democratic papers, such as the Free Press, found it impossible to refrain from criticizing the Republicans. More conservative papers, less interested in partisan gain, continued to applaud Lincoln, as long as they thought he was carrying out a peace policy. Most importantly, many Democratic journals continued to argue that a peace policy, even if it meant de facto recognition of secession, ultimately held the best hope for an amicable reunion.

By the first week in April it became apparent to most Democratic papers that the Lincoln Administration did not plan to evacuate Sumter immediately. But they still had no clear idea of what he was actually contemplating. On the 3rd, the Free Press lambasted the Administration for doing nothing except distributing party spoils. Although

it appeared that Lincoln was planning to let the border states go, he had as yet to announce for either war or peace. By the 7th, the Free Press had decided that the Administration was for war. A war policy was better than no policy, it declared, although "the war will be on a magnificent scale." If there were any good in holding Sumter and Pickens, the paper commented two days later, "we could comprehend why almost any sacrifice should be made to hold them." But the Government had no power to collect the revenue on ship-board. Hence, unless the Government planned to enforce the law within the seceded states, there was no point to hold on to the forts. The only sensible policy, the paper concluded, was to abandon the forts to save the peace. Finally, on the 12th, the day the guns opened on Sumter, the Free Press continued to argue that if Lincoln recommended adoption of the Crittenden proposals and ordered the withdrawal of Federal troops from the seceded states, a popular reaction to secession would emerge in the South, ultimately reuniting the Union. But, "slavery," it admitted, "has everything to do with the pending 'tremendous issues,' and those issues cannot be settled until the slavery question shall be settled."

Other Democratic papers requested the Administration to announce a policy. "The people demand WAR, or PEACE," thundered the Grand Rapids Daily Enquirer. Rumors that the forts were to be abandoned or reinforced, that the revenue was or was not to be collected, that the

Confederacy was or was not to be recognized disturbed the people. They were sick of the Government's paralysis. They wanted a decision, one way or the other. If the peace policy were adopted, revolution should be recognized as successful, constitutional amendments guaranteeing the rights of the South should be passed, and an appeal made to the Union men in the South to reconstruct the Union. If such overtures should be refused, international adjustments should be negotiated which would establish a community of interests between the two nations. On the other hand, should a war policy be adopted, it should be done quickly to prevent the Confederates the time to build itself up to the point "that to crush out their revolutionary experiment and scheme, would require the best bone, muscle and blood of the North."<sup>40</sup> By the 10th the paper accurately concluded that "the Government intends to assert its authority over the seceding States." People had to realize, however, that the Confederacy was going to resist such efforts. In regard to Sumter, it observed that "this spot seems destined to become immortalized in History." The Three Rivers Western Chronicle also called for an announced policy. It demanded an end of Lincoln's "do-nothing policy." A peace policy was hoped for, but any policy was better than none.<sup>41</sup> No Democrat in the North believed in secession, stated the Niles Republican. There was no cause for revolution, it continued, because the Republican Administration had done nothing to encroach on

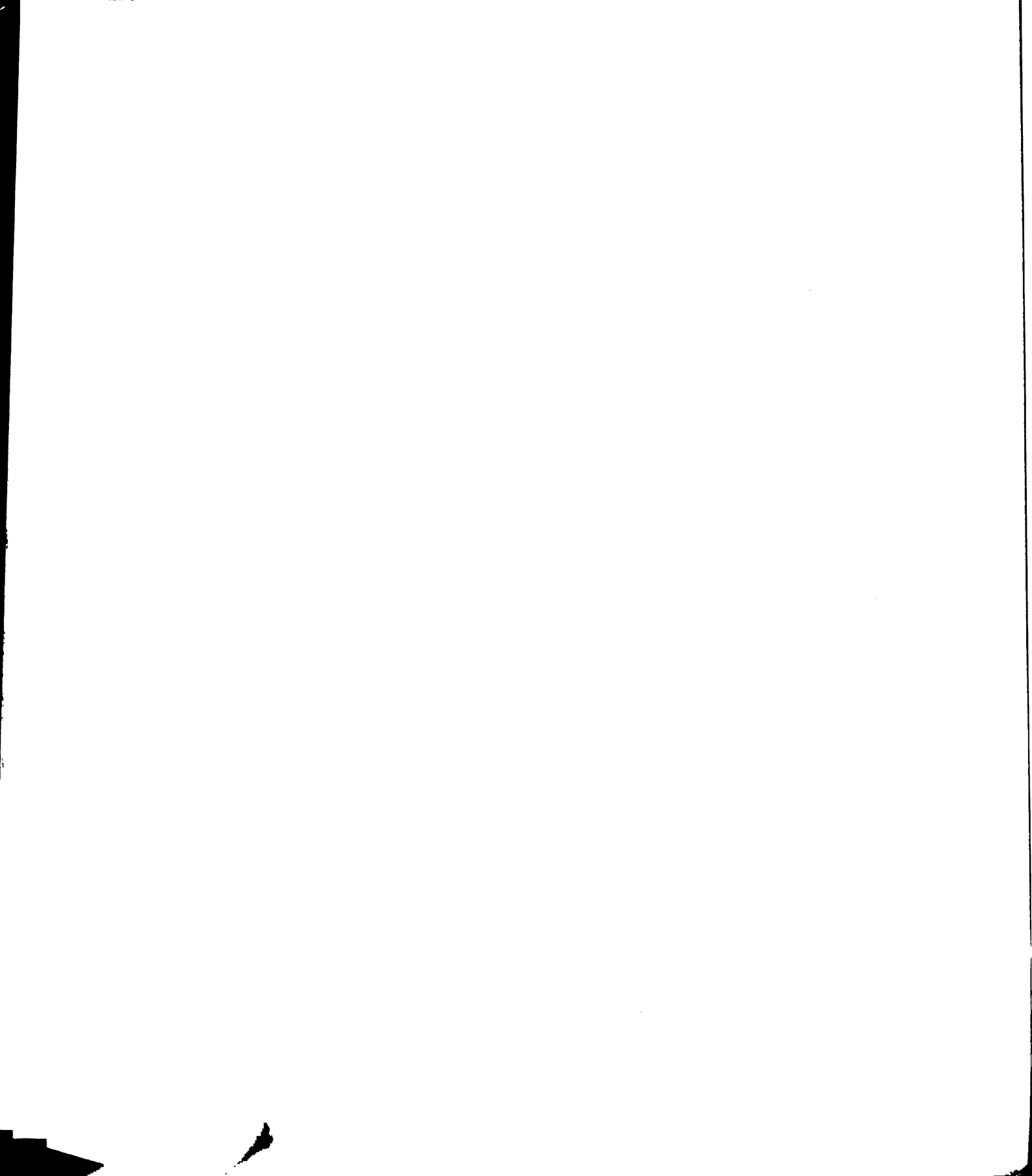


southern rights. Indeed, the Republicans recently had organized three territories without reference to slavery. Lincoln had no choice but to execute the laws. It would be an admission of the nation's weakness if he did not do it. Hence, although war would be terrible, "we do not believe in the right of secession."<sup>42</sup> The Republican, it appears, on the eve of the conflict, took a minority position in regard to enforcing the laws.<sup>43</sup> Most Democratic papers seemingly still desired their oft-discussed peace policy. But out of a frustration of being kept in ignorance so long, they were ready to accept a war policy, just to end the suspense.

Politically, the Republican papers were in a much more precarious position than the Democratic press. They were compelled to defend the Administration while not knowing its policy. During the first week of the Lincoln Administration, Republican papers expected the President to reinforce Sumter. Because the United States did not recognize secession, stated the Detroit Daily Tribune, South Carolina had no right to attack Fort Sumter, hold Fort Moultrie, or collect the revenue. Surrendering the Constitution to the secessionists would not save the Union. Wars over boundaries, fugitive slaves, navigation of the Mississippi, and foreign policy would ensue. Only the rebels would be hurt by upholding the Constitution.<sup>44</sup> The Government would do all in its power to relieve Anderson, commented the Adrian Daily Expositor. It was

possible, however, that if the Government had no means at its disposal, Sumter would have to be evacuated. But the indications were that "where the forts can be held and supplied, they will be."<sup>45</sup>

By the middle of the month, the Republican papers came to realize that the evacuation of Sumter was a real possibility. Naturally they blamed the Buchanan Administration for such a sad event. The infamy of Sumter's evacuation rested on the imbecility of Buchanan and his Cabinet, charged the Detroit Daily Advertiser. This, "the deepest humiliation to which the nation has ever been called upon to submit," was "the legitimate fruit of modern Democracy, and their leaders alone must bear the ignominy."<sup>46</sup> The Michigan State News, overwhelmed with "shame and indignation," feared the evacuation would "humiliate and demoralize Northern sentiment," while raising the spirits of the secessionists. It reminded Lincoln that thousands of men would volunteer to relieve the fort, even if there were only a forlorn hope of success. Having little faith in surrendering to treason, it noted that the evacuation of Sumter would at least disprove the Democratic peace theory.<sup>47</sup> Sumter could not be relieved without a force of 20,000 men, conceded the Adrian Daily Expositor. Nor did the President have the naval power at his disposal. Unfortunately the evacuation of the fort "will only embolden the secessionists to new aggressions and demands, and lead, perhaps a little





sooner, to certain collision."<sup>48</sup> The Lansing State Republican accepted the evacuation only with the greatest reluctance. The "sternest necessity" required it, because "no slight cost of treasure or blood can justify such an inglorious retreat." As other papers, the Republican castigated the Buchanan Administration in the most severe terms. But it rationalized that evacuation would weaken secession because the traitors thrived on violence. "Peace stifles secession," it suggested.<sup>49</sup> Finally, the Grand Traverse Herald argued that the fort was being abandoned only out of military necessity. Cursing the secessionists, it remarked, "how Devilishly omnipotent is the power of Slavery!"<sup>50</sup> All in all, most Republican papers accepted the rumored evacuation of Sumter with a sense of pain, humiliation, and outrage that the Slave Power was winning another victory. Indeed, one senses that the Republican editors experienced an overwhelming sense of powerlessness. They wanted the Union to retain possession of the fort, but there was seemingly nothing they could do to prevent it from falling.

By the fourth week of the new Administration, Republican papers felt compelled to defend it from charges that it was not doing enough to stave off secession. Some papers tried to find virtue in Lincoln's seeming inclination towards a peace policy. The President was not enforcing the laws in the seceded states, wrote the Eaton County Republican, because he had decided "to reduce the

Southern Confederacy to submission by the operation of causes within the seceded States." Attributing the peace policy to Seward, the paper observed that he hoped to stimulate southern Unionism. Exploiting the dissension in the seceded states, combined with the influence of the border states, might return most seceded states back to the Union.<sup>51</sup> The Lansing State Republican defended the Administration's peace policy as a method of stimulating counter-revolution in the South. Once the people in the seceded states realized that the Administration would treat them with forbearance, "the love of the Union will be re-kindled...."<sup>52</sup> The Marshall Statesman, which had so recently called for a "war to the knife," praised the peace policy as "commendable" as long as it brought the rebels back to their sworn allegiance to the United States; but it also exhibited an underlying anxiety that peace would not work. It stated: "War and bloodshed are to be deprecated--they are enormous evils; but desperate diseases require desperate remedies."<sup>53</sup> Clearly the Statesman was prepared for war if it should come. The Battle Creek Journal also thought that Seward's peace policy would prevail. The first step in its implementation would be the evacuation of Sumter to allow the South time to make a decision to return to the Union. Yet, the Journal, as the Statesman, could not wholeheartedly support a peace policy. "We suppose every Republican," it stated, "will be better satisfied if no necessity be found

to exist for the withdrawal of troops from that fortress;...."<sup>54</sup>

Sometimes the Administration's lack of action was explained on the grounds that it did not have enough time to implement a policy. The Detroit Daily Advertiser responded to the criticism of fellow Republicans that the Administration had adopted a passive policy by noting that it could not undo in three weeks four years of treason under the Buchanan Administration. It reiterated the argument of how difficult it would be to reinforce Sumter because of the decayed condition of the armed forces. Although the evacuation of the fort would be a humiliation, an abortive effort to relieve it would even be a greater one. Hence, the Administration should be given time to formulate its own policy.<sup>55</sup> The public was not giving adequate attention to the difficulties facing the new Administration, commented the Detroit Daily Tribune. It was unfair to expect the Administration to formulate and execute a policy in three weeks. It was also absurd to expect that once a policy was decided upon, the Administration would rush to tell it to the New York papers.<sup>56</sup> Lincoln would fulfill his inaugural pledge to hold, occupy, and possess the public property as soon as Congress gave him the means to do it, observed another journal.<sup>57</sup> The Hillsdale Standard beseeched those "sacred Republicans" who criticized the Administration to "be rational." Noting that the new Administration had to undo years of

Democratic misrule, the paper urged Republicans to give it time to consolidate its power. Nor should Republicans expect the Administration to announce its policy "for the sake of gratifying their idle curiosity and to prevent the wailing of the opposition."<sup>58</sup>

Through the last days of March and first half of April, Republican papers became increasingly dissatisfied with the seeming inaction of the Lincoln Administration. They were greatly heartened when it finally appeared that the North would assert its power. The Detroit Daily Tribune applauded the rumor that troops were ordered to land at Fort Pickens. "That work should be held at all hazards," it declared.<sup>59</sup> All effort to avoid collision should be made, the paper noted on April 4, but the Union would not be allowed to crumble "without a blow being struck in its defense...." On April 5, the paper recorded its first implicit criticism of the Lincoln Administration. Noting that the South was growing more aggressive while the North was doing nothing, it declared that "the more we delay, the more they gain, and the more we lose." The policy of the Government seemed finally determined, it noted five days later. Sumter would be held, but there would be no aggressive action such as invading the South or attempting to re-take the lost forts. If bloodshed ensued, it would be the fault of the South. But the paper again criticized the Administration while it claimed it was not doing so. "No, the letting alone policy will not

do," it stated. Those who argued that secession would have run its course if the South had been let alone were proven wrong. On the contrary, the strength of secession had grown. The Government had to increase its power in the South as much as possible, although not invade it.

