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**The Michigan Democratic press and the expansion of black
rights: A divided party united, 1861–1870**

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Michigan State University, 1993

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THE MICHIGAN DEMOCRATIC PRESS AND THE EXPANSION OF BLACK
RIGHTS: A DIVIDED PARTY UNITED, 1861-1870

By

Janice L. Bukovac

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ABSTRACT

THE MICHIGAN DEMOCRATIC PRESS AND THE EXPANSION OF BLACK RIGHTS: A DIVIDED PARTY UNITED, 1861-1870

By

Janice L. Bukovac

In 1860 the Democratic party, which had been the nation's dominant political force for over thirty years, was in chaos. The 1860 national Democratic convention left the party split, and though reconciliation was attempted, these efforts failed. The split of the national party resulted in a similar breakdown of the party in Michigan.

On the eve of the Civil War, the national Democratic party, aided by various U.S. Supreme Court rulings, maintained that since slavery was a state, not a federal institution, Congress could not tamper with it where it existed. In 1861 Democrats refused to recognize slavery as a war aim; eight years later they were debating giving the Freedmen the right to vote.

This research asks the question how did editorials of the Michigan Democratic press portray Democratic party positions on the constitutional expansion of black rights during the 1860s. As political vehicles the newspapers should portray the national party stand, as well as the various factional divisions.

Contrary to political reality the newspapers portrayed the Michigan Democratic party as united and cohesive. Although the Democrats continued to suffer serious

Janice L. Bukovac

dissent, the press developed an impressive pattern of continuity in their arguments against the expansion of black rights. The Democratic press maintained a strong devotion to principles that had characterized the party since the election of Andrew Jackson. Internal struggles did not affect the press concerning the expansion of black rights. The ability of the press to maintain a cohesion attested to its importance and power.

The Michigan Democratic press successfully promulgated the party line and generated an emotional vibrancy that indicated continual mass support. As a result the Democrats continued to be a successful political entity that by 1870 had established a continuity of behavior and function that stymied legislation on black rights expansion for many years.

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DEDICATION

To my family, especially my father

There is but one thing which has saved this country from being to-day at the mercy of as unscrupulous a set of fanatical and one idea partisans as ever existed in any country, and that is the unintermitting labors and exposures of the Democratic press of the country.

The Detroit Free Press, 10 November 1867

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Of all those who helped with this effort, Dr. Robert V. Hudson deserves the most credit. As my major professor he inspired, cajoled and motivated me to finish my work, often when I was unsure of the results. Thank you, Dr. Hudson. My other committee members—Drs. Keith Adler, Erik Lunde and Stan Soffin—deserve recognition for their constant support and understanding. I feel fortunate to have had them on my side. Dr. Bruce Vanden Bergh deserves acknowledgement—as my department chairperson he not only motivated me, but kept me gainfully employed while I worked on this degree. I sincerely appreciate his understanding, consideration and support.

Beyond the academic sphere there are several individuals that I also want to thank. My aunts' constant inquiries about my progress spurred me to make sure I had something to report. My children helped me keep one foot in the real world. My husband not only remained married to me through this ordeal, but is still my best friend and hero.

I want especially to thank my mother who has supported me in all of my endeavors, and my father who always told me I had the capability to do anything. As he wrote in my high school dictionary, "Keep in mind that with self discipline, hard work and organization you can make your talents go far." I guess father does know best.

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CHAPTER I. PURPOSE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY

In 1860 the Democratic party, which had been the nation's dominant political force for more than thirty years, was in chaos. The 1860 national Democratic convention left the party split, and though reconciliation was attempted, these efforts failed.¹ Southern Democrats nominated John C. Breckinridge for the presidency, while Northern Democrats nominated Illinois Senator Stephen Douglas. Divisiveness among the Democrats led to an easy Republican victory in the November 1860 presidential election. For the next twelve years Democratic party labels and loyalties were confused and out of focus.

Since the late 1850s, the Michigan Democratic party had suffered divisions. Focused primarily on disagreement over the Lecompton Constitution in Kansas and personality quarrels, the breach was originally confined to the eastern half of the state.² The split of the national party in 1860 resulted in a breakdown of the party in Michigan. Most Michigan Democrats supported Douglas, but a small group of conservatives favored

¹Paul Angle, ed., *The Lincoln Reader* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1947), 282.

²Floyd Streeter, *Political Parties in Michigan, 1837-1860* (Lansing: Michigan Historical Collection, 1918), 271.

Breckinridge. Lincoln carried Michigan in the 1860 election with more than 87,000 votes.³

On the eve of the Civil War, the national Democratic party, aided by various U.S. Supreme Court rulings, maintained that since slavery was a state, not a federal, institution, Congress could not tamper with it where it existed.⁴ Conversely, Republicans found slavery immoral and opposed its further spread. Though not all Republicans favored slavery's immediate abolition, they argued with a single voice against allowing its development and growth into the nation's western territories. Republican hostility to slavery did not mean party members believed that blacks were their equals. Most Northerners, Republican and Democrat alike, disliked and feared the movement of blacks northward. The Democrats would wield this weapon with some success in years to come.

As South Carolina and other Southern states left the Union during the winter of 1860-61, Democrats hoped that the secession crisis would lead to the demise of the Republican party and their return to power.⁵ Those sentiments were short-lived, however, when the Confederate forces attacked Fort Sumter in Charleston, South Carolina, on 12 April 1861. With the United States under attack, Northern Democrats rallied behind the Republican administration to save the Union.

³Ronald Formisano, *The Birth of Mass Political Parties, Michigan, 1827-1861* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), 289.

⁴Kirk Porter and Donald Johnson, comps., *National Party Platforms, 1840-1956* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1970), 30-3.

⁵Page Smith, *Trial by Fire* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1982), 34.

By supporting Lincoln, the Democrats hoped to maintain a wide popular base that would ultimately allow them to return to power. They would never achieve that goal during the Civil War and Reconstruction. In addition to the strong opposition of the Republican party, Democrats continued to be plagued by internal divisions. Stephen Douglas, the party's strongest leader, died in 1861. In Michigan, seventy-eight-year-old Lewis Cass, a former U.S. senator, secretary of war and secretary of state, as well as the 1848 Democratic presidential candidate, was revered, but no longer a strong leader among Michigan Democrats.

During the war, the Democrats split into two wings: Peace Democrats, who favored a cessation of hostilities regardless of the cost, and War Democrats, who supported the vigorous prosecution of the war. The Peace Democrats represented the bulk of the party; War Democrats were never numerous in comparison to the mass of party loyalists.⁶ Peace Democrats were further split into purist and legitimist, depending on what they perceived was appropriate political behavior. The purists and legitimists shared the same party ideology, but the legitimists acknowledged the need to be competitive and compromising in order to maximize votes and win elections. What good were party principles without party victories to promote them? Purists were less willing to compromise party principles, and preferred to be true to their beliefs than victorious at

⁶Joel Silbey, *A Respectable Minority* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1977), 58.

the polls. But regardless of their internal differences, all Democrats agreed that the abolition of slavery should not be an issue in restoring the Union.⁷

The 1860s saw a period of revolutionary racial change. By 1871 four million slaves were emancipated, and black males were enfranchised and granted the rights of equality.⁸ Although some of those hard won rights were later lost, the speed and expansiveness of the change in the 1860s was unprecedented. Historically, state governments were responsible for the protection and regulation of personal liberties and civil rights. During the Civil War the federal government assumed, for the first time, the role of guarantor of these liberties and rights. Emancipation, perhaps the most dramatic expansion of civil rights, required constitutional sanction. The Thirteenth, Fourteenth and Fifteenth amendments provided sanction and a method of implementation. These amendments and their interpretation defined postwar reconstruction and political party structure.

The sixties had an enormous impact upon the Democratic party. In 1861 Democrats refused to recognize slavery as a war aim; eight years later they were debating giving the Freedmen the right to vote. This was no less than a political quantum leap, and the change could not have been achieved easily. Northern Democratic prejudice against

⁷William Smith, *A Political History of Slavery: Being an Account of the Slavery Controversy from the Earliest Agitations in the Eighteenth Century to the Close of the Reconstruction Period in America* (New York: G.P. Putnam & Sons, 1903), 448.

⁸James McPherson, *The Struggle for Equality: Abolitionists and the Negro in the Civil War and Reconstruction* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964), 111.

Negroes was strong.⁹ Widespread distaste for social and political equality was old and deep-seated. The battle against the expansion of Negro rights was based on more than quasi-support for an outdated institution. Hatred for abolitionists—accused of bringing on the war—disillusionment with Lincoln and his abolitionist goals, and the deep-seated prejudice of race were a part of the battle.¹⁰

Research Question

This research asks the question: How did the editorials of the Michigan Democratic press portray Democratic party positions on the constitutional expansion of black rights during the 1860s? It assumes that the Democratic party took a position on the issue of black rights and that the newspapers offered varying portrayals of that position. Exploratory research indicated that the Democratic party had strong perceptions about how deserving the Negro was of political and social rights. In 1868 the Democratic platform opposed suffrage. Consequently, it is believed that the newspapers, as political vehicles, not only reflected the party's stated platform positions, but exaggerated and expanded them in order to promote the Democratic party. The disruption within the party should be apparent by the different responses and positions of individual newspapers. This

⁹William Gillette, *The Right to Vote: Politics and the Passage of the Fifteenth Amendment* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1965), 45.

¹⁰LaWanda Cox and John Cox, *Politics, Principle, & Prejudice, 1865-66: Dilemma of Reconstruction America* (New York: Atheneum), 3.

research looks for patterns, continuity and change in the newspapers' portrayals of the Democratic party's position on the expansion of black rights.

This research does not, for lack of evidence, ascertain the influence of the editorials on their readers, but outlines the response of the press on the expansion of black rights. This provides a better picture of the evolving political attitudes and struggle of a divisive political party trying to rebuild during a decade of enormous turmoil.

Justification

Documenting and interpreting Democratic editorial policy contributes important insight on the restructuring of the Michigan Democratic party during the 1860s and an understanding of the ideologies of an institution that would ultimately face many challenges in restructuring black and white relations throughout the century. Little consideration was given the Democrats during this time period; most historians focused their interest on the Republican party. This is especially true of Michigan. After Floyd Streeter's book, *Political Parties in Michigan, 1837-1860*, there is no comparable work for the following decade. This research provides insight into a neglected period in Michigan Democratic history, including information on party activities, and political stands. This research also considers the role of the editorial as disseminator of political information in the state during the period. Non-metropolitan newspapers, although often ignored by historians, were important indicators of belief and behavior. They provided more indepth and personal views of the populace.

A complete understanding of the Democratic stand concerning black rights must include listening to the party vehicles. Few sources reflected the importance of controversial issues and events better than newspapers. Civil War-period newspapers were fiercely partisan. Despite frequently losing money, the newspapers were directed, and sometimes supported, by political parties in the hopes of swaying public opinion. Consequently, editorial policy provided an invaluable mirror of political positions and attitudes, as well as a diffusion of news and ideas. Editors were often better known than their papers, the position of party editor being an honored spot within the political community. Influential editors were able to control and guide parties; their editorials comprised an important aspect of the political environment. This research supports the assumption that newspapers were important unifiers, maintaining a strong party base regardless of external disruptions.

Literature Review

Topical literature for this research was abundant. Works on the national and Michigan Democratic party and press, black rights, the Emancipation Proclamation, the Thirteenth Amendment, the Fourteenth Amendment and the Fifteenth Amendment are plentiful.

Newspaper Studies

There was no published research directly relating to this research topic. Abundant secondary material on similar topic areas exists, but nothing deals specifically with Michigan Democratic editorial response to black rights. There are, however, a few dissertations pertinent for their subject or methodology. The most useful is by Rodney Joseph, "The Michigan Press and the Coming of the Civil War 1859-1861: A Study of Editorial Opinion." Joseph's work is valuable for its synthesis of primary and secondary evidence, as well as for corroborating evidence of newspapers' political affiliations. Unfortunately, it provides little additional help concerning methodology or analysis structure. Joseph details the opinions of the press without consideration of political affiliation.

Other dissertations that provide partial models for methodology include Thomas James Kelly, "White Press/Black Man: An Analysis of the editorial Opinion of the Four Chicago Daily Newspapers Toward the Race Problem: 1945-1968," and Matthew Herbert Epstein, "A Study of the Editorial Opinions of the New York City Newspapers Toward the League of Nations and the United Nations During the First Year of Life, 1919-1920, and 1945-1946." These dissertations contain valuable examples of editorial research and provide rationale and justification for the use of newspapers as windows on popular views. Their methodologies differ, however, from the one utilized in this research. Epstein, for example, offers a detailed quantification analysis that was appropriate for his research, which measured editorial references to specific governmental committees.

Various other authors examined the editorial opinions of the press about the Civil War. These works include *Northern Editorials on Secession*, by Howard C. Perkins, and *Southern Editorials on Secession*, by Dwight L. Dumond. These are collections of editorials meant to demonstrate the breadth of opinion about secession. They provide insight into that event and into some political disagreements within the various political parties, but do not interpret the editorials in the context of the political situation.

A series of articles deal with the Negro and the Northern press. These focus on any number of Northern papers, few from Michigan. Since Michigan was not one of the more aggressive Democratic states, it was not examined extensively. These works provide a general body of knowledge concerning the Northern press and its opinions on the institution of slavery.¹¹

The Michigan Democratic Party

The Michigan Democratic party was similar to its national counterpart, struggling to reorganize and amend internal conflicts. Works of particular benefit that clarify the political structure include Floyd B. Streeter, *Political Parties in Michigan, 1837-1860* (1918) and Ronald Formisano, *The Birth of Mass Political Parties, Michigan 1827-1861* (1971). These are the most definitive works concerning Michigan politics of the 1850s

¹¹Howard Perkins, "The Defense of Slavery in the Northern Press on the Eve of the Civil War," *Journal of Southern History* IX: 501-3; Eugene Berwanger "Negrophobia in Northern Proslavery and Antislavery Thought," *Phylon* XXXIII(3) (1972): 266-75; and Ray Abrams, "The Copperhead Newspapers and the Negro," *Journal of Southern History* XX(1): 131-52.

that delineate the divisions within the Democratic party. There are no such works found for the 1860s. Information for the succeeding years was collected through a wide variety of more general treatments of the Democratic party, including discussions about Michigan's situation and role.

Numerous sources describe the national Democratic party structure. Works that address the national party with references to, or information on, Michigan in relation to relevant issues, include Joel H. Silbey, *A Respectable Minority: The Democratic Party in the Civil War Era, 1860-1868* (1977); LaWanda Cox and John H. Cox, *Politics, Principles, and Prejudice 1865-1866* (1963); and Kirk Porter and Donald Bruce Johnson, *National Party Platforms, 1840-1968* (1970). Two works that help illustrate the Democratic party ideology include Charles E. Merriam, *A History of American Political Theories* (1903) and George Dewey Harmon, *Political Aspects of Slavery and the Civil War* (1959).

Slavery and the Negro

More expansive than the literature on the Democratic party is the literature on slavery and the plight of the blacks during the Civil War and Reconstruction. General works are too numerous to list. Those that address the issue with respect to freedom and the expansion of legal rights include James M. McPherson, *The Struggle for Equality: Abolitionists and the Negro in the Civil War and Reconstruction* (1964); Clement Eaton, *A History of the Old South* (1975); and Jacobus tenBroek, *Equal Under Law* (1965).

These works provide background for the lack of rights that the constitutional efforts rectified.