The Detroit Daily Advertiser also advocated forceful measures against the South. Although it had faith that the policy outlined in the Inaugural Address would be carried out, the paper noted a public apprehension that everything would be conceded to the secessionists to hold the border states in the Union for another season. The paper itself hoped that the evacuation of Sumter would be the only humiliation the country had in store. Yet, it was still possible that the fort would not be abandoned. The people, it observed, would never accept the evacuation of Sumter as a "backing down" to the South. Indeed, it would "create such a storm of indignation at the North, as would leave the Administration without a supporter in the Republican party." The northern people would accept a bloody civil war rather than concede everything to the "blustering traitors," the paper commented.<sup>60</sup> On the 6th, the paper published an even more critical editorial. Although the people still hoped the Administration would prove equal to the emergency, they could not fail to see that the Government was "rapidly losing its power to preserve and protect itself." The northern people had for too long submitted to the insults and outrages of the

traitors. The Government had to do something to vindicate national honor, or else it would become an object of contempt. In other words, the Government had to enforce the laws "to the utmost extent of its power." On the 8th, however, the Advertiser vigorously applauded the Administration for its military and naval preparations. At last, "we have a Government," it stated. Although Sumter might not be held to the extreme sacrifice, Pickens would be maintained, as would other public property, the revenue collected, and the laws enforced. The people had increased confidence in the Government, the paper remarked three days later. If war should come, there would be half a million volunteers within a month. In sum, beginning in April, the two leading Detroit dailies no longer felt they could defend the Administration's do-nothing policy. Respectfully, but nevertheless forcefully, they demanded some sort of action to vindicate northern honor. When the Government at last showed it was ready for action, the two newspapers enthusiastically supported it.

Other Republican papers cheered the Government's newly found energy. "Warlike potents are rapidly increasing," observed the Adrian Daily Expositor. The peace policy, which only had allowed the South to rob the North, was being abandoned. "Millions of strong hearts" would back the Government in the exercise of its legitimate functions.<sup>61</sup> When it became apparent that the President was finally going to act, the Hillsdale Standard chided



those Republicans who had doubted him. Peace was desired, the paper declared, "but bloodletting is a better remedy for insurgents and black-hearted revolutionists" than a policy of government indecision.<sup>62</sup> The Government had come to power determined for peace, stated the Battle Creek Journal, but its conciliatory course had only emboldened the rebels to make new demands. With a crisis fast approaching, either the Government or the rebels had to submit. The Administration had no choice but to maintain the public property or be the laughing stock of the nation.<sup>63</sup> The Allegan Journal also rejoiced that the Government was at last going to enforce the laws. If civil war should result, the blame would be on the traitors. The destruction of the Union was worse than civil war, as horrible as it would be.<sup>64</sup> Thus, when the guns opened on Sumter, the Administration had no reason to fear that the Michigan Republican press would not vigorously support its effort to crush the rebellion.

Interestingly, several Republican papers still hoped to the end to see in the South some sort of reaction against secession. Although in January the Tribune asserted that the border states were only for the Union if the Republicans made sweeping concessions to the South,<sup>65</sup> most of the time it continued to grasp at any sign of discontent in the seceded states. On March 18, for example, it stated that evidence was growing of dissatisfaction with disunion. "Facts go to show that the Montgomery



scheme will result in an early failure," observed the Marshall Statesman. Many Confederate papers, it noted, were criticizing the Montgomery government.<sup>66</sup> As late as April 2, the Michigan State News predicted that in the South "whenever the people are able to make themselves heard, their voice will be loud and potent for the Union."

Only at the end of March did the two Detroit dailies even hazily comprehend that the North could not depend on the Unionism of the border states. They, the Advertiser observed on March 27, would remain in the Union only if they were guaranteed the right of secession and slavery was given everything it wanted. Two days later, however, the paper noticed "strong indications of returning reason on the part of the border states...." The Tribune, by the first week in April, seemed finally and irrevocably to abandon any hope in the border states, if not the southern people. The North, it stated, would never agree to the concessions demanded by the border states whereby "the negro everywhere, must be crushed as though he was a slave upon the Southern plantations. Christian civilization is not going to be turned back a century, even in the face of so overshadowing a calamity as the disruption of the Union."<sup>67</sup> The paper also denounced Virginia as "utterly incompetent" as a mediator between the two sections. Indeed, she had raised "the shield of treason and rebellion." The Cotton states, the North had to understand, wanted to be rid of the Union because they thought they could do

better without it. Yet it was possible that with a firm and vigorous policy from the Government the southern people would assert themselves against their leaders.<sup>68</sup> In summary, in the interlude between Lincoln's inaugural and the beginning of April, many Republican papers continued to hope that a policy of strength would undermine secession. They never seemed to realize that their advocacy of firm governmental action against secession, such as reinforcing Sumter, would further alienate the southern people, especially those of the upper South. They still believed, or at least hoped, that the Republican policy of no compromise, and maintenance of the public property, would prompt a reaction in the South.

Throughout the period from Lincoln's inaugural to the firing on Sumter, the Michigan press could no more than guess what policy Lincoln would implement. In his Inaugural, he promised to "hold, occupy, and possess," the property of the United States. But early in his Administration, it appeared he would follow a "peace" policy, i.e., abandon Fort Sumter. The Democratic press welcomed this, provided he abandoned the fort to conciliate the South, rather than out of military necessity. In contrast to Douglas, who apparently explicitly opposed secession,<sup>69</sup> some Democratic papers were willing, although reluctantly, to give it de facto recognition. Certainly by the time of Lincoln's inaugural, and probably before, most papers realized that compromise and concessions would not draw

the seceded states back into the Union. They hoped to placate the border states, hence keeping them in the Union. Ultimately, they argued, through the moral leadership of the border states, the seceded states would see the wisdom of rejoining the Union. The papers opposed any form of coercion, such as relieving Sumter, because they were convinced that such a move would drive the border states out of the Union, killing any chance for a reconstruction of the nation. In other words, Democratic papers considered a Union based on force not worth its existence.

The Republican papers, on the other hand, believed that if the Government undertook firm measures against disunion, it would stimulate the latent Unionism of the southern people. For the first three weeks of the new Administration, however, they could not advocate this course of action because it would have been in conflict with the Administration's seeming peace policy. As loyal Republican papers they felt duty bound to defend party policy. But by the beginning of April, when many Republicans were explicitly critical of Lincoln, Michigan's Republican papers could not avoid implicit criticism of the Administration. Their frustration was at last relieved when it became clear that Lincoln had no peace policy in mind (as defined by Democrats), but rather was biding his time until he was ready to act. News that an expedition was being sent to Sumter cheered them because they felt that the national

honor would be vindicated. Editorials once again explained the necessity of enforcing the laws. The situation provided the Republicans another opportunity to spill out their hatred of the South. Republican editors, unlike their Democratic counterparts, saw no virtue in conciliating traitors to the Government and the Constitution.

## CHAPTER VIII NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Kenneth Stamp, And the War Came (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1950), pp. 185-187.

<sup>2</sup>Richard N. Current, Lincoln and the First Shot (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1963), pp. 50-51. Due to a foul-up in communications, the troops did not land.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 53-54, 90-91; Stamp, And the War Came, p. 272.

<sup>4</sup>Current, Lincoln and the First Shot, pp. 95-100.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., pp. 148-153, 170.

<sup>6</sup>Detroit Free Press, November 9, 14, 1860.

<sup>7</sup>Kalamazoo Gazette, November 9, 16, 1860.

<sup>8</sup>Niles Republican, November 17, 1860.

<sup>9</sup>Detroit Free Press, January 3, 17, 1861.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., February 21, 1861.

<sup>11</sup>Jonesville Independent, November 6, 1860.

<sup>12</sup>Allegan Journal, November 19, 1860.

<sup>13</sup>Detroit Daily Advertiser, November 20, December 24, 1860.

<sup>14</sup>St. Joseph Traveler, November 28, 1860.

<sup>15</sup>Eaton County Republican, November 30, 1860.

<sup>16</sup>Marshall Statesman, February 13, 1861.

<sup>17</sup>Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr. and Fred L. Israel, eds., The Chief Executive: Inaugural Addresses of the Presidents of the United States (New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1965), pp. 135-137.

<sup>18</sup>Detroit Free Press, March 5, 7, 1861.

- <sup>19</sup>Previously the Free Press had bellowed that re-inforcing Sumter was coercion and could not be tolerated.
- <sup>20</sup>Detroit Free Press, March 9, 10, 1861.
- <sup>21</sup>Grand Rapids Daily Enquirer, March 5, 6, 7, 13, 1861.
- <sup>22</sup>Kalamazoo Gazette, March 8, 1861.
- <sup>23</sup>Marshall Democratic Expounder, March 7, 1861.
- <sup>24</sup>Michigan Argus, March 8, 1861.
- <sup>25</sup>Niles Republican, March 9, 1861.
- <sup>26</sup>Three Rivers Western Chronicle, March 14, 1861.
- <sup>27</sup>Detroit Daily Tribune, March 5, 7, 1861.
- <sup>28</sup>Adrian Daily Expositor, March 5, 1861.
- <sup>29</sup>Constantine Mercury and Advertiser, March 7, 1861.
- <sup>30</sup>Eaton County Republican, March 8, 1861.
- <sup>31</sup>Michigan State News, March 12, 1861.
- <sup>32</sup>Current, Lincoln and the First Shot, p. 55.
- <sup>33</sup>Detroit Free Press, March 6, 13, 14, 1861.
- <sup>34</sup>Grand Rapids Daily Enquirer, March 8, 1861.
- <sup>35</sup>Michigan Argus, March 15, 22, 1861.
- <sup>36</sup>Grand Rapids Daily Enquirer, March 16, 1861.
- <sup>37</sup>Detroit Free Press, March 16, 17, 19, 1861.
- <sup>38</sup>Marshall Democratic Expounder, March 28, 1861.
- <sup>39</sup>Kalamazoo Gazette, March 22, 29, 1861.
- <sup>40</sup>Grand Rapids Daily Enquirer, April 7, 1861.
- <sup>41</sup>Three Rivers Western Chronicle, April 11, 1861.
- <sup>42</sup>Niles Republican, April 13, 1861.
- <sup>43</sup>As most Democratic papers were weeklies and events moved so fast in the week before the firing on

Sumter, it is impossible to say definitively how the Democratic press felt about supporting the enforcement of laws immediately on the eve of the conflict.

<sup>44</sup>Detroit Daily Tribune, March 7, 1861.

<sup>45</sup>Adrian Daily Expositor, March 12, 1861.

<sup>46</sup>Detroit Daily Advertiser, March 15, 21, 25,  
1861.

<sup>47</sup>Michigan State News, March 19, 1861.

<sup>48</sup>Adrian Daily Expositor, March 20, 1861.

<sup>49</sup>Lansing State Republican, March 20, 27, 1861.

<sup>50</sup>Grand Traverse Herald, March 29, 1861.

<sup>51</sup>Eaton County Republican, March 29, 1861.

<sup>52</sup>Lansing State Republican, April 3, 1861.

<sup>53</sup>Marshall Statesman, April 3, 1861.

<sup>54</sup>Battle Creek Journal, March 22, 1861.

<sup>55</sup>Detroit Daily Advertiser, March 27, 1861.

<sup>56</sup>Detroit Daily Tribune, March 22, 1861.

<sup>57</sup>Eaton County Republican, March 22, 1861.

<sup>58</sup>Hillsdale Standard, April 2, 1861.

<sup>59</sup>Detroit Daily Tribune, March 30, 1861.

<sup>60</sup>Detroit Daily Advertiser, April 3, 1861.

<sup>61</sup>Adrian Daily Expositor, April 10, 1861.

<sup>62</sup>Hillsdale Standard, April 9, 1861.

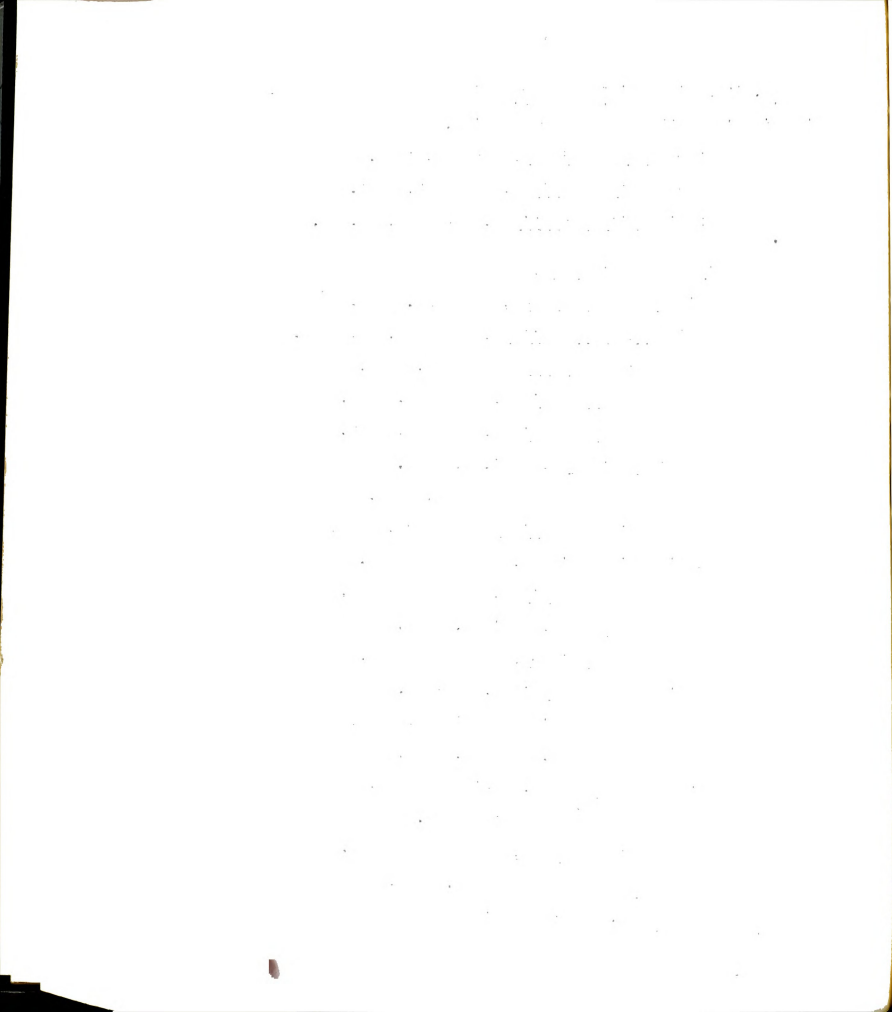
<sup>63</sup>Battle Creek Journal, April 12, 1861.

<sup>64</sup>Allegan Journal, April 15, 1861.

<sup>65</sup>Detroit Daily Tribune, January 19, 1861.

<sup>66</sup>Marshall Statesman, March 20, 1861.