Emancipation and the Amendments

Specific works that provide details of development of emancipation and the constitutional amendments include John Hope Franklin, *The Emancipation Proclamation* (1963); Robert A. Goldwin, ed., *100 Years of Emancipation* (1963); and George Henry Hoemann, "What Hath God Wrought: The Embodiment of Freedom in the Thirteenth Amendment" (1982). The background and adoption of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth amendments are discussed in Jacobus tenBroek, *The Antislavery Origins of the Fourteenth Amendment* (1951); Joseph B. James, *The Framing of the Fourteenth Amendment* (1956); and William Gillette, *The Right to Vote: Politics and the Passage of the Fifteenth Amendment* (1965).

One dissertation that deals with this topic and is useful for racial themes, is Lee Allen Dew, "The Racial Ideas of the Authors of the Fourteenth Amendment" (1960).

With respect to particular obstacles the amendments faced, see LaWanda Cox and John H. Cox, "Negro Suffrage and Republican Politics: the Problem of Motivation in Reconstruction Historiography" (August 1967, 303-30) and Leslie H. Fishel, Jr., "Northern Prejudice and Negro Suffrage, 1865-1870" (January 1954, 8-26). Monographs that discuss Northern racial prejudice include V. Jacque Voegeli, *Free But Not Equal: The Midwest*

and the Negro During the Civil War (1967), and Forrest G. Wood, *Black Scare: The Racist Response to Emancipation and Reconstruction* (1968).

Methodology

This research was geographically limited within Michigan by availability of primary sources. Considering the distribution across the state of these sources, they represent an acceptable sample of the Michigan Democratic press that was typical of the Midwest region.

The principal primary sources for this research are Michigan's Democratic party newspapers. The rationale for using newspapers, specifically editorials, for insight on the political response to these historical issues is based on the function of the press during the period. Newspapers were an influential vehicle for communicating and molding public opinion.

Nineteenth-century newspapers also were more politically biased and more abundant than their twentieth-century counterparts. Many small communities had several weekly papers. The papers, although inexpensive to produce, usually had low circulation figures and were financially aided by political parties. Advertising revenues were occasionally overshadowed by political solicitation. Party representatives solicited for the paper, contracted party printing, occasionally absorbed paper losses and obtained public contracts for the print shop. Reprints of speeches, notification of meetings, political gatherings and other activities were published in accordance with the paper's partisan

nature. Most importantly, the papers offered their readers biased news and glorifying editorials supporting their party's stand. As the voice of the Democratic party, newspapers reached the constituents in their homes among their family. According to the *Marshall Democratic Expounder*, it was "the bounden duty of every party man to subscribe for the paper which represents his party."¹² Working slowly but all the more surely, the papers appealed to reason as well as to emotion and provided important continuity for the Democratic party. Editors represented every rural and urban area, and reflected the thoughts and feelings of the state.¹³ They enjoyed important status in the community, and their newspapers provided invaluable political public relations for the Democratic party.¹⁴

Michigan newspapers were similar to their national counterparts. Republican papers were more abundant than Democratic, but shared their popularity and readership with the *New York Tribune*—the most influential Republican paper in Michigan. Although in a minority, the Democratic press was as partisan and vocal. But unlike the *New York Tribune*, Michigan's largest Democratic newspaper, the *Detroit Free Press*, did not enjoy the same unchallenged position of leadership among Michigan Democratic papers during the Civil War. Other prominent Democratic papers, like the *New York World*, enjoyed

¹²*Marshall Democratic Expounder*, 6 June 1867.

¹³Howard Perkins, *Northern Editorials on Secession* (New York: D. Appleton-Century Co., 1942), 4. Michigan's population in 1860, as recorded by Streeter (1918, p. 352), was 749,113. The 1864 elections recorded a total of 166,125 voters; Lincoln won the state with 91,521 votes while McClellan received 74,604 votes.

¹⁴Richard Jenson, *Grass Roots Politics* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1983), 35.

considerable attribution in Michigan.¹⁵ The *Detroit Free Press* was, however, the dominant state Democratic voice and the head of the Democratic press in Michigan.¹⁶

Unfortunately, copies of many of these papers do not exist. Begun in 1962, the Michigan Newspapers on Microfilm Project was responsible for the most comprehensive collection of Michigan newspapers located at the Library of Michigan. The rationale for confining this research to Michigan included the accessibility of primary materials and the fact that Michigan, although predominately Republican, opposed the expansion of black rights. Michigan was representative in this regard of the Midwest region. All available newspapers for the time period were accessed, the minimum number available for any one specific time being five. Continual coverage across the years and consistent continuity indicates that the holes in various newspaper runs are not significant to the analysis.¹⁷

Primary Sources

The newspapers are the most valuable primary source for this research. The leading Democratic paper was the *Detroit Free Press*. Other papers include the *Clinton County Independent*, *Coldwater Sentinel*, *Grand Rapids Enquirer*, *Jackson Eagle*,

¹⁵Dr. Frederick Williams, Civil War classroom lecture, Michigan State University, 4 April 1984.

¹⁶*Detroit Free Press*, 22 January 1865

¹⁷See the bibliography for a complete list of newspapers and their years of availability.

Kalamazoo Gazette, *Marshall Democratic Expounder*, *Monroe Monitor*, *Niles Democratic Republican*, *East Saginaw Courier*, *Van Buren County Press*, and the *Western Chronicle* (Three Rivers). Out-of-state papers that were utilized for responses to specific events or comparison include the *New York Tribune* and the *New York World*. For information on Michigan editors and their papers, *Michigan History Magazine* periodically has published "Little Journeys in Journalism," many of which focus on Michigan editors. These articles provide information on the status of editors and their social role in the community. The *Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collection* was particularly useful in this area. This collection of essays periodically discussed communities and their various newspapers.

Additional primary sources include the Democratic party platforms and Congressional records. Both the national Democratic party platforms and the state of Michigan's Democratic party platforms were examined. Since the Michigan platforms defer to the principles enunciated in the national platforms and vary only in wording concerning the issue of black right expansion, the reference to platform in this research is to that of the national Democratic party. These stated platforms, in conjunction with the central congressional arguments, were the instruments for identifying the Democratic party's formal positions on the expansion of black rights.

The political disposition of each newspaper was determined by its stated political affiliation and by examining election-year support. Secondary sources cited earlier were utilized when available to corroborate newspaper political affiliation.

Events

To structure this study, the specific constitutional milestones toward black equality were identified and are referred to as emancipation and the war amendments. Specific events include the Emancipation Proclamation, and the Thirteenth, Fourteenth and Fifteenth amendments. The Emancipation Proclamation freed the slaves in the Confederate states. Although not a constitutional action, it was considered a precursor of the Thirteenth Amendment that formally ended slavery. The Fourteenth Amendment conferred equal citizenship on the freedmen, and the Fifteenth Amendment forbid states from denying them the right to vote.

Editorials were examined from each event's date of Michigan ratification. The most intense debate occurred during this time period, rather than the date of national ratification, which was in many respects a mere formality. The search for editorials proceeded systematically forwards and backwards from the date of ratification to determine if the event and its issues were dealt with continuously over the period or appeared in a confined time period. Over eight thousand editorials were scanned, with approximately eight hundred, or 10 percent, being of substantial import.

Evidence Use

The editorials were interpreted following the "rule of context," by which a statement is interpreted in relation to what precedes and follows it.¹⁸ External criticism is not an issue with this research, but internal criticism is. When interpreting editorial policy, the intent of the composer must be remembered. Real meaning is often different than literal meaning. Politically partisan newspapers and editors were biased, and they addressed a specific, often equally biased, audience. Consideration of the composer's intent and biases is important to this research. Identifying editorial position, which is a function of the editors' intent and bias, is a primary objective of this research.