<sup>67</sup>The Tribune's statement indicates that some Republicans at least, opposed the extension of slavery as

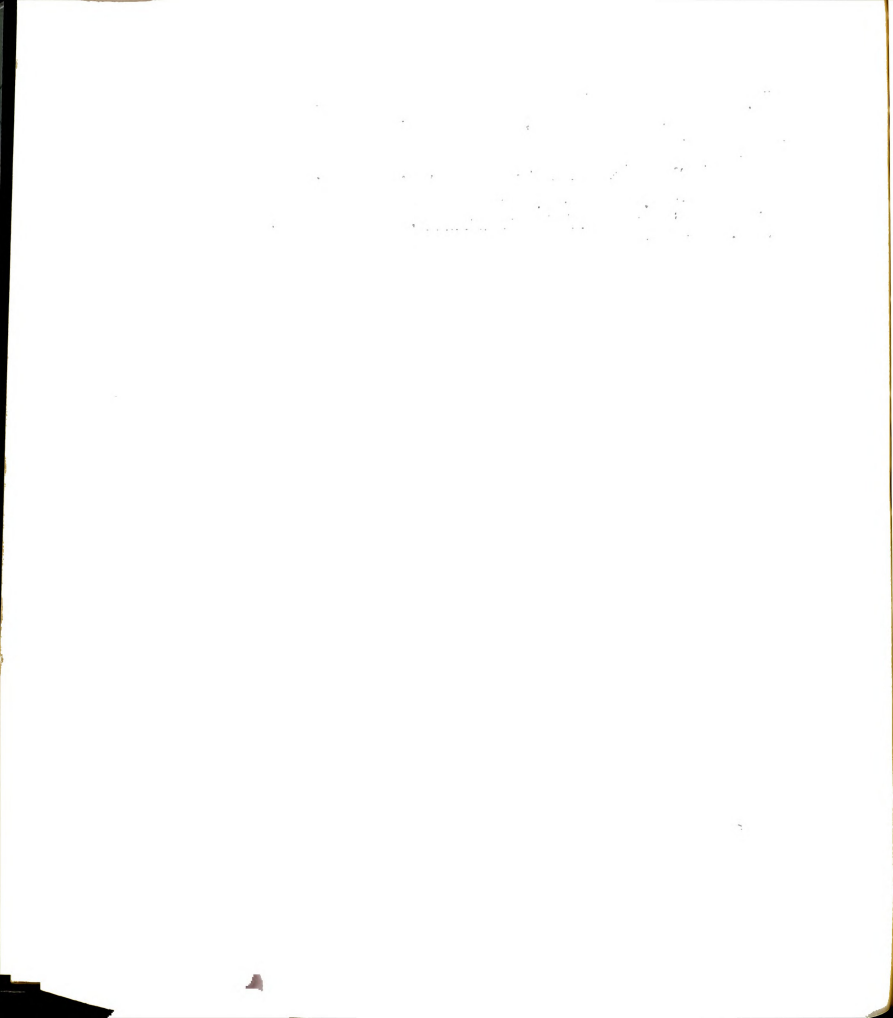




a system of labor and not because it was composed of Negroes. This lends further credence to the contention that Republicans, on the whole, were markedly less racist than Democrats.

<sup>68</sup>Detroit Daily Tribune, April 4, 8, 9, 1861.

<sup>69</sup>Robert W. Johannsen, "The Douglas Democracy and the Crisis of Disunion," Civil War History, IX (September, 1963), pp. 234-235.



## CHAPTER IX

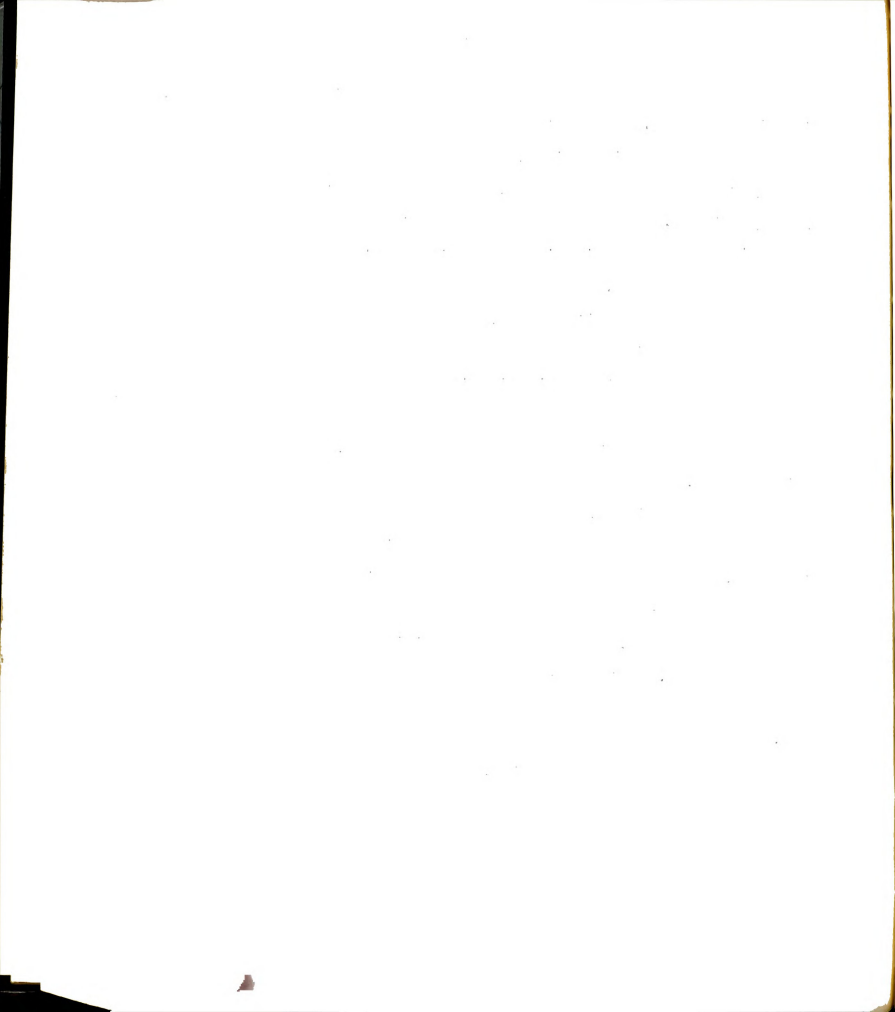
### THE WAR AND ITS GOALS: FIRST REACTIONS

On April 15, 1861, Abraham Lincoln issued a proclamation declaring that the laws of the United States in South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Florida, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas were being obstructed "by combinations too powerful to be suppressed by the ordinary course of judicial proceedings...." He issued a call for 75,000 militia of the several states to suppress the combination and enforce the laws. The forces would probably be used to repossess forts and other property seized from the Government, he stated. He also commanded "the persons composing the combinations aforesaid to disperse and retire peaceably to their respective abodes within twenty days from this date." Finally, he ordered the Congress to convene on July 4.<sup>1</sup>

As expected, the Republican press readily concurred with the President's determination to use force to quash the rebellion. "Freedom's hope, here and over the world, must NOT be blasted by traitors to law and order," declared the Detroit Daily Tribune. Treasonous talk should not be allowed to demoralize the nation. If necessary, "let us have Martial law proclaimed at once. No quarter to



traitors." As to the fall of Sumter, it was humiliating, but not surprising. The North was now so aroused that it made a second defeat impossible.<sup>2</sup> The people could be at least grateful for a united North, stated the Detroit Daily Advertiser. The North had justice, right, and power on its side and could maintain ten men in the field for every one of the South. Nor could the Government tolerate neutrality in such a perilous time. Freedom of speech and press are approved in times of peace, but "what may then be a virtue is an absolute crime in time of war."<sup>3</sup> The war had grown out of the attempt of a group of people to cram slavery "down the throats of Northern freemen," wrote another editor. Although the Democracy had encouraged the growth of the conspiracy, the past must be forgotten because the North was united in its effort to vindicate the Government.<sup>4</sup> The Battle Creek Journal was confident that the slogan "no coercion" would now cease.<sup>5</sup> "Reason, forbearance, magnanimity," had failed to conciliate or restrain the rebels, declared the Eaton County Republican. Now the North was forced to end the bullying of the Slave Power. The "holy war" would be fought to the end to sustain the Union and the Constitution. After the crushing of the rebellion, the "peculiar institution" would be respected, but the seceded states would no longer be allowed to dominate the nation. The "hideous viper" of slavery would no longer be considered sacred. It would be freely discussed and legislated upon. Hence, the "pompous



swagger" of the Slave Power was just a record of history.<sup>6</sup> The rebellion had to be crushed, declared the Hillsdale Standard, or "else crouchingly let us lick the hands of our Southern masters...."<sup>7</sup> Finally, the Michigan State News, while wholeheartedly supporting the war effort, cautioned against "an exhibition of intolerance." The country was based on free speech and such a right should not be violated. Those who uttered treasonous sentiments would only deepen the Union sentiment of all patriotic men.<sup>8</sup> This paper, therefore, served the admirable purpose of reminding other Republican sheets of the virtues of free speech. The war was being fought in large measure, it noted, to preserve the right to dissent, so ruthlessly suppressed by the Slave Power.

Most Democratic papers, immediately, and somewhat surprisingly, announced their support of the Government's determination to preserve the Union. Realizing it would be political suicide to oppose the war effort, they repudiated their pre-Sumter peace policy. Loyal to the concept of Union, they decided, albeit reluctantly, that it could only be preserved by war. While the guns were still firing on Sumter, the Detroit Free Press declared for the Union. The disaster could have been avoided, it stated, if the Republican leaders and their Radical allies had agreed to concessions. But the paper refused to attack the present actions of the Administration because that would jeopardize the existence of the Government itself.

The flag had to be defended, "though it be held aloft by unworthy hands."<sup>9</sup> The Free Press later clarified its position, attacking, as it did during the presidential campaign, both the Republican party and the secessionists while simultaneously pledging its fidelity to the Union and the Constitution. Democrats would fight ten years, the paper observed, but would remember that they had foreseen the disaster and warned against the Republican party's refusal to agree to a fair compromise. Nor did Democrats like to have Republicanism crammed down their throats. In no way did the party support the Administration of Abraham Lincoln.<sup>10</sup>

While castigating the Republicans, the Free Press devoted even more editorial space to denouncing the secessionists, whom the paper bitterly resented as much for being traitors to the Democratic party as to the Union. "If the southern people had proved as true to the North as the northern democracy have to them, instead of war...we should now have peace....," the paper declared. Whatever evils should befall the South, they would derive from its lack of faith in the northern Democracy. The seceded states should not delude themselves to think they had any friends in the North. Although the party had been laid "prostrate in the dust" because of the southern betrayal, it would still fight for that section's constitutional rights. But "the whole North will stand as one man against all attempts to overthrow the government...." The



southern people had been lured from their loyalty to the Constitution by a "deep-laid conspiracy" of revolutionists, it continued. The secessionists had acted quickly, not telling the southern people that disunion meant rebellion and war. Abolitionism and the election of Lincoln were mere pretexts for revolution. The former had its main effect on the border states, not on the seceded Cotton states. Lincoln and his Cabinet had been willing to respect the rights of the South; the Republicans controlled no branch of Congress. Hence, the revolutionists, who had destroyed the party at Charleston and Baltimore, would not find the least sympathy from the northern Democrats. Indeed, they expected no "other result than THE COMPLETE AND EVER-LASTING OVERTHROW OF THE GREAT REBELLION."<sup>11</sup> Clearly, the Free Press spoke differently than during the latter stages of the secession crisis. Its deep hatred for the secessionists, whom it claimed destroyed the Democratic party, and its genuine love for the Union, combined to compel the paper into as fervent a supporter of the war as any Republican journal. With but one exception,<sup>12</sup> the Free Press, during the opening stage of the war, would no longer speak of peace.

Other Democratic papers quickly responded to the cause of the Union. The Marshall Democratic Expounder initially interpreted Lincoln's call for 75,000 troops as coercion, a policy the paper opposed. Although it was for peace and compromise, it had no choice "but to stand by

the flag and honor of the government." But it could not thirst for blood for it opposed both abolitionism and secession. If secession should be successful, the Expounder continued, reconstruction could be consummated on the basis of the Confederate constitution, which "fully secures the rights of each State and has no very objectionable features." A week later the paper came out even more firmly for the Union. Denouncing southern aggressions on the public property and the Constitution, it declared that arms would be met with arms.<sup>13</sup> The Kalamazoo Gazette, fully cognizant of the magnitude of the crisis, thought that the fate of free government rested on its outcome. Although it hoped civil war could be avoided, the Government had to be sustained. Hence, every citizen had to vindicate the honor of the nation, even though no Democrat could be held responsible for events.<sup>14</sup> The Michigan Argus also announced support for the Federal government. It despised the southern traitors but had great sympathy for the misguided masses. Echoing the Free Press, the Argus warned the secessionists not to expect help from the northern Democracy. Although northern Democrats had always defended the constitutional rights of their southern brethren, they would "never, Never, NEVER help them break up the government and plant an oligarchy in its stead."<sup>15</sup> "All party lines must be obliterated," declared the Niles Republican. The welfare of the country had priority over partisan politics. Democrats did not support Lincoln, but

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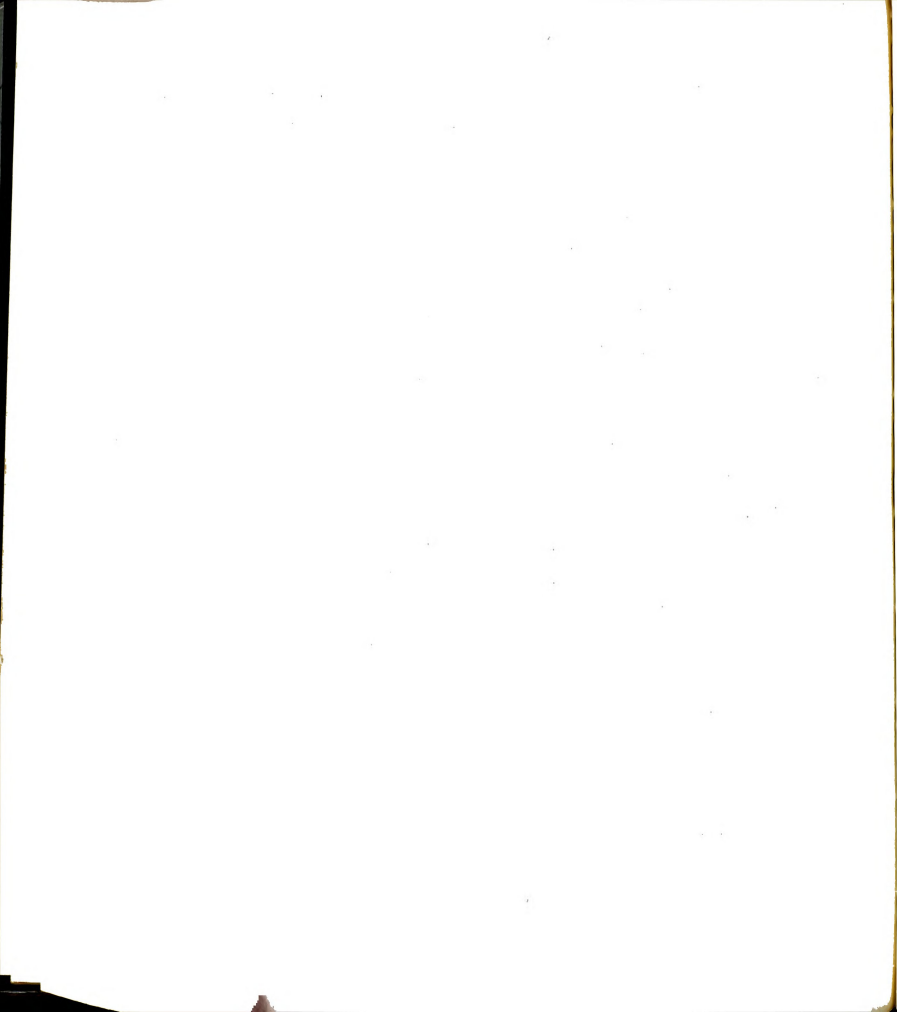
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they would not allow the South to destroy the nation. Unless Southerners sheathed their swords, they would be overwhelmed by the North and possibly by the horrors of servile insurrection.<sup>16</sup>