The controversy over the expansion of black rights involved more than constitutional theory and prejudice. Historically blacks enjoyed very few, if any, rights. The magnitude of the events of the 1860s may only be appreciated after considering the Negro situation prior to that period.

¹⁸Robert Shafer, *A Guide to Historical Method* (Homewood: Dorsey Press, 1980), 151.

CHAPTER II. LACK OF RIGHTS HISTORICALLY

In 1861 the majority of Negroes were Southern slaves with virtually no legal, social or political rights. Established in early colonial times, slavery had become by the American Revolution a social and economic institution, especially in the South. Slaves were devoid of any civil rights and were considered property. Their welfare lay in the hands of those who owned them; any privileges they enjoyed were dependent on individual owners. During the period of the American Revolution, perhaps as a result of that fight for freedom, slavery rhetoric from the South became defensive and apologetic. Due either to the belief in freedom or the current recession that made slavery unprofitable, the institution was criticized. Slavery was economically expensive; for many Southerners it was an economic burden to maintain slaves. While Southerners believed that Negroes were innately inferior to whites, they did not look on slavery as permanent.¹⁹

Many Southerners believed that slavery was a temporary institution. As slaves became more expensive to maintain and otherwise unnecessary, the institution would become defunct. The 1793 invention of the cotton gin, however, changed that situation both economically and morally for the South. Suddenly the production of cotton became

¹⁹Clement Eaton, *A History of the Old South* (Prospect Heights: Waveland Press, 1975), 368.

a profitable enterprise and slaves an agricultural necessity. By the early 1830s the South no longer sounded apologetic for slavery, but ardently defended the institution, recognizing it as a positive good.²⁰

By the early 1830s there was also substantial agitation against slavery. In the 1820s serious opposition to the institution had arisen in the hill country of east Tennessee, Kentucky, North Carolina and North Alabama. Nat Turner's rebellion in 1831, although in reality a negligible event that was quickly suppressed, generated fear and distrust among the white population and resulted in severe restrictions on already controlled slaves and free Negroes. Such codes forbade a slave to leave his or her plantation without a written pass, legally marry or assemble without the presence of a white man.²¹

The plight of the freedman was little better. He constantly feared enslavement and his movement was severely curtailed. Legally, his position was extremely tenuous. One infraction of the codes meant the loss of freedom with no legal recourse. As public nervousness mounted, unfounded reports of insurrections fueled Southern concern. John Brown's 1859 raid on the U.S. Arsenal at Harper's Ferry prompted a further increase in restrictions on the Negro and heralded the future battle against the extension of rights.

Increasing restrictions on Negro rights did not, however, diminish the fact that in 1830 there were fifty antislavery societies in existence and a clear four-point attack was enunciated against the institution.²²

²⁰Williams, 4 April 1984.

²¹Clement Eaton, *A History of the Old South* (Prospect Heights: Waveland Press, 1975), 260.

²²Williams, 4 April 1984.

The attack was straightforward. First the issue was political: the North felt the South enjoyed too much power as a result of the three-fifths clause that allowed the Southern white minority to carry considerable political weight in Congress, blocking banking and tariff laws the Northern states supported. Second, the issue was economic: land in the South was cheap; slaves were expensive. As a result, many slave holders exploited the land and ruined the soil, funneling money into slaves and new land rather than into redevelopment or conservation. Third, slavery was fundamentally a moral wrong. Fourth, God was the father of all people; therefore, slavery was a sin against God.²³

Although the debate was well established and the opposition strong, there were few efforts to abolish slavery by any method, including a constitutional amendment, before 1860. A few noteworthy attempts at legislation included one as early as 1818 by Arthur Levermore, who introduced a resolution in Congress to prohibit slavery. This early attempt failed to gain the House's cursory consideration.²⁴ In 1839, John Quincy Adams of Massachusetts introduced three separate amendments: to abolish hereditary slavery after 1842, to restrict admittance of slave states to the Union and to abolish slavery in the District of Columbia after 1845. All three attempts failed.²⁵

The years following John Quincy Adam's attempts to reveal slavery as unconstitutional saw many attitudinal changes in the United States, both politically and

²³Williams, 4 April 1984.

²⁴*Annals of the Congress*, 1818, 32:1675-6.

²⁵*Congressional Globe*, 26th Cong., 1st sess., 1839-40, 8:220-4.

socially. The response to slavery was no exception.²⁶ More than two hundred amendments were introduced in the first session of the Thirty-sixth Congress, in 1860-1. The majority of these proposed amendments originated from the South and protected rather than restricted slavery. Others were proposed compromises, undoubtedly efforts to avoid a future division of states that was becoming probable. One proposed amendment restricted congressional slavery legislation. This amendment was relatively successful—it passed both Houses—but it failed to receive the required state ratification as House Joint Resolution 80, Thirty-sixth Congress.²⁷

After the Civil War broke out the issue of slavery intensified. As a consequence of secession, the Southern states also gave up their representation in Congress, which opened the door to antislavery proponents to pursue new antislavery legislation. On 16 April 1862 slavery was abolished in the District of Columbia; later that year it was abrogated in the territories. The Emancipation Proclamation was imminent.²⁸

In Michigan the first slaves were Indians, whose fate had been determined as a result of tribal warfare. When the Northwest was occupied by the French and later the British, the Indians developed a profitable trade of selling stolen Southern black slaves to these new settlers. Although the Ordinance of 1787 forbade slavery in the Northwest Territory, the French and British were allowed to maintain their slaves under American

²⁶Senate Committee on the Judiciary, *Amendments to the Constitution: a Brief Legislative History* (Washington, D.C.: United State Government Printing Office, 1985), 25.

²⁷*Ibid.*

²⁸*Ibid.*

jurisdiction. Americans also owned slaves despite the law. Some interpreted the Northwest Ordinance as prohibiting the importation of additional slaves, not discontinuing enslavement.²⁹ Large slave-holdings were uncommon in Michigan; as a result of the number of fur traders and small farmers, slaves enjoyed a more intimate, hired-hand basis with their owners. The submissive inferior image of the Negro was uncommon in Michigan. Their treatment in the eighteenth century rang more of equality than servility. It was not surprising to find Michigan Negroes—although few in number—actively pursuing their rights in the nineteenth century.

When the Americans formally took possession of Detroit and Michilimackinac in 1796, Michigan slavery quickly declined, although vestiges remained until the first state constitution abolished it in 1835. On the eve of statehood three slaves were officially recorded in Michigan.³⁰ By the 1840 census 753 Negroes were recorded in Michigan, none listed as slaves. Prior to that the number of slaves identified in a census reached a high of 32 in 1830. The majority of Negroes in Michigan were free.³¹ Antislavery sentiment and freedom did not, however, provide for civil rights. Negroes were denied suffrage in the Michigan Constitution of 1835 and were generally segregated from white society.

²⁹David Katzman, "Black Slavery in Michigan," *American Studies* X(1) (1969): 61.

³⁰*Ibid.*, 62.

³¹*The Negro People in Michigan*, Addresses delivered at the sixty-fifth annual meeting of the State Historical Society of Michigan in the senate chamber, 16 November 1939, at Lansing, Michigan. 221-222.

Legally and traditionally, Michigan was a caste society.³² The majority of Michiganians from 1830 through 1870 remained opposed to extending black rights, especially the right to vote. Although many Michiganians were unfamiliar with the Negro race, their perceptions were molded by outside information.³³ The power of the press to disseminate views about the Southern Negro was an important element in the resistance to a virtually unknown entity.

Regardless of opposition, an active minority in Michigan continued to work to augment the Negroes' rights. From the mid-1830s until the Civil War the status quo was challenged. These individuals, primarily Republicans, in cooperation with individuals from across the country, argued for the expansion of freedmen's rights and the abolition of slavery. Their cumulative pressure influenced the president's decision to issue the Emancipation Proclamation.

³²Ronald Formisano, "The Edge of Caste: Colored Suffrage In Michigan, 1827-1861," *Michigan History* LVI(1) (1972): 19.

³³Streeter, *Political Parties in Michigan, 1837-1860*, 45,57.

CHAPTER III. EMANCIPATION

The Emancipation Proclamation

Whereas, on the 22nd day of September, in the year of our Lord 1862, a proclamation was issued by the President of the United States, containing, among other things, the following, to wit:

That on the 1st day of January, in the year of our Lord 1863, all persons held as slaves within any state or designated part of a state, the people whereof shall then be in rebellion against the United States, shall be then, thenceforward, and forever free; and the executive government of the United States, including the military and naval authority thereof, will recognize and maintain the freedom of such persons and will do no act or acts to repress such persons, or any of them, in any efforts they may make for their actual freedom.

That the executive will, on the 1st day of January aforesaid, by proclamation, designate the states and parts of states, if any, in which the people thereof, respectively, shall then be in rebellion against the United States; and the fact that any state or the people thereof shall on that day be in good faith represented in the Congress of the United States by members chosen thereto at elections wherein a majority of the qualified voters of such states shall have participated shall, in the absence of strong countervailing testimony, be deemed conclusive evidence that such state and the people thereof are not then in rebellion against the United States.

On 22 September 1862, following months of delicate political consideration, President Abraham Lincoln declared that on 1 January 1863 all slaves in states still in rebellion against the United States would be free. Pressured by the Radical Republicans and foreign observers to emancipate immediately and unconditionally, yet warned by conservative Republicans to move slowly on this explosive issue, Lincoln designed his

own solution—the Emancipation Proclamation. It was also the spark that ignited a series of three constitutional amendments that expanded black rights and changed the structure of society.

Party Platforms

The Democratic party platforms of 1860 did not articulate specific stands regarding emancipation, but reaffirmed the traditional democratic philosophies of limited government, sanctity of the Constitution and preservation of the Union. The platforms reflected established beliefs about behavior and the political process, putting the maintenance of individual and states' rights paramount. In general, the national platforms portrayed the Democrats as stable and unchanging, being for the most part a repetition of the 1856 version. The fact that there were two separate platforms, and an acknowledgement that a "difference of opinion exists" regarding the expansion of slavery in the territories, illustrated severe internal dissention.³⁴

Military and Legislative History

In his 4 March 1861 inaugural address, President Lincoln declared that he had no intention of interfering with slavery where it existed. Following Republican party policy, Lincoln's statements were designed to keep war from occurring and to pacify Northerners

³⁴Porter, *National Party Platforms, 1840-1956*, 30.

who opposed emancipation. But following the outbreak of hostilities, calls for emancipation grew from a murmur to a clamor as both military and congressional efforts for emancipation became more pronounced.

In May 1861, U. S. General Benjamin Butler, stationed at Fort Monroe, Virginia, refused to return fugitive slaves left behind Union lines by their fleeing masters. Butler's actions violated the existing 1850 Fugitive Slave Law. Contending that the law did not effect foreign countries, Butler claimed that Virginia was a foreign country and he had no legal obligation to return the slaves. Butler was only the first of several embarrassments for the Lincoln administration in dealing with the slavery question.³⁵

In the late summer of 1861, Congress took an important step toward eventual emancipation—on 6 August the First Confiscation Act was passed, providing for the emancipation of slaves employed in arms or labor against the Union. A halfway measure, the act allowed for the confiscation of all property used in aiding the rebellion. Although unclear on how the property would be seized, the act marked Congress's first official statement on emancipation.³⁶

A month after the passage of the confiscation law, U. S. General John Fremont, stationed in Missouri, declared martial law in the state.³⁷ Fremont's declaration included a proclamation freeing the slaves of rebel masters in Missouri. The proclamation exceeded

³⁵J. G. Randall and David Donald, *The Civil War and Reconstruction* (Lexington: D.C. Heath, 1969), 371.

³⁶*Ibid.*, 283, 372.

³⁷Carl Sandburg, *Abraham Lincoln* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1954), 262-3.

Fremont's authority and Lincoln responded swiftly when he learned of the action. Faced with angry Border states who threatened not to fight the South if Fremont's order stood, Lincoln ordered Fremont to recall or modify his edict. Fremont refused and Lincoln rescinded the proclamation. Eventually, Fremont was relieved of his command, but he had successfully established himself as an instant hero to abolitionists and Radical Republicans.³⁸

In May 1862 another military commander, U.S. General David Hunter, proclaimed the emancipation of all slaves in his department, which included Georgia, Florida and South Carolina. Still concerned about the reaction of the Border states, Lincoln countermanded the order ten days after it was issued, infuriating abolitionists with his action.

As Lincoln dealt with the immediate events involving the slavery question, Congress continued to take steps of its own. In April 1862 a bill that enjoyed Lincoln's support abolished slavery in the District of Columbia. The legislation provided one million dollars to compensate slave owners and allowed for the removal and colonization of the freed slaves. In June, Congress officially abolished slavery, without compensation, in the U.S. territories.³⁹

In July 1862 Congress passed the Second Confiscation Act, which included many of the same provisions later contained in the Emancipation Proclamation. The act liberated

³⁸Smith, *Trial by Fire*, 150.

³⁹John Hope Franklin, *The Emancipation Proclamation* (Garden City: Doubleday and Co., 1963), 19.

the slaves of those slaveholders who had committed treason or supported the rebellion, but failed to establish the procedures to implement that liberation. The act also appeared inoperable since it provided for the sale of property, not freed slaves.⁴⁰

Lincoln disapproved of the severity of the Second Confiscation Act, but did not veto the measure because of other elements in the act that he favored. It had become clear that a cautious attitude was inadequate. Lincoln had hoped that emancipation could be voluntary, gradual and compensated, but many in the North grew impatient. Suggestions of voluntary emancipation had met with doubt, protest and apprehension. Plans for compensated emancipation in the District of Columbia seemed destined to fail; Lincoln was continually under pressure by abolitionists to emancipate slaves immediately and completely.

On 13 July 1862, Lincoln told Secretary of the Navy Gideon Welles and Secretary of State William Seward that he believed a proclamation for emancipation was necessary to save the Union. Increased abolitionist pressure, and threat of foreign intervention on behalf of the South, convinced Lincoln of this necessity. On 22 July, Lincoln informed his cabinet of his intentions to issue a preliminary emancipation proclamation. Overcoming his caution and conservatism, Lincoln recognized that the increased radicalism of the "war mind," mounting numbers of slaves following the Northern armies and the increased antislavery sentiment abroad necessitated some kind of executive action.⁴¹

⁴⁰Randall and Donald, *The Civil War*, 372.

⁴¹*Ibid.*, 377.

Urging caution, Seward contended that such a proclamation would be better issued following a Northern military victory. The summer of 1862 had brought continued military setbacks in the eastern theater. General George McClellan's Peninsular campaign had failed and another Union army, commanded by General John Pope, had been decisively beaten in late August near Manassas, Virginia. In the western theater Northern armies had not experienced any recent victories. Heeding Seward's advice, Lincoln waited to issue his Emancipation Proclamation.

On 20 August 1862, Horace Greeley, editor of the *New York Tribune*, in an editorial entitled, "The Prayer of Twenty Millions," accused Lincoln of not upholding the Confiscation Act. Greeley demanded that all reachable slaves be freed and even suggested that Lincoln was being subservient to slave interests.⁴² Lincoln's response, published in Northern newspapers, contended that the destruction of slavery was not a primary Union war aim. The paramount objective, Lincoln insisted, was to save the Union, not destroy slavery. The president declared that if he could save the Union without destroying slavery he would do so.⁴³

As late as September, Lincoln continued to conceal his intention of issuing an emancipation proclamation. When visited by a Chicago religious group who stressed the need for immediate emancipation, Lincoln explained that such an action would result in

⁴²*New York Tribune*, 20 August 1862.