At first, a few Democratic papers only reluctantly supported the war. On April 11, when it was apparent that war was imminent, the Grand Rapids Daily Enquirer observed that the South by committing revolution had placed itself in the position the Administration wanted. Under the pretext of enforcing the laws, it was likely the Republicans would launch an anti-slavery crusade. Union appeals would merely mask such a design. Northerners, it cautioned, should decide for themselves what the Administration was planning. In other words, "before fighting let us find out what we are to fight for." The paper's editorial of April 14 bordered on treason. The conflict, it stated, was between "Abolition-republicans" and the South. The Democracy had no quarrel with the South. Hence, "if we remain passive in this contest these Abolitionists ought to be satisfied." Again it reminded Democrats to think twice before enlisting in a crusade to shove the Chicago platform down the throats of the South. Three days later the paper shifted its position somewhat. While lamenting that certain political opponents seemed to be gleeful at the pending carnage, it conceded that "Honor should impel every man to stand up for his country's flag." It qualified its statement, however, by stating that the people should rise



up against those who imperilled the Union, whether they be from the North or the South. For the next few days, the Enquirer reiterated that it supported the Government out of duty. But it continued to blame the conflict on the Abolitionists and did not condemn the southern contribution to the war. Indeed, it stated that the conflict was "between men of the same country, of the same kin, of the same interests, of the same sense of rights in degree, of equal valor, of equal determination--between friends."<sup>17</sup> Finally, on April 26, the Enquirer came out fully for the war effort. No matter what caused the war, it declared, being loyal to the flag was paramount. "That we intend to do. Politics may go to the shade, 'till the fight is over." The Three Rivers Western Chronicle followed a similar pattern. Interpreting the fall of Sumter as meaning "war to the hilt," it gloomily predicted the economic dislocations the conflict would inflict on the North. Worse, brothers would soon be fighting brothers. And after the carnage finally ended, the same issues would still have to be settled. A week later the paper changed its tune. The preservation of the Government was paramount, it declared. For if the Government were destroyed, "anarchy, robbery, and ruin" would result.<sup>18</sup> These two journals, representing a minority of Democratic papers, certainly followed rather than led public opinion. They did not understand that the Democratic call for peace at all costs, which had some appeal during the secession

[illegible]

crisis, was no longer tenable in the emotional frenzy following the firing on Sumter. Finally realizing the folly of their course, the papers belatedly climbed on the Union bandwagon.

Although the Democratic papers pledged their wholehearted support for the war to preserve the Union, they condemned any attempt to turn the conflict into an anti-slavery crusade. Mr. Lincoln had no intention of liberating the slaves, declared the Niles Republican. But if he should make such a declaration "a million men in the North" would fight for the rights of the slaveholders. Yet the paper had no doubt that the war would seriously affect slavery.<sup>19</sup> The objective of the war was simply to restore allegiance to the Constitution, stated the Detroit Free Press. Democrats in no way endorsed an anti-slavery crusade. The paper was confident that the Government would respect the constitutional rights of the South and fight for no other end than restoration of the Union.<sup>20</sup> The Three Rivers Western Chronicle offered an emotional explanation why the war could not be turned into an anti-slavery crusade. Raising the specter of racial warfare, the paper predicted that "were every slave and free black in this country armed for fight, and should they succeed in slaying every white man in the south, they would not tamely lay down their arms, until a terrible and bloody effort was made to effectually exterminate every white man from the American continent." It was imperative,





therefore, for every man, North and South, to know that the war was not one to destroy the domestic institutions of the South.<sup>21</sup> The Marshall Democratic Expounder represented attempts by Radical Republicans to force the Administration into a war on slavery. All Union men would support the war if Lincoln resisted such pressure; but if he did not, "the horrors of the French Revolution and the massacre of St. Domingo will fade before the scene of carnage and blood with which our country will be visited." The Union could not be restored to its "pristine vigor" unless the Negro was kept under the control of state constitutions.<sup>22</sup> The Grand Rapids Daily Enquirer also announced that the war was for the Union, not abolitionism.<sup>23</sup>

Governor Austin Blair's special Message to the Michigan legislature, delivered on May 7, 1861, bitterly aroused the Democratic press to re-affirm its contention that the war had nothing to do with the future of slavery. Blair argued that African slavery, "the great and only disturbing element in our institutions," after pushing the free states so far that it could go no further, had taken up arms to reach its goal, a slave-holding despotism. But the war, the Governor concluded, "will result in its total and speedy destruction."<sup>24</sup> The Detroit Free Press characterized Blair as "a narrow-minded, intolerant, fanatical abolitionist." He, and a few other Radicals, were extremely dangerous because they gave credence to the fears of the secessionist leaders that the North planned a war



on slavery. It was the duty of responsible Northerners to dispel Southerners of this belief and to assure them that Blair was "a fanatic and an ass." The war was being fought, in fact, "for the protection of the rights of the slaveholders as of the non-slaveholders."<sup>25</sup> Blair, a "small-brained, narrow-minded political huckster," committed a gross impropriety when he injected a partisan sentiment into his Message, commented the Marshall Democratic Expounder. Democrats were fighting for "the supremacy of law against the mob." They wanted to preserve the Constitution as it was, not turn it into an "anti-slavery instrument." Worse, Blair was burying southern Unionist sentiment.<sup>26</sup> Blair's statements were as "injurious as open treason," stated the Three Rivers Western Chronicle. They strengthened the South and hurt the Government. Southerners had to be assured of the conservative intentions of the North.<sup>27</sup>

The virtually unanimous declaration by Democratic editors that they would not tolerate a war on slavery indicates how fragile was the early war-time coalition. The seeds were already planted for the emergence of a Democratic peace party which would repudiate support of the war when its goals came to encompass emancipation. The Democratic position also reveals how the exigencies of politics forced the party to reverse the stand it held during the secession crisis. Before the opening of hostilities, Democrats not only demanded peace at any price

but also a drastic revision of the Constitution to placate the South. After Sumter, the party supported the war and demanded that the Constitution remain unchanged, i.e., including slavery. The Republicans, of course, would also eventually change their position.

During the weeks immediately after the fall of Sumter, the two Detroit Republican dailies analyzed and recommended policies the Government should pursue in the effort to crush the rebellion. From the first, the Detroit Daily Advertiser called for a vigorous and massive campaign. "The war should be carried into Africa [the South], and the conspirators utterly exterminated from the face of the earth if necessary to preserve and secure hereafter the peace and safety of the country," it declared. The Administration's call for 75,000 volunteers fell far short of public expectation. Northern patriotism was white hot and should not be wasted. Half a million would have been a more satisfactory number, although 200,000 more men were likely to be called. With such a force every rebellious state could be overrun and their harbors blockaded. Moreover, the demoralizing effect of such a large force "would be worth a dozen victories to the Government." To prosecute the war on a giant scale, as desperate and bloody as it would be, would actually be an act of humanity, the paper stated. The more brutal the war, the faster it would be over. To spare the blood of traitors would only increase their insolence and

ultimately result in a greater loss of life. Even if the Government desired to spare bloodshed, it could not, for the traitors were determined to fight to the bitter end. Finally, to reflect the magnitude of their crimes, the paper recommended the hanging of the rebel leaders. Northerners would only accept the "unconditional surrender of the rebels, or their extermination."<sup>28</sup>

Simultaneously with its call for relentless war, the Advertiser, as a loyal Republican paper, defended the Administration from the charge that it was not waging the war with proper vigor. Attacks on the Administration, the Advertiser stated, were based on no knowledge of its plans. Actually it had almost performed a miracle by saving Washington from imminent rebel attack. In any case, it was likely that within a few days the Administration would send armies to meet the rebels wherever they should be concentrated, whether at Richmond, Baltimore, Harper's Ferry, or elsewhere. The paper also once again defended Seward from charges of conservatism. The Secretary of State, the paper noted, was accused by certain New York papers of being the main obstacle to a vigorous prosecution of the war. Such accusations were false, the Advertiser countered. Except for a letter to the Governor of Maryland, he had done nothing that "gives the slightest color to the presumption that he is for a defensive war only."<sup>29</sup> Thus, as during the secession crisis, the Advertiser defended the Administration but was eagerly waiting

to call on the Union to protect their interests. After professing loyalty to the Union, they could then expect the Government's protection.<sup>31</sup>

The Democratic press, on the whole, was as adamant as the Republican press in its call for an aggressive, ruthless war against the rebellious states. The Detroit Free Press, except for one editorial, was as militant as any Republican paper. On April 17, it deplored the rising war spirit and blamed the politicians for the crisis. Peace meetings rather than war meetings were needed. But in all other editorials, the paper saw no other alternative than war to end the rebellion. After momentarily urging a defensive policy,<sup>32</sup> it later stated "whatever is necessary to conduct the war expeditiously and successfully must be done." No half-way measures, but the full power of the nation had to be thrown into the conflict. A defensive policy was not acceptable. Baltimore and Richmond had to be occupied to assure that the battlefield was on southern soil. The Ohio river had to be commanded and the southern ports blockaded. "Humane cruelty" would assure a fast peace and save the nation from degenerating into Spanish republics, constantly plagued by "petty wars, anarchy, and poverty." In other words, the Free Press was convinced that a united North, vigorously prosecuting the war, guaranteed "the perpetuity of free institutions." No quarter should be given to the enemy. The proposed armed neutrality of the border states was rejected by the Free

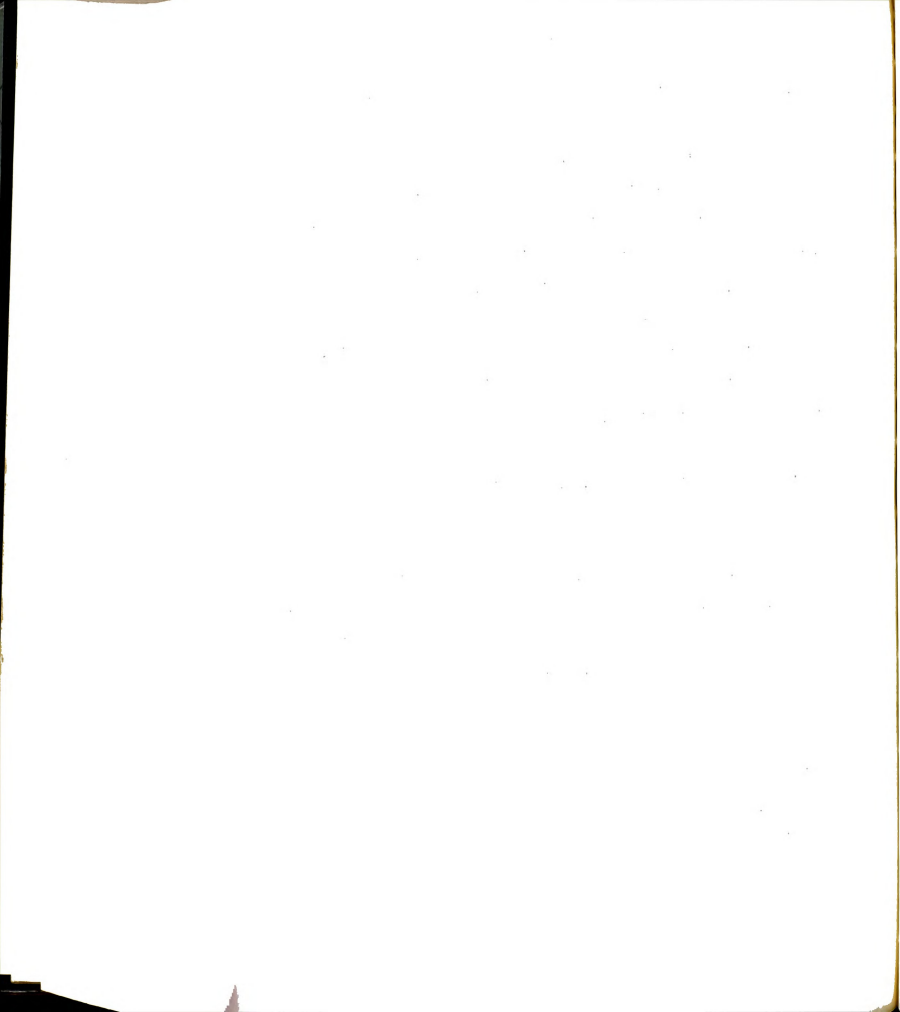
for it to act.

The Detroit Daily Tribune was also uneasy over the lack of action, yet defended the Administration. For the New York press everybody and everything was going too slow, it noted. But while conceding there were things to complain about, the paper urged giving the President and Cabinet a fair chance. The "warlike West" was anxious to strike a blow but did not want to waste it. Therefore, the Administration had to be supported as the nation's only rallying point. By May 16, however, the Tribune began to show some dissatisfaction. The Government, the paper suspected, would content itself with essentially a passive policy of blockading the South by land and sea. This plan would demoralize the North as much as the South. The next day the Tribune was more critical, saying that conditions warranted an offensive, not defensive policy. The West preferred not to "sit still" and allow the South to brag of its strength, but "to push our forces instantly into the hostile regions...." Four days later the paper once again reversed itself, declaring that the Administration was not vacillating, but moving forward. In sum, during the month after Sumter, the Tribune was torn between loyalty to the Administration and a desire for action. Finally, while disclaiming any intent to foment slave insurrections, the paper hoped that northern troops would show "no zeal" in putting them down. Now that the rebels claimed to be out of the Union, they had no right



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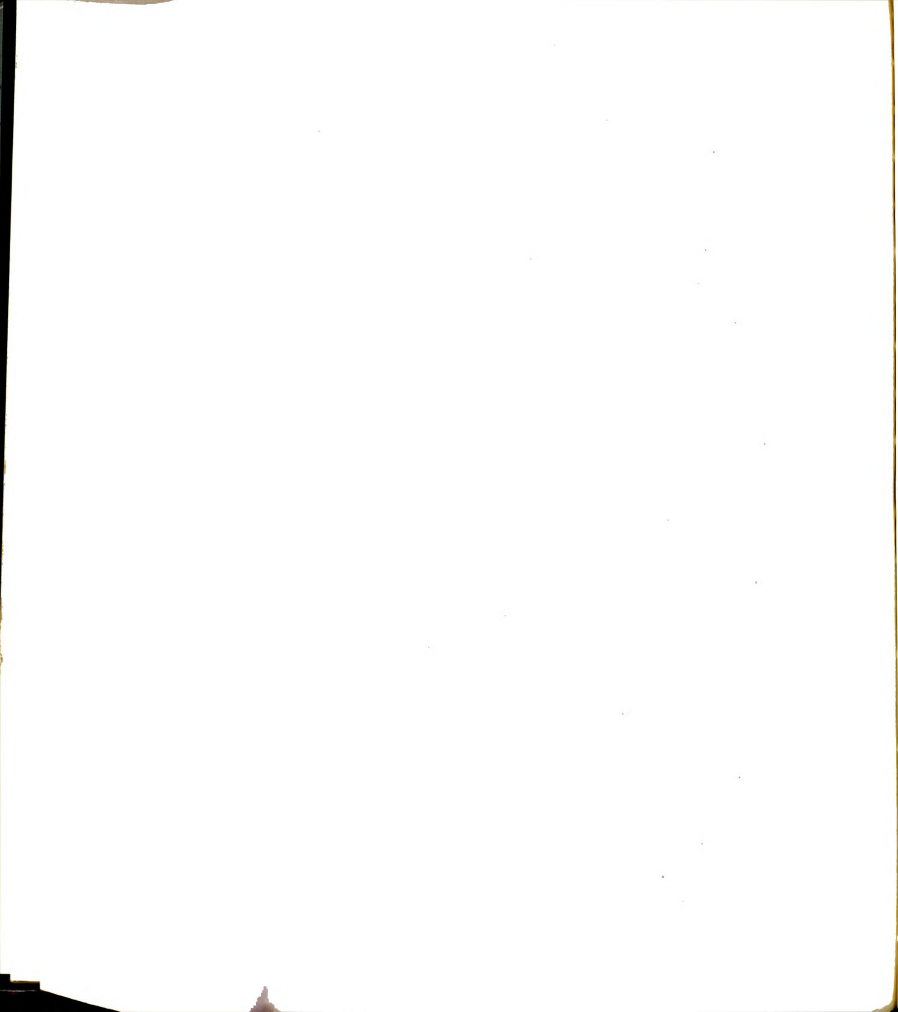
Press. Every state had to take sides; there could be no neutral ground. The paper also opposed a rumored armistice on the ground that it should be signed with the South only "with an army of a hundred thousand men upon their soil." Peace was honorable before the war, it noted, but not any longer. The North had to fight until the supremacy of the Constitution and the laws were recognized by all.<sup>33</sup>

The uprising at Baltimore which threatened United States soldiers had to be crushed at once, demanded the Grand Rapids Daily Enquirer. If not, Washington could be endangered. It recommended "less talking and more work."<sup>34</sup> The paper supported, however, the President's supposed defensive policy. It was wise for the Government to take the time to build up the nation's resources. Because the Confederacy had had great time to prepare for war, the Government should not immediately risk a battle since "defeat would lose us everything." Concentrating masses of men at all exposed points in conjunction with a blockade of the coast was the most offensive policy the Government could afford to pursue. But the paper expected the Government to retake the southern forts. This would not be a light task because the forts had the ability to resist a long time, and there were so many to retake. Blood would be "poured out like water...."<sup>35</sup> The Niles Republican was more aggressive than the Enquirer. To assure free government, the flag had to be carried into

the seceded states and the rebels wiped out. "No Palmetto flag," it declared, "will ever wave over this nation."<sup>36</sup>

The Three Rivers Western Chronicle was relieved to learn that the Government would not pursue a defensive policy. It had to put down the rebellion, or "accept the terms the rebels may dictate." Virginia, Kentucky, and Tennessee had to be restored to the Union by the use of Federal authority, hence eliminating the term "border states." A vigorous policy in conjunction with the Government's assurance that it planned to guarantee the rights of the southern people would culminate in the triumph of the Constitution and law and order.<sup>37</sup> A defensive policy would not meet the emergency, stated the Marshall Democratic Expounder. The Government had been humiliated enough; the forts had to be retaken and the rebel leaders tried for treason. Force "must crush out the rebellion and restore the supremacy of the constitution." Nor would the neutrality of the border states be tolerated. They had to accept the Constitution of the United States either willingly or by force.<sup>38</sup>

Both Democratic and Republican papers desired a short war. "Overwhelming popular sentiment," stated the Detroit Free Press, demanded an end to the war during the summer months.<sup>39</sup> If the war lingered, cautioned the Kalamazoo Gazette, the people would become accustomed to revolution, military despotism, and disappointment.<sup>40</sup> The correspondent of the Detroit Daily Tribune warned that a

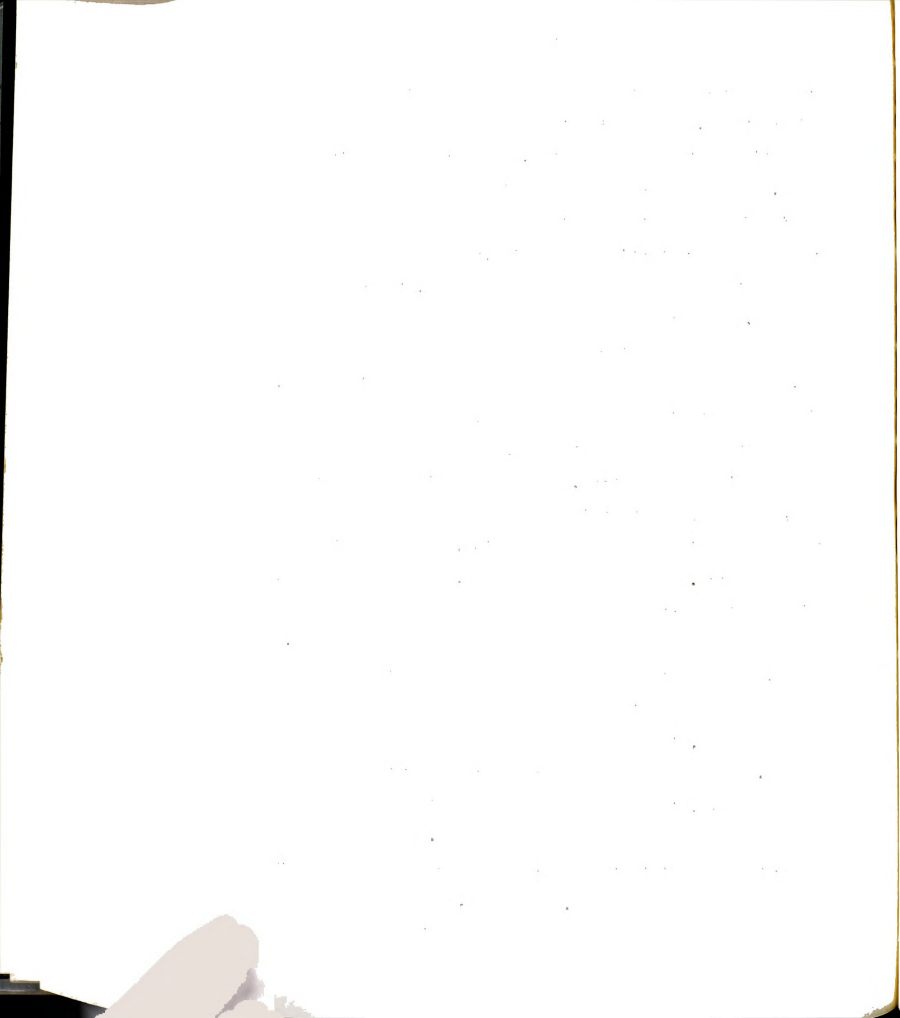


protracted contest would foster rebellion, anarchy, oppression, piracy, and the demoralization of the country. National progress would be retarded for half a century.<sup>41</sup>

But as much as the Michigan press desired a short war, there was no unanimity as to what actually would be the case. Several papers did expect a short war. The war would not last long, thought the Kalamazoo Gazette, as soon as the Southerners realized that "their strength is inadequate to meet the wealth, power, and united enthusiasm of the Northern people." Before long their ports would be blockaded and their cities threatened.<sup>42</sup> The Detroit Daily Advertiser accepted the short war argument of the New York Commercial. Modern war was short and decisive, it argued. A few thrusts delivered at vulnerable points would soon end the contest.<sup>43</sup> Others expected a war of longer than just a few months duration.<sup>44</sup> The Grand Rapids Daily Enquirer lamented that "it is now too late to hope for anything but a long and bloody conflict with our Southern brethren." Many had deluded themselves who thought that Jefferson Davis and his Cabinet were "merely a lot of hot-headed, foolish, brainless idiots." Northern armies should expect to meet strong resistance as they marched South. It thought, however, that if the President's defensive policy were implemented, whereby the southern ports would be blockaded, the war could be over in a year.<sup>45</sup> The Ingham County News declared it "necessary for the people to prepare for a long and bloody conflict--

such as one was never witnessed by the people of the United States."<sup>46</sup> The length of the war would depend on the action of the border states, thought the Detroit Free Press. If they seceded the conflict would "assume proportions of the most fearful magnitude and must end in complete and everlasting separation." If they did not secede and the southern ports were blockaded, the war would be short.<sup>47</sup>

In the month immediately after the firing on Sumter, the press of both parties rallied to the Union cause. Within a short time a consensus developed which called for total victory over the South. All agreed that no quarter could be given to traitors. The Democratic press, however, made it clear that it would support the war only to restore the Union and the Constitution. It repudiated any war on slavery. The Republican papers, on the other hand, while denying that the war was for the suppression of slavery, did not state they would not support such a war. Indeed, the Detroit Daily Advertiser commented on May 7 that although Republicans were fighting for the honor of the Government, it was likely the war would sweep away slavery. The change in position of the Democratic papers was remarkable, inasmuch as they completely reversed their previous stand against coercing the South. The temper of the North and political necessity mandated Democratic support of a war for the Union. Moreover, the Democrats themselves had a deep and abiding love of the Union and





were greatly offended by the firing on the flag. Another interesting reversal was that the Democrats no longer called for drastic changes of the Constitution. Now the cry was for "the Constitution as it is." With the South out of the Union and fighting about to commence, Democratic papers realized that if the Constitution should be changed, slavery would be weakened, not strengthened.

1. The first part of the paper discusses the importance of the study of the history of the United States. It is argued that a knowledge of the past is essential for a full understanding of the present and for the development of a sound policy for the future. The author points out that the study of history is not only a means of gaining knowledge of the past, but also a means of developing the ability to think critically and to make sound judgments.

CHAPTER IX NOTES

<sup>1</sup>James D. Richardson, A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents, Vol. VI (Washington, 1897), p. 13.

<sup>2</sup>Detroit Daily Tribune, April 16, 1861.

<sup>3</sup>Detroit Daily Advertiser, April 16, 18, 1861.

<sup>4</sup>Jonesville Independent, April 18, 1861.

<sup>5</sup>Battle Creek Journal, April 19, 1861.

<sup>6</sup>Eaton County Republican, April 19, May 10, 17, 1861.

<sup>7</sup>Hillsdale Standard, July 2, 1861.

<sup>8</sup>Michigan State News, April 23, 1861.

<sup>9</sup>Detroit Free Press, April 13, 1861.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., April 16, 24, 1861.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., April 19, May 1, 2, 5, 8, 11, 1861.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., April 17, 1861.

<sup>13</sup>Marshall Democratic Expounder, April 18, 25, 1861.

<sup>14</sup>Kalamazoo Gazette, April 19, 26, 1861.

<sup>15</sup>Michigan Argus, April 19, 26, 1861.

<sup>16</sup>Niles Republican, April 20, 27, May 11, 18, 1861.

<sup>17</sup>Grand Rapids Daily Enquirer, April 18, 20, 1861.

<sup>18</sup>Three Rivers Western Chronicle, April 18, 25, 1861.

<sup>19</sup>Niles Republican, May 4, 25, 1861.

<sup>20</sup>Detroit Free Press, May 4, 10, 1861.

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- 21 Three Rivers Western Chronicle, May 15, 1861.
- 22 Marshall Democratic Expounder, July 18, 1861.
- 23 Grand Rapids Daily Enquirer, May 1, 1861.
- 24 Journal of the Senate of the State of Michigan,  
1861, Extra Session, Joint Document No. 1, pp. 1, 9.
- 25 Detroit Free Press, May 9, 10, 1861.
- 26 Marshall Democratic Expounder, May 16, 1861.
- 27 Three Rivers Western Chronicle, May 22, 1861.
- 28 Detroit Daily Advertiser, April 20, 22, 27, 30,  
May 3, 1861.
- 29 Ibid., April 29, May 3, 8, 1861.
- 30 Detroit Daily Tribune, April 29, 30, 1861.
- 31 Ibid., May 17, 1861.
- 32 Detroit Free Press, April 18, 1861.
- 33 Ibid., April 24, 25, 29, May 1, 3, 1861.
- 34 Grand Rapids Daily Enquirer, April 24, 25, 1861.
- 35 Ibid., May 1, 2, 4, 1861.
- 36 Niles Republican, May 4, 1861.
- 37 Three Rivers Western Chronicle, May 8, 1861.
- 38 Marshall Democratic Expounder, May 9, June 20,  
1861.
- 39 Detroit Free Press, April 27, 1861.
- 40 Kalamazoo Gazette, June 14, 1861.
- 41 Detroit Daily Tribune, May 7, 1861.
- 42 Kalamazoo Gazette, May 10, 1861.
- 43 Detroit Daily Advertiser, April 19, 1861.
- 44 Austin Blair expected a long war. He stated:  
"There will be calamities and disasters which have not  
been looked for. He who went forth joyously singing the

nation anthem, will sometime be brought back in a bloody shroud....This is to be no six week's campaign. I do not under-estimate the gallantry of Southern men, and they will find it a grave error that they have under-estimated ours." Journal of the Senate of the State of Michigan, 1861, Extra Session, Joint Doc. No. 1, p. 7.