⁴³Roy P. Basler, ed., *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1953), 5:388.

the loss of fifty thousand loyal Union men in the Border states. Furthermore, such a proclamation would be inoperative in the states toward which it would be directed.⁴⁴

On 22 September, following the Northern victory at the bloody Battle of Antietam in western Maryland, Lincoln issued the preliminary Emancipation Proclamation. The proclamation declared that on 1 January 1863 all slaves in areas still in rebellion against the United States would be "forever free." To appease the Border states, the proclamation did not free slaves in areas under Union control. Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation "by virtue of the power" he enjoyed as commander-in-chief. This reasoning made emancipation a wartime emergency measure that Lincoln hoped would paralyze the Southern economy.⁴⁵

Reaction to the preliminary Emancipation Proclamation varied across the country. Abolitionist and Radical Republicans hailed the document, although disappointed at its subdued form. The Border states were outraged with the administration, while Democrats struggled with Lincoln's apparent turnabout.

Although concerned with the legality and effect of emancipation among the Border states or Northern conservatives, Lincoln, by the summer of 1862, believed that since compensation had failed and Congress continued to push legislation that neared emancipation, the Emancipation Proclamation had become a necessity. On 1 January 1863, the Emancipation Proclamation was formally issued.⁴⁶

⁴⁴Robert Harper, *Lincoln and the Press* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1951), 176.

⁴⁵Benjamin P. Thomas, *Abraham Lincoln* (New York: Modern Library, 1952), 333.

⁴⁶Randall and Donald, *The Civil War*, 379.

Newspaper Editorials

Prior to issuance of the Emancipation Proclamation, the Michigan Democratic press continually stressed the need to save and maintain the Union "as [it] was."⁴⁷ Most Michigan Democrats, although Lincoln's political opponents and divided among themselves, supported the war effort in early 1861. On 24 April 1861, Lewis Cass, who had resigned as President James Buchanan's secretary of state over the president's lenient policy toward the South, delivered an eloquent address on behalf of the Union. Cass concluded, "There is but one path for every man to travel, and that is broad and plain . . . he who is not for his country is against it. There is no neutral position to be occupied."⁴⁸

A war for the Union was a glorious cause to rally around, but Democrats did not believe an attack on slavery was an integral element of that cause. Early in the war, all the Democratic papers expressed irritation at the amount of time and effort afforded the slavery question. Democrats, reflecting traditional philosophy, maintained that slavery was a domestic state institution and should be left alone where it existed. Consequently, Democratic papers did not treat emancipation events with extensive coverage early in the

⁴⁷*Detroit Free Press*, 23 April 1863.

⁴⁸Milo M. Quaife and Sidney Glazer, *Michigan: From Primitive Wilderness to Industrial Commonwealth* (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1948), 215.

war. Prior to the First Confiscation Act, the Democratic press rarely responded to emancipation efforts.

The First Confiscation Act elicited minimal response, as did General Fremont's Missouri proclamation. The Democratic press offered no clear opinion. None of the papers condoned emancipation, but they appeared hesitant to condemn Fremont's action or the First Confiscation Act. The *Marshall Democratic Expounder* displayed the Democratic confusion when it declared, "Confiscation of property used for treasonable purposes is perfectly right, [but to] declare all property of rebels, confiscated, and all slaves of rebel masters free, whether for rebellious purposes or not, is going a step too far."⁴⁹ The Democratic press was eager to support the war effort, but feared the implications of these emancipation efforts.

The emancipation of slaves in the District of Columbia in the spring of 1862 received an increased, if varied, response. Some newspapers, like the *Kalamazoo Gazette*, merely published a short notice of the event giving no indication of their approval or disapproval of district emancipation. Other newspapers were more expressive. The *Jackson Eagle* believed emancipation was issued against the judgment of the president and accused district slaveholders of selling their best slaves to Southerners, which meant that federal dollars freed only "the old, the halt and the wheezy darkies."⁵⁰

⁴⁹*Marshall Democratic Expounder*, 19 September 1861.

⁵⁰*Kalamazoo Gazette*, 18 April 1862; *Jackson Eagle*, 26 April 1862.

The *Niles Democratic Republican* provided the most blunt Democratic criticism on district emancipation. The Berrien County weekly accused Congress of not only exceeding its power, but also of "gradually establishing slavery." The *Republican* noted:

The liberty of the press and of citizens has been arrested without due process of law. The rights of the people have been trampled upon. The abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia is a power which Congress has no right to exercise even if it has the power. Neither the people of Maryland or of the District have been consulted. The people of the District have to bow down to the yoke of oppression, without a voice, without a vote, give up their property for just such compensation as a dishonorable and disgraceful Congress dictate.⁵¹

Regardless of the content, the Democratic press had begun to respond to emancipation efforts.

By early summer of 1862 the Democratic response to emancipation was more visible and coherent. Hunter's emancipation attempt received a clear and similar response from most Michigan Democratic papers as they opposed emancipation as a war goal. Reasons for this response included the various Northern military setbacks in the spring of 1862 and a growing confidence on the part of the Democrats as Northern criticism of the Lincoln administration increased. All Democrats, however, were not yet willing to give up on Lincoln. Applauding Lincoln's rescission of Hunter's proclamation, the *Kalamazoo Gazette* hoped the president "had not surrendered to the extremists." The *Van Buren County Press* concurred that "our worthy president would now wipe out General Hunter and every amalgamation nigger-editor that lauded the treasonable manifesto."⁵²

⁵¹*Niles Democratic Republican*, 24 May 1862.

⁵²*Kalamazoo Gazette*, 23 May 1862; *Van Buren County Press*, 26 May 1862.

Democratic concurrence with Lincoln's actions did not, however, diminish Democratic criticism.

During the summer of 1862, the Michigan Democratic press rejected Republican charges that their apparent defense of Southern slavery meant they sympathized with the Confederacy. The Democratic position on slavery reflected a concern for maintaining constitutional rights—even for the Confederacy. Claiming they were not proslavery but supporters of the Constitution and state rights, the Democrats favored winning the war and restoring the Union, and did not want to do anything—like offending the Border states—that might jeopardize those results. Slavery, they maintained, was an acknowledged state institution with constitutional protection. They did not condone slavery, nor did they feel the federal government had the right to intervene with it where it existed. The Democrats continued to adhere to a philosophy of government that did not include the role of emancipator. Emancipation was a secondary goal to be considered only after the restoration of the Union. The *Kalamazoo Gazette* argued that "As a general rule, those who object to measures for the abolition of slavery of a summary and violent character, and in defence of any constitutional power of the Government over the subject, are no more the friends of slavery then those who clamor so loudly for its hasty extinction."⁵³ The Democrats repeatedly clarified their stand.

Regardless, the Democratic press found the issue of slavery constantly confronting them. Slavery was not the problem or cause of the war—it was merely a symptom. Slavery was no more the cause of the conflict than tea had precipitated the American

⁵³*Kalamazoo Gazette*, 30 May 1862.

Revolution. The *Kalamazoo Gazette* declared, "Revolution and great national disturbances, ordinarily arise from some violation of a valuable principle or right." Claiming that the violation of one of these principles by the federal government had forced the Southern states to leave the Union, the *Gazette* explained: "It must be borne in mind that this is not a war for Negro emancipation. . . . The question of slavery is merely an incidental one, effecting the mode of conducting the war."⁵⁴ The Democrats were appalled that the slavery issue had become so encompassing. The war for the Union was overshadowed by a minor social issue.

The Democratic press made it clear that the obsession with black emancipation not only received too much importance, its emphasis hindered the Northern war effort. These newspapers consistently maintained that the slavery question—like all other questions concerning the conflict—should be considered and judged within the constitutional authority of the government. Slavery was being considered differently, and more importantly, the Democrats believed it was a roadblock to the successful prosecution of the war. The *Marshall Democratic Expounder* noted that in Congress "bills for the benefit of Negroes are introduced in all conceivable shapes and when measures are pressed for the energetic prosecution of the war, a Negro bill is sure to stand in the way."⁵⁵ The Democrats continued to maintain that the problem of slavery would solve itself, if left alone and given time.