<sup>45</sup>Grand Rapids Daily Enquirer, April 20, 26, May 1, 1861.

<sup>46</sup>Ingham County News, May 23, 1861.

<sup>47</sup>Detroit Free Press, April 18, 1861.

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## CHAPTER X

### CONCLUSIONS

In the years immediately preceding the Civil War a fundamental difference existed between the two major parties in Michigan regarding the nature and future of the Union. Most Michigan Democrats viewed the Union nearly perfect as then constituted. But they considered it endangered by needless agitation over the slavery question. They could not understand why the southern fire-eaters and the northern Republicans were close to blows over the issue. Their attitude toward slavery was basically amoral. Most, if they had had the power, would not have introduced the "peculiar" institution into the nation. A few saw some virtue in it; but none considered it an issue which should have led to division of the Union and war. Democrats liked to think of themselves as moderates, the agents for maintaining peace between North and South. Hence, during the campaign of 1860, they argued that the adoption of popular sovereignty would be a fair means of settling the controversy over the extension of slavery into the territories. During the secession crisis Democrats urged territorial concessions to the South as a means for preserving the Union.





Republicans, on the other hand, viewed the Union as corrupted by the aggressions of a decadent Slave Power. Believing that the nation was committed to freedom at its founding, Republicans argued that some time in the course of the Union's history this commitment was betrayed by the transgressions of slavery's offspring, the Slave Power. They manifested their disgust with the Slave Power by spewing out hatred for the southern masters whose society they considered antithetical to the northern way of life. As Eric Foner has pointed out, Republicans perceived southern society as decadent, the antithesis of the northern free labor society where, they believed, anybody with ambition and a desire to work could raise himself out of the laboring class to middle class status. They feared that if the Slave Power were allowed to expand its institution into the territories, the North would eventually be surrounded and its free labor society crushed out.

An analysis of the Michigan Republican press indicates that Republicans opposed and despised the Slave Power for reasons in addition to the threat to free labor. Many Republican editors displayed a genuine moral concern over the plight of the Negro slave. They believed that slavery was a moral evil, and for that reason alone it had to be abolished, sooner or later. Republicans opposed the Slave Power because it was a threat to the freedom of all people. They saw freedom of speech and press stifled in the South and were convinced that the Slave Power would not

be satisfied until these liberties were suppressed in the North. They also noted that the unamendable amendments proposed during the secession crisis yoked the democratic process to the whims of a small elite. Republicans were spared the dilemma of choosing between conflicting idealistic and selfish goals. In the ante-bellum period they perfectly complemented each other, and in Michigan at least Republican editors appealed to the idealistic as much as to the selfish interests of their readers.

A marked difference existed between the parties in their racial attitudes. During the 1860 campaign, Democratic papers continually emphasized racist themes, attempting to portray Republicans as desiring Negro equality. Most agreed that even if the slaves were freed, it was improbable that they would rise above their servile state. The alleged inferiority of the free northern Negro was harped upon by the Democratic press. Democrats conducted a scare campaign, raising the specter of Negro equality if the Republicans won the election. But the Democrats failed miserably in Michigan. The Republican campaign was characterized by a marked scarcity of racist appeals. Although not totally absent, they were negligible compared to the Democratic output. Indeed, Republicans frequently explained the degraded condition of the Negro slave as a result of the "peculiar" institution. Michigan Republican editors certainly never preached Negro equality; a few announced that they were white supremacists. But

they never expressed fear that the North would be overrun by free Negroes in the event of emancipation. Although Michigan was a racist state in 1860, as was the rest of the North, there were degrees of racism; and the Democrats were more extreme than the Republicans.

Republicans frequently claimed that their party was the truly conservative one of the nation, and to a large degree they were correct. Their conception of a free labor society was essentially static. Satisfied with northern society as they believed it then existed, Republican editors took no account of the effects of America's increasing industrialism on limiting social mobility. They argued that their Jacksonian type of society (as popularly conceived) could only be saved by containing slavery. Their refusal to agree to constitutional amendments during the secession crisis further highlighted Republican conservatism. To change the Constitution in favor of the Slave Power would have endangered free labor and freedom. The Democrats, in this instance, were viewed by Republicans as the real radicals of the North, willing to alter substantially the political structure of the nation. Democratic advocacy of popular sovereignty during the campaign was also radical in that it would have abrogated the traditional Congressional right to regulate the territories. In their attitude toward slavery, the Republicans, in their own eyes at least, were conservative. Believing that slavery was a dying institution at the

nation's founding, they wished to fulfill the Founding Fathers' goal of eliminating the institution. But Republicans refused to transcend the Constitution and apply radical measures to abolish it. They conceded that the Constitution protected slavery where it already existed and, hence, could not be touched there. Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., therefore, was correct in his contention that Republicans, while totally aware of the moral evil of slavery, could only attack it by cutting off its growth in the territories, compelling it to eventually wither away.<sup>1</sup> But the Republicans could not totally escape the tension between their commitment to the Constitution and their hatred of slavery. This became quite apparent in the aftermath of John Brown's raid. Republican editors realized the unconstitutional nature of Brown's attempt to end slavery and condemned his lawlessness. Yet, they praised his idealism and nobility, because he had tried by one quick blow to fulfill immediately their dream of the end of slavery.

The Republican party in Michigan was anti-slavery, both in a narrow and broad sense. Most Republicans not only wished to curtail slavery expansion in the territories and preserve northern society for free labor, but they also desired the abolition of slavery in the southern states. Their commitment to the Constitution prevented them from openly proclaiming their abolitionism. If there were no Civil War, Lincoln almost certainly would have made

made no overt move for abolition in the South. But most Republicans did not believe direct action was necessary. They accepted the common belief that slavery had to expand to live. Southerners also accepted that belief and that is why they did not settle for the uncertainties of popular sovereignty. They were determined to have slavery expansion guaranteed. As much as the desire to protect free labor, many Republicans in Michigan also opposed slavery expansion from a moral opposition to the institution itself. William H. Seward perhaps best expressed the sentiments of Michigan Republicans in a campaign address that he delivered in Detroit in September, 1860. He openly and candidly presented both the selfish and idealistic elements of the Republican philosophy. He flatly asserted that many Northerners opposed slavery expansion to benefit the white man:

It cannot be denied that the African races among us are abject, although their condition, and even their presence here are due not to their will or fault, but to our own, and that they have a direct interest in the question of slavery. How natural has it been to assume that the motive of those who have protested against the extension of slavery, was an unnatural sympathy with the negro instead of what it always has been, concern for the welfare of the white man.

But at the same time, he articulated, the moral repugnance that many Northerners held for slavery:

Slavery, however, it may be at any time or, in any place be exercised, is at all time and everywhere unjust and inhuman in its very nature; while freedom, however it may at any time or in any place be neglected, denied or abused, is in nature, right, just and beneficent. It is never under any circumstances



wise to persevere voluntarily in extending or fortifying an institution that is intrinsically wrong or cruel.<sup>2</sup>

Certainly, then, an analysis of Michigan Republican editorial opinion indicates that the base of the Republican outlook was anti-slavery. Virtually no evidence exists that Michigan Republicans desired to eliminate the Slave Power primarily to gain passage of a homestead act or to establish the rule of an industrial elite over the nation. They definitely favored the Homestead Bill and did not oppose industrial and commercial development (they did occasionally condemn its abuses), but their crusade against slavery transcended these narrow goals. They wished to crush the Slave Power primarily because they viewed it as a threat to the northern way of life and because slavery itself was an intolerable moral evil. To say that in Michigan, at least, the Republican program was geared for the benefit of only a select few is to invoke a conspiracy theory of the most awesome proportions. Indeed, it would be more accurate to argue that northern Democrats conspired with the southern leadership to assure the continued domination of a small planter elite.

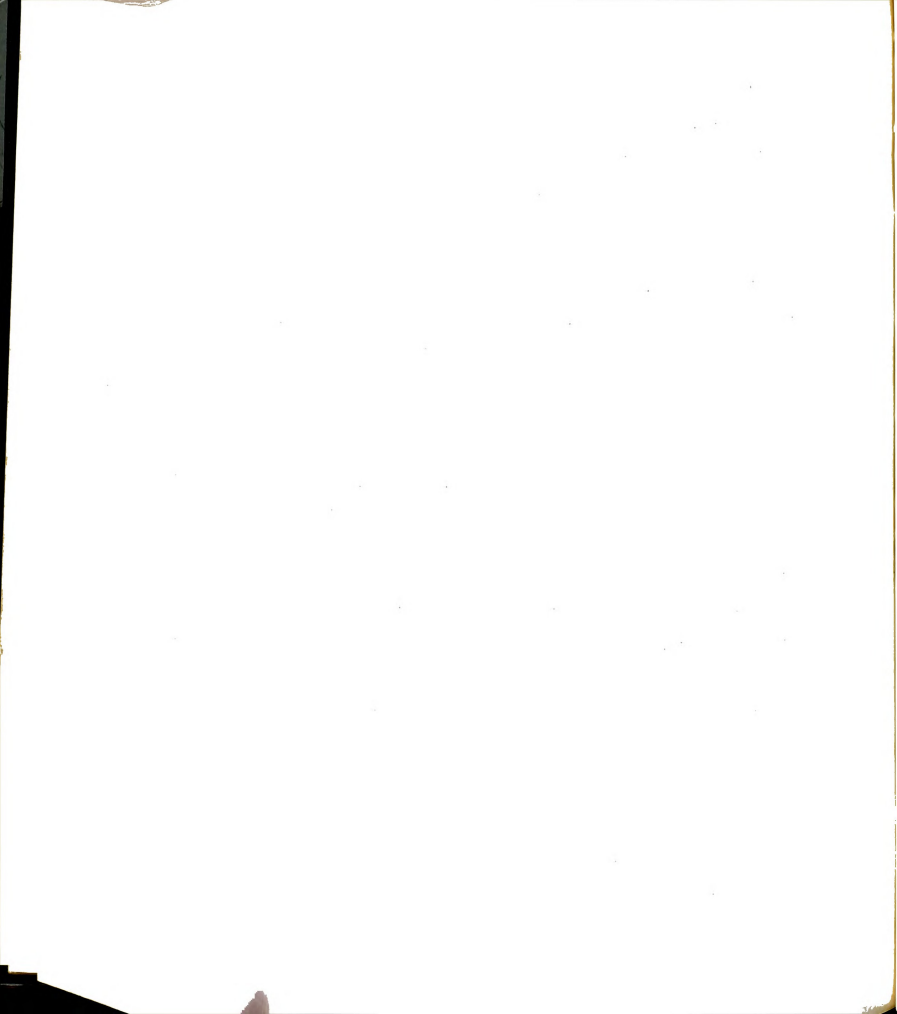
Some historians have argued that because the effect of the Civil War was to substitute the rule of an industrial elite for a slave-holding elite, the industrial interests must have somehow caused the war or been the bulwark of the Republican party. But this writer concurs with Eric Foner who argues that the Republican party



identified "with the aspirations of the farmers, small entrepreneurs, and craftsmen of northern society."<sup>3</sup> Republicans desired to preserve an upwardly mobile society threatened by the Slave Power. Yet, the free-labor "ideology" was very adaptable to changed conditions and was able to be used during the Gilded Age to justify a greatly stratified society. After all, the root of the free-labor argument was laissez-faire. Advocates stated that American society provided unlimited opportunities for upward mobility as long as it remained free from unnatural fetters, such as the Slave Power. This was a middle-class notion which had little sympathy for the "mechanic" who could not rise out of the working class. Indeed, one Michigan Republican expressed contempt for the working class, in a private autobiography written for his son. Writing in 1862 C.B. Stebbins, who edited the Adrian Daily Expositor and the Lansing State Republican in the 1840's and 1850's, observed:

The mechanics of our land, as a class, are the least educated of the native population. With ignorance we shall always find low aspirations. Not that the ignorant do not want a high place in society, but they care not for a character calculated to secure it. They desire influence; but not the intellectual development that would secure it. They want to be respected, but care little about being respectable. They desire certain benefits, but strive not for the ability which can alone secure them, or the character to which only they are adapted. Outwardly their aspirations are high, inwardly low.<sup>4</sup>

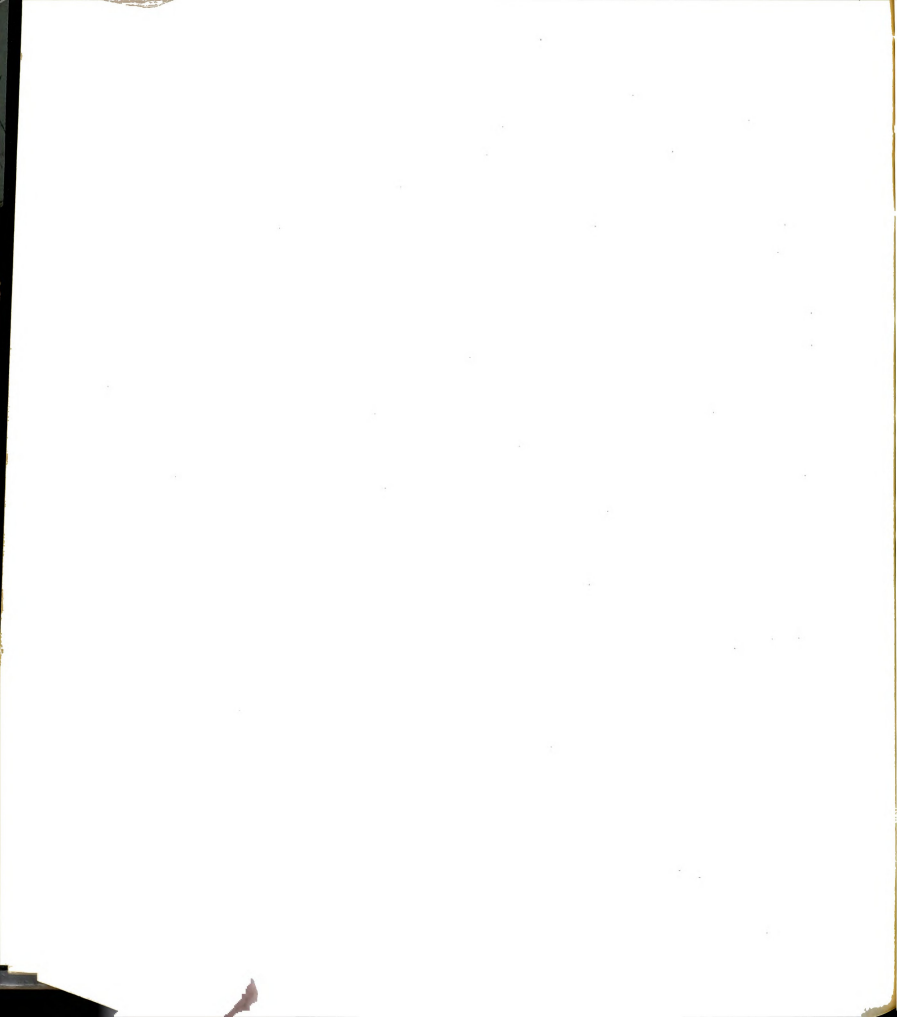
Thus, it was not difficult for the apologists of the industrial ascendancy to transform the ante-bellum



free labor argument, based on a society where many men believed they could rise to middle-class status, as most Michigan Republican editors actually did, to justify the exploitation and degradation of a wage-earning proletariat. By the Gilded Age, if not actually sometime before, the existence of an impoverished working class could simply be rationalized on the grounds that workers were ignorant and did not have the character to aspire to rise in a land of boundless opportunities.