⁵⁴Ibid.

⁵⁵*Marshall Democratic Expounder*, 29 May 1982.

According to the Democratic press, there were two possible policies to suppress the rebellion. The first, which included emancipation efforts, was one of "extreme severity, of confiscation, of emancipation, fire, sword and the halter." The other alternative was a policy "of vigor in military operations till the military strength of the rebellion is entirely broken and subdued—but in all other respects of moderation, recognition of all rights secured by the Constitution on a return to loyalty, amnesty of the past and assurance of kindness for the future."⁵⁶ Unlike the Republicans, the Democrats wished for a return to an earlier state of being, with the Union and the Constitution unchanged.

The latter policy that the Democratic press advocated in mid-1862 included emancipation only when achieved through military operations and not through the usurpation of constitutional rights. This policy assured the Union's salvation and did not alter the Constitution. To the Democrats' delight, this appeared to be the policy that Lincoln was adopting.

The Democratic press thought little of the Second Confiscation Act and Lincoln's efforts at voluntary emancipation with compensation. Regarding the Confiscation Act, the *Jackson Eagle* argued that in the South, only two types of property held any real value—slave property and real estate. Slave property was unaffected by the confiscation law because, according to the *Marshall Democratic Expounder*, slaves could not be considered "property" under the current laws of the Union, and real estate was protected

⁵⁶*Kalamazoo Gazette*, 13 June 1862.

by the Constitution.⁵⁷ Voluntary emancipation elicited one common Democratic response: "Where is the money to come from?" The editors argued that the enormous debt created by compensation would be beyond the ability of the government to pay.⁵⁸

Horace Greeley's "Prayer of Twenty Millions" and Lincoln's response received widespread Democratic response. Except for a few comments that Greeley was "the great leader of disunion," who preferred to see the Union destroyed rather than saved if slavery could not be ended, the Democratic press spent little time discussing Greeley's dispositions. Instead, they devoted their attention to Lincoln's response.

The *Marshall Democratic Expounder* reprinted an editorial from the prominent *Chicago Times*, that thanked Lincoln for affirming the war was being fought to save the Union "as was," leaving slavery and abolition to take care of themselves. "The President has now united the whole people, sincerely, ardently, joyously, in his support, save the radical abolitionists," the *Expounder* added. The *Kalamazoo Gazette* noted that Lincoln's attitude "is precisely the attitude of all Democrats." Though cautious, the *Detroit Free Press* believed Lincoln's response indicated his intent to "cut loose from the radical [abolitionist] element."⁵⁹ By early September, the Democratic press was confident both Lincoln and the Democrats agreed that saving the Union came first; emancipation would have to wait. Understandably, the preliminary Emancipation Proclamation was an unexpected disappointment for the Democrats.

⁵⁷*Jackson Eagle*, 19 July 1862; *Marshall Democratic Expounder*, 24 April 1862.

⁵⁸*Detroit Free Press*, 23 July 1862.

⁵⁹*Ibid.*, 26 August 1862; *Marshall Democratic Expounder*, 28 August 1862; *Kalamazoo Gazette*, 28 August 1862.

The majority of the editors believed that Lincoln had been forced to issue the proclamation in response to constant pressure from the Radical Republicans. Reprinting Lincoln's September comments to a Chicago religious group on why freeing the slaves was impossible, the *Monroe Monitor* argued that these "are still [Lincoln's] real sentiments." The *Monitor* predicted that "as soon as the Radicals are satisfied that the proclamation is useless [Lincoln] will recall it." Believing Lincoln had succumbed to Radical Republican pressure helped the Democrats exonerate themselves for having supported—and even praised—Lincoln's longtime resistance to emancipation.⁶⁰

Reflecting traditional party principles, the Democrats contended that Lincoln lacked the constitutional power to issue such a proclamation over a state institution like slavery. The *Jackson Eagle* voiced this major Democratic complaint when it declared that the Emancipation Proclamation was "a useless pretention of power derived from a repudiated Constitution." The Three Rivers *Western Chronicle* described Lincoln's action as a "usurpation of authority reserved to the states or the people." The *Marshall Democratic Expounder* declared that the proclamation was "objectionable on the ground of constitutionality and expediency. Slavery is a domestic institution of the States over which the Executive has no control." The *Niles Democratic Republican* added that Lincoln's action was a "calamity" caused by his "utter disregard of the constitution."⁶¹

⁶⁰*Monroe Monitor*, 15 October, 1862. See also *Monroe Monitor*, 1 October 1862; *Marshall Democratic Expounder*, 2 October 1862; *East Saginaw Courier*, 30 September 1862; *Western Chronicle*, 1 October 1862; *Detroit Free Press*, 26 September 1862.

⁶¹*Jackson Eagle*, 27 September 1862; *Western Chronicle*, 1 October 1862; *Marshall Democratic Expounder*, 8 January 1863; *Niles Democratic Republican*, 10 January 1863.

Considering the Democratic party platform, such Democratic support for states' rights came as no surprise.

The Democrats argued as one voice about the lack of federal authority in the seceded states. The *Detroit Free Press* illustrated this belief by proclaiming the proclamation "lame and impotent," while the *Marshall Democratic Expounder* noted: "The President might just as well attempt to abolish the relation of husband and wife as of master and servant."⁶² If the seceded states no longer considered themselves a part of the Union, why then should they considered themselves bound by its laws?

The inoperable nature of the proclamation led Democrats to believe it would fall like a "dead letter" on the South. Though a few papers such as the *Jackson Eagle* believed the proclamation would help end discord in the North, the majority of the Democrats feared it might serve as the catalyst that would make the rebels fight even harder for independence. The *Monroe Monitor* professed, "Make this an Emancipation War and you unite the South." The *Detroit Free Press* added that in chasing the demon slavery, the "demon of disunion has been permitted to grow and strengthen."⁶³

Since the Democratic press had long contended that the only feasible or legal way to free Southern slaves was through Northern military success, its negative response was expected. The war did not need more words, but rather a more vigorous prosecution. The *East Saginaw Courier* argued, "A victory in arms, one which must be general,

⁶²*Detroit Free Press*, 4 January 1863; *Marshall Democratic Expounder*, 8 January 1863.

⁶³*Jackson Eagle*, 27 September 1862; *Monroe Monitor*, 24 September 1862; *Detroit Free Press*, 26 September 1862.

overwhelming and conclusive, is the only result which can bring about a satisfactory solution of our differences." The *Courier* concluded that before such a victory, any legislation or executive proclamation that delayed "practical" action was "unnecessary, unwise, and in the highest degree mischievous."⁶⁴ The Emancipation Proclamation was a useless waste of energy that should have been directed towards more effective measures of winning the war.

Foreshadowing increased economic and social concerns, the Democrats predicted that Lincoln's emancipation would lead freed slaves to migrate to Michigan, where, according to the *Kalamazoo Gazette*, they would "compete with, underbid, and drive out white labor . . . [and] swarm upon us like the locusts of Egypt, devouring the whole land."⁶⁵ Racist rhetoric increased in the Democratic press: such language and fears persisted throughout the decade.

As 1862 drew to a close, the Democratic press continued to oppose the Emancipation Proclamation. It asserted that emancipation did not enjoy widespread support in the North, citing the party's electoral gains in November as proof that the Emancipation Proclamation had not been well-received. When Lincoln returned to the well-worn hope of compensation and eventual emancipation in his December 1862 congressional address, the Democratic press contended that even the president recognized the Emancipation Proclamation was seriously flawed. The *Marshall Democratic*

⁶⁴*East Saginaw Courier*, 30 September 1862.