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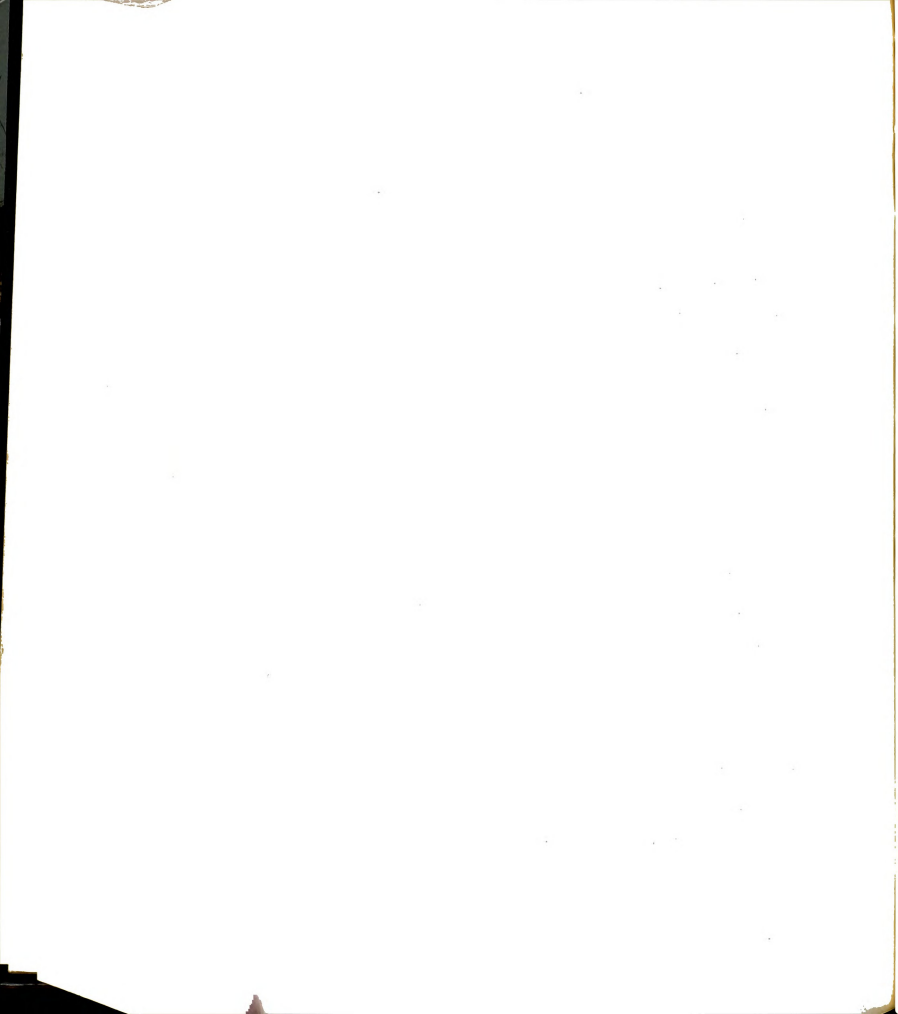
David Potter and Kenneth Stampp, two historians who analyzed the secession crisis, differed on what Republicans expected when they rejected compromise. Potter argued that the rejection of compromise did not in Republican eyes narrow their alternatives to separation or war, which they also rejected. Rather, Potter continued, Republicans suffered from "the illusion of the Southern Unionists." Believing secession to be a superficial phenomenon, they expected that once Lincoln was inaugurated and showed the South he meant it no harm a strong Unionist reaction would develop there.<sup>5</sup> Stampp contended that the Republican view of the alternatives in 1860-61 was compromise, acquiescence in secession, or using force to collect the revenue and maintain Federal property. The latter course, from the perspective of 1861, did not necessarily mean war. Republicans chose to enforce the laws without knowing what it would lead to. Stampp



believed the Republicans, although not really knowing what the future held, concocted the notion of voluntary reunion as a stratagem to convince Northerners that the rejection of compromise would not culminate in disaster.<sup>6</sup> My investigation of Michigan Republican editorials has developed a third explanation of Republican expectations during the secession crisis. Most Republican editors hoped for a Unionist reaction to grow out of a vigorous enforcement of the laws. They thought that through the enforcement of the laws, even if it entailed some use of force, southern Unionists would see that they could depend on the Lincoln Administration to maintain order. Assured of support, they would overthrow the secessionists. An underlying Republican assumption was that the secessionist leaders took power by some sort of coup and that they were unpopular with the southern people, except perhaps in South Carolina. Some Republican editors did think war was likely, but most accepted the possibility of war, while believing that the enforcement of the laws would avert it.

\* \* \* \* \*

What role did the press play in the coming of war? Certainly it did not neglect the issue of the sectional conflict. Virtually every issue of every paper made some reference to them. Moreover, there can be little doubt that the ante-bellum newspapers could have had no other effect than to increase emotionalism. Diatribes, vitriolics, and slanders were not unique to issues concerned



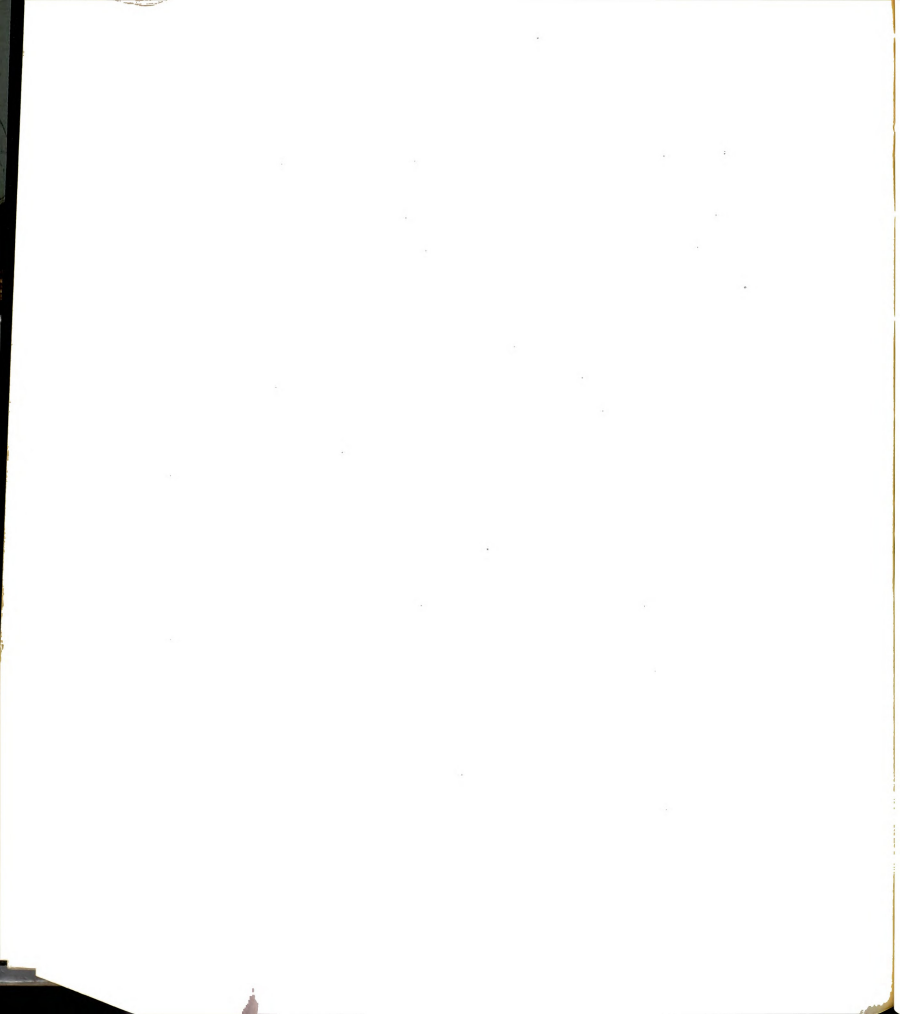
with the sectional conflict. The difference, however, is that in contrast to the election of 1840, for example, where the emotionalism aroused was largely feigned and manipulated by party leaders for partisan gain, the emotionalism fostered during the period covered in this study was based to a large degree on genuine, long-term concerns and fears, as well as partisanship. Certain partisan attacks such as Democratic accusations that Republicans believed in Negro equality or Republican charges that Floyd plotted Brown's raid or that Douglas was a Catholic were essentially used for political purposes. Yet the Republican fear of the Slave Power was real, as was the Democratic desire to bury the slavery issue. The newspapers served the function of leading and giving articulation to the underlying pre-dispositions of the people. They helped arouse public support for specific policies that reflected inchaote public attitudes. Republican papers specifically illustrated the danger to northern society if slavery were allowed to expand into the territories while Democratic papers pointed out to their readers the danger to the Union of a Republican victory. There were times, however, when for partisan reasons, newspapers did not reflect the opinion of the party faithful. Republican newspapers could not hide their uneasiness when they supported Lincoln's supposed peace policy in regard to Sumter in the face of overwhelming Republican demands for action. The reluctance of a few Democratic

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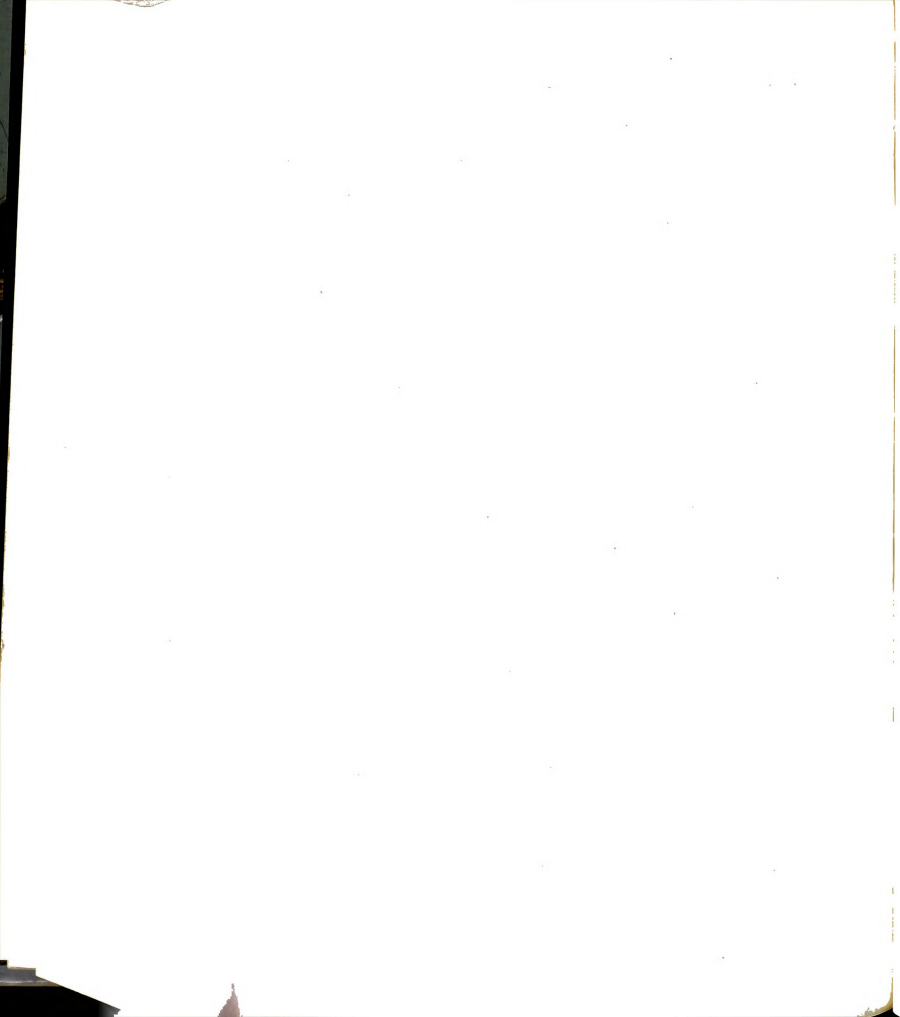


papers to get behind the war effort immediately reflected their unawareness that the Democratic masses had repudiated the party's pre-Sumter peace policy. But, on the whole, the press of both parties did reflect the basic philosophical differences of the concerned and informed public in Michigan in regard to the greatest crisis in American history.

A measure to gauge how well the press reflected public opinion is to compare editorial opinion with the resolutions of local political organizations. Obviously, even if there were a similarity of views, it would tell little about the opinions of the "average citizen." Another limitation is that virtually all the editors were involved in local politics and helped shape the policies they advocated in their newspapers. Actually there is no sure way to judge mass opinion in an era before the advent of the public opinion poll, but local political opinion is better than nothing. And as expected, it did coincide with editorial opinion. A random selection of county conventions, for example, indicates that Seward had deep grass-roots support. All the Republican county conventions studied endorsed the New York senator. The Republican state convention, which met on May 2, 1860, declared that the Republican party "is strangling the twin serpents of polygamy and slavery." It reaffirmed the principles of the 1856 platform and called for a homestead law. It also resolved that Congress had the power "to maintain the



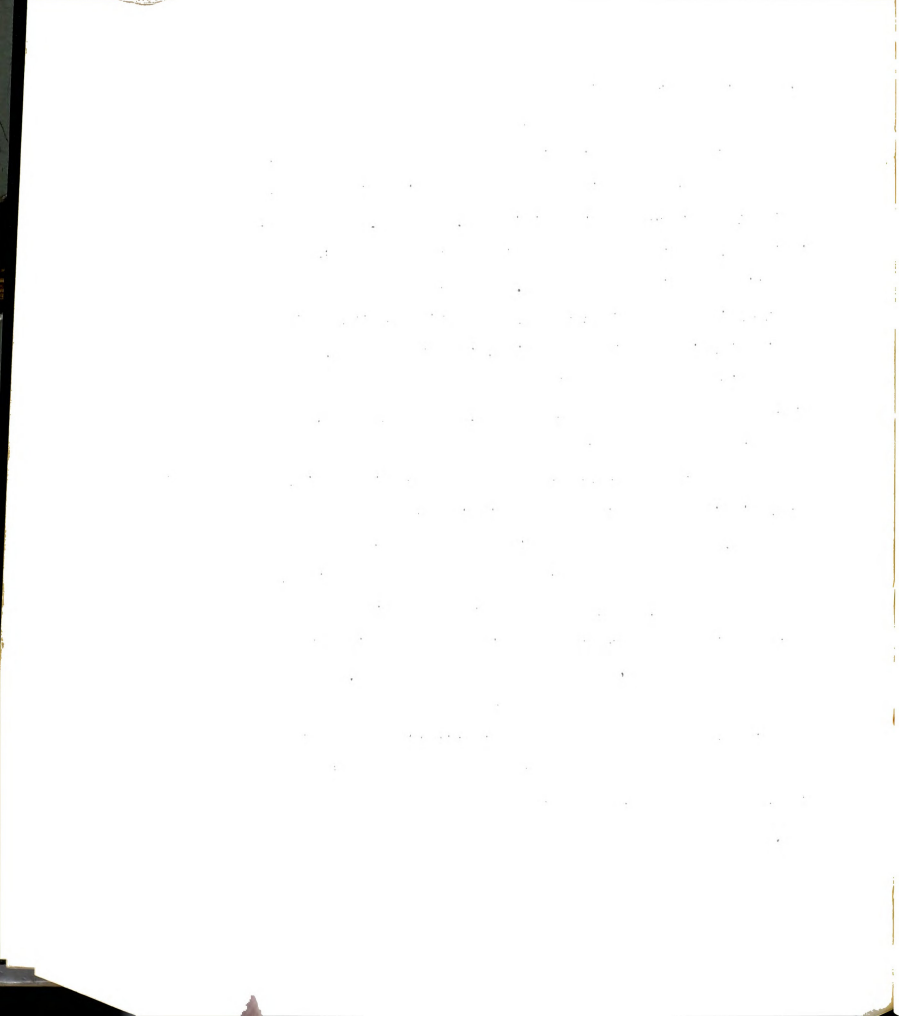
rights of freedom, free soil and free labor in the Territories of the Union," and only Republican doctrine could "resist the power of the slaveocracy." Seward was proclaimed the first choice of Michigan Republicans.<sup>8</sup> On the Democratic side, it was a similar story. The best example is the set of resolutions passed at the Democratic state convention which met in Detroit on February 7, 1861. While declaring that secession was not a constitutional but a revolutionary right, the Union, the convention stated, could not be held together by force, but only by fraternal feelings. It announced that "coercion by arms is civil war; that civil war is disunion, absolute and forever; and we earnestly counsel against all menaces or acts of coercion of States by arms." The convention also called for compromise, and repeal of the Personal Liberty laws.<sup>9</sup> Certainly, that convention adopted the peace policy proposal. The resolutions of the Calhoun county convention, meeting on February 5, further illustrates the correspondence between local political sentiment and the editorial opinion of the press. This convention, as did the bulk of the Democratic press, reversed years of enmity towards Seward and praised him as a conservative. It called for repeal of the Personal Liberty laws, opposed coercion, secession, and the use of force to conquer the South, announced support of either the Douglas or Crittenden compromises, and recommended leaving the morality of



slavery to the theologians.

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If we are able to give any credence to the observations of those who lived in the period immediately preceding the outbreak of the Civil War, slavery, not economic issues, was the wedge that divided the Democratic and Republican parties in Michigan. But slavery must be understood in its broadest sense. Republican editors viewed the institution and its offspring, the Slave Power, not only as immoral but as a threat to the northern way of life based on free speech and press, and free labor. Democrats did not perceive any real danger from the Slave Power and could not understand how the Republicans did. Thus, Michigan Republicans were willing to go to war, if necessary, to curb the aggressions of the Slave Power which was defying the Constitution to spread its poison. On the other hand, Democrats urged the cessation of slavery agitation so that the nation could continue to prosper as the world's most nearly perfect state. But after the issue of slavery was settled by battle and those Republicans who fought to end the institution and uplift the Negro faded from the political scene, once again the differences between the parties became more shadow than real.<sup>11</sup>



## CHAPTER X NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., "The Causes of the American Civil War: A Note on Historical Sentimentalism," Partisan Review, XVI (1949), pp. 969-981.

<sup>2</sup>Detroit Daily Advertiser, September 5, 1860.

<sup>3</sup>Eric Foner, Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party before the Civil War (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), p. 316.

<sup>4</sup>C. B. Stebbins, Sketch of My Life, 1862 (typescript in Clarke Historical Library, Central Michigan University), p. 78.

<sup>5</sup>David M. Potter, "Why the Republicans Rejected both Compromise and Secession," in George Harmon Knoles, ed., The Crisis of the Union, 1860-1861 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1965), pp. 99-100.

<sup>6</sup>Kenneth M. Stamp, "Comment," in Ibid., pp. 108-111.

<sup>7</sup>As is well known, even the most sophisticated polls of today occasionally err. This fact further highlights the difficulty of gauging public opinion in the ante-bellum era. Moreover, if one takes the position that the masses only play a limited role at best in the formation of policy, it is more important to discover the positions of the local political elites.

<sup>8</sup>The Republican conventions studied were: Monroe, Kent, Tuscola, Van Buren, Wayne, and Oakland. Detroit Daily Advertiser, April 13, 27, 30, May 1, 3, 1860; Pontiac Gazette, March 16, 1860; Monroe Commercial, April 19, 1860.

<sup>9</sup>Kalamazoo Gazette, February 15, 1861.

<sup>10</sup>Niles Republican, February 16, 1861.

<sup>11</sup>John A. Garraty in The New Commonwealth: 1877-1890 (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), p. 240 notes for the post-war period that "since political discussion focused on issues that were at best only tangentially related to the





important questions of the time, it is no wonder that the politics of the era appear so remarkably vacuous and fruitless." He further states that "the closest thing to a subject that really separated Republican from Democrat was also the most meaningless, i.e., whether the Democrats were fit to govern the nation.

## BIBLIOGRAPHICAL ESSAY

### Newspapers and Manuscripts:

The most significant primary sources for this study are the Michigan newspapers themselves. The files of most ante-bellum papers no longer exist. Of those surviving, Republican papers greatly outnumber Democratic journals. The most important Republican papers consulted were the Detroit Daily Tribune, Detroit Daily Advertiser, and the Grand Rapids Daily Eagle (unfortunately there is a break in the extant editions from August 4, 1860 to the end of the period of this study). Other Republican papers studied were: Lansing State Republican, Ingham County News, Hillsdale Standard, Allegan Journal, Adrian Daily Expositor, Grand Traverse Herald, Michigan State News, St. Joseph Traveler, Jonesville Independent, Battle Creek Journal, Eaton County Republican, Three Rivers Western Chronicle, Marshall Statesman, Ann Arbor Journal, Flint Wolverine Citizen, Niles Inquirer, Constantine Mercury and Advertiser, and Monroe Commercial.

The leading Democratic paper was the Detroit Free Press. Other Democratic papers consulted were: Michigan Argus, Niles Republican, Adrian Daily Watchtower, Pontiac Jacksonian, and the Grand Rapids Daily Enquirer.



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The leading Democratic paper was the Detroit Free Press. Other Democratic papers consulted were: Michigan Argus, Niles Republican, Adrian Daily Watchtower, Pontiac Jacksonian, and the Grand Rapids Daily Enquirer.

The Michigan State News, Ann Arbor Journal and Michigan Argus are available on microfilm at the office of the Ann Arbor News, Ann Arbor, Michigan. All other newspapers are available on microfilm at the Michigan State Library, Lansing, Michigan.

Several manuscript collections in the Michigan Historical Collections, University of Michigan were of limited value in this study. The DeLand family papers has some of the correspondence of Charles V. DeLand, editor of the Jackson American Citizen. The Irving K. Pond papers contain some letters from Elihu B. Pond, editor of the Michigan Argus to his son Irving. A few of Pond's diaries exist, but they do not cover the period of this study. Most of the entries are limited to weather reports. The Francis W. Shearman collection contains a few speeches Shearman delivered in the months after the firing on Sumter. Shearman, editor of the Marshall Democratic Expounder, re-stated the Democratic position that the war was for the Union, not against the institutions of the South.

The typescript of C. B. Stebbins' Sketch of My Life (1862) at the Clarke Historical Library, Central Michigan University, sheds some light on the Republican attitude towards the working man. The Jacob M. Howard papers in the Burton Historical Collections, Detroit Public Library, has a letter from Howard to Rufus Hosmer, editor of the Lansing State Republican, requesting Hosmer

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to use his influence to get Howard a Cabinet position in the Lincoln administration. The Austin Blair papers in the Burton Historical Collections contain a few letters from Michigan editors to Blair, but they contributed little to this study.

#### Other Sources:

William Livingstone's History of the Republican Party, 2 v. (Detroit, 1900) provides details as to the formation of the Republican party in Michigan. William Stocking's Under the Oaks (Detroit, 1904) also provides background on the party's formation. The only book length study of ante-bellum Michigan politics is Floyd B. Streeter, Political Parties in Michigan, 1837-1860 (Lansing, 1918). For background on the editors of ante-bellum Michigan newspapers, see: Aug. C. Baldwin, "Bench and Bar of Oakland County," Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections, XXXI (1902), pp. 152-72; George B. Catlin, "Little Journeys in Journalism: Wilbur F. Storey," Michigan History Magazine, X (1926), pp. 515-33; "DeWitt C. Leach," Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections, XXXVII (1909-10), pp. 698-99; John W. Fitzgerald, "Early County Newspaper Publishers in Michigan," Michigan History Magazine, IX (1925), pp. 58-71; William Stocking, "Little Journeys in Journalism: Joseph Warren," Michigan History Magazine, XXII (1938), pp. 403-08; William Stocking, "Little Journeys in Journalism: Michigan Press Influence



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editors. It includes: Morgan Bates, Albert Baxter, Isaac P. Christianity, Donald C. Henderson, John N. Ingersoll, Seth Lewis, James O'Donnell, Francis H. Rankin, Harvey B. Rowlson, Ezra C. Seaman, C. B. Stebbins, Aaron B. Turner, Edwin Willits, and Walter Woolnough. A few county historians are useful for background on the editors. Aaron B. Turner and Albert Baxter, both of the Grand Rapids Eagle are discussed in the History of Kent County (Chicago, 1881), pp. 418-22. Joseph Saunders of the Charlotte Republican is briefly mentioned in the Portrait and Biographical Album of Barry and Eaton Counties (Chicago, 1891), p. 241.

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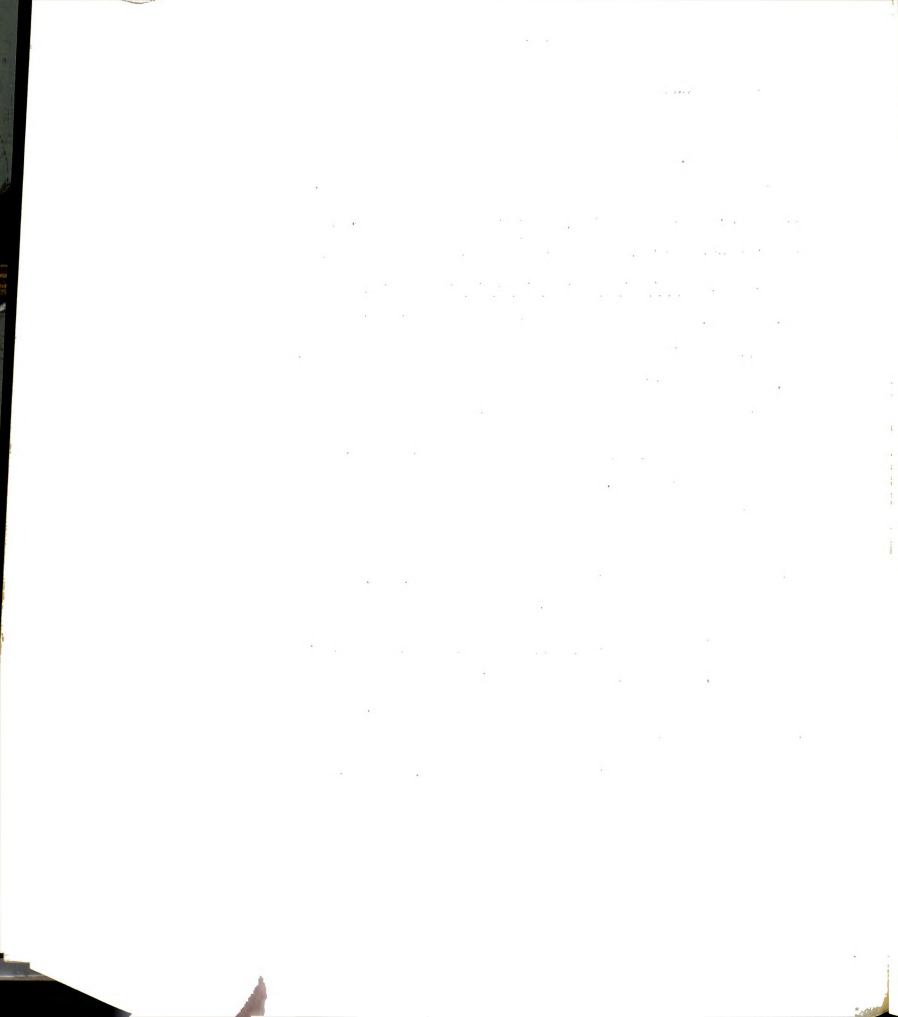
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"Slavery and the Slave Power: A Crucial Distinction," Civil War History, XV (1969), pp. 5-17 analyze northern opposition to the aggressions of the Slave Power. See Major L. Wilson, "The Free Soil Concept of Progress and the Irrepressible Conflict," American Quarterly, XXII (1970), pp. 769-90 for a perceptive discussion of the "free-soiler's" desire to return the nation to a state of purity, unfortunately corrupted by the Slave Power. Some Northerners defended slavery. See Howard C. Perkins, "The Defense of Slavery in the Northern Press on the Eve of the Civil War," Journal of Southern History, IX (1943), pp. 501-31.

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