⁶⁵*Kalamazoo Gazette*, 31 October 1862. See also *Detroit Free Press*, 2 December 1862.

Expounder noted: "The most remarkable feature of the President's Negro policy is the conflict between the message and the emancipation proclamation. . . . They are incompatible with each other and the abandonment of one or the other becomes a necessity."⁶⁶

By the time the Emancipation Proclamation took effect on 1 January 1863, all of the Democratic newspapers opposed the measure. The *Jackson Eagle* stridently noted that "We supported the administration persistently until to do so longer seemed to us to be faithlessness to the Union, to the Constitution, and to the government. . . . We have no longer a President, but that the constitutional functions of this office are committed to a vile cabal, destitute of common honesty or a decent share of common sense, and whose demoniac fingers are even now tearing the vitals of American freedom."⁶⁷ Refocusing on their beliefs, the Democrats positioned the Republicans as traitors to the Constitution who "wilfully and deliberately violate that sacred instrument, trample in the dust the rights of States, and people alike."⁶⁸ The Democrats were beginning to regain their continuity.

By early 1863 the Democrats accepted the inevitable. The *Detroit Free Press* concluded that

We have already discussed the whole subject and have seen nothing to shake our conclusions that the President has no power under the Constitution to attempt the liberation of the slaves in the several states. Slavery has been decided, over and over, to be a local State institution,

⁶⁶*Marshall Democratic Expounder*, 11 December 1862.

⁶⁷*Jackson Eagle*, 17 January, 17 February 1863.

⁶⁸*Detroit Free Press*, 4 January 1863.

subject to the rules and regulations of State Constitutions and laws. The proclamation must fall a dead letter to the ground. It requires no army of 'thrice three hundred thousand' men to carry this proclamation into effect, and it is not difficult to prophesy [*sic*] that it will fall a dead letter all over the South. But we will not pursue this subject any further."⁶⁹

Concluding that the Emancipation Proclamation would be an inoperable failure, the press determined the issue closed. Unfortunately the Republicans also recognized the instability of the Emancipation Proclamation and turned to amending the Constitution to insure its success.

Summary

The Michigan Democratic press faced an acute dilemma during the early years of the Civil War. The 1860 presidential campaign left the Democrats disorganized, but when civil war broke out in April 1861, most Democrats were swept up in the enthusiasm of the war effort and the Lincoln administration's efforts to restore the Union. As it became clear that the war would not be won easily, the fragmented Democratic party began reasserting itself by expressing opposition to various matters, like the emancipation of Southern slaves. This placed the Democrats in a precarious situation.

The emancipation of Southern slaves illustrates the Democratic dilemma. The Democratic response to early emancipation issues revealed disunity. Prior to May 1862, the Michigan Democratic press either responded weakly or not at all to emancipation issues. The lack of a strong singular voice may be attributed to the Republicans'

⁶⁹*Detroit Free Press*, 31 January 1863.

dominance in Michigan, but it also reflects a party suffering from division and insecurity. The press feared their strident comments would appear treasonous, opening the minority party to criticism that might weaken its already fragile structure.

The Democratic response, although based on the same principles that had guided the party for years, displayed divergent opinions. The papers agreed on the method and manner of emancipation; it was the tone and conviction of their positions that varied. Many editors found themselves in the difficult position of supporting the administration while trying to maintain an opposition status. Most newspapers supported Lincoln when he represented a conservative and restricting influence on Radical Republican emancipation efforts. Until September 1862, Lincoln responded to emancipation events by expressing positions similar to those of the Democratic press. His continual arguments against immediate emancipation and his nullification of several efforts to free Southern slaves endeared him to the Democrats. Their criticism, however consistent, was tempered by this situation. It was not until after Lincoln issued the preliminary Emancipation Proclamation that the press developed a more cohesive and critical voice. With minor exceptions such as the *Jackson Eagle*, which harbored the hope that Lincoln would reconsider, the press accepted its minority status and opposition role.

This demonstration of solidarity did not eliminate the dilemma the Democrats faced. They were in a delicate position. In order to avoid the charge of traitor, the Democrats were continually forced to justify their criticism. They maintained that emancipation by proclamation was unconstitutional and inoperable, overlooking legally legitimate concerns as a result of military necessity. The newspapers spent considerable

time defending and justifying these concerns to their constituents and opponents. Their vocal criticism was diminished by their continual need for self-justification. Although struggling with their philosophy and the Republican administration, the issuance of the Emancipation Proclamation provided the Democrats with a common point from which to build.

The Michigan Democratic press failed to develop a coherent early response to emancipation. Not until a year after the war had begun did the Democrats overcome their fear of being labeled traitors and speak boldly on this controversial issue. Though the Democrats lost their fight to keep emancipation from becoming a goal of the Northern war effort, the emancipation issue helped Michigan Democrats reestablish some of the unity and respect they had earlier enjoyed. The Democrats recognized that the issue of slavery was by no means settled; their ability to adjust and rebuild would be tested in the years ahead.

CHAPTER IV. THE THIRTEENTH AMENDMENT

6 December 1865

SECTION 1. Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction.

SECTION 2. Congress shall have power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation.

The Thirteenth Amendment was the first constitutional amendment to address the federal government's jurisdiction over state law involving discriminatory issues.⁷⁰ It was the first in a series of amendments expanding constitutional power to ensure that the "inalienable rights of man" promised in the Constitution and embodied in the Emancipation Proclamation were guaranteed to all.

Ever since its introduction in North America in the seventeenth century, slavery had been a topic of debate. It was not until the years immediately preceding the Civil War that constitutional amendments were introduced concerning its abolition, protection or compromise. The secession of the Southern states in 1860-61 opened the way for a number of measures, including the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia and the Emancipation Proclamation.

⁷⁰Senate Committee on the Judiciary, *Amendments to the Constitution: a Brief Legislative History*, 25.

The Emancipation Proclamation, in conjunction with the confiscation acts and Northern military orders in the occupied South, freed thousands of slaves. The constitutionality of this measure, however, was unclear. Republicans desired to see emancipation become a condition of reconstruction and feared that measures taken during the war under military necessity would not be considered legal by the justice system during peacetime. Additionally, the Emancipation Proclamation did not address the problem of slaves within the unoccupied South and Border states, areas where the war measures did not have jurisdiction. By the end of 1863 Republicans concluded that a constitutional amendment was needed to guarantee the abolition of slavery in the United States. Such an amendment would assure that no state could continue or later reestablish the practice. Years of discourse, measures and laws addressing emancipation converged in the form of a Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution, first introduced in the House of Representatives by James M. Ashley of Ohio on 14 December 1863.

Party Platforms and Legislative History

The 1860 Democratic platforms failed to articulate the party's stand on the abolition issue, except in the territories. It was on this issue that the two platforms disagreed. The Breckinridge faction held that all citizens had the right to settle with their property, including slaves, in the territory. Instead, the Douglas Democrats relied on the wisdom of the Supreme Court to decide the constitutionality of slavery. Regardless, the entire party was confident that the Republicans' efforts would, if enacted by the

administration, be declared unconstitutional by the Court. Unlike the 1864 and 1868 platforms, neither of the 1860 platforms contained accusatory language or harsh criticism of the Republican party. In 1860 it appeared clear that the Democrats did not anticipate the monumental events of the next four years.

The congressional debate concerning the abolition of slavery was bitter, lengthy and largely devoid of lasting legal interest. Considerable haranguing was evidenced, primarily concerning the sins of slavery and its inherent evils.⁷¹ Numerous arguments were made supporting the abolition of slavery as a necessity to win the war and as a just punishment for the South. The Democratic arguments in Congress reflected the party's stated national platforms of 1860, specifically with reference to their position on states' rights and Supreme Court jurisdiction over the question of slavery in the territories. Although the Democrats reaffirmed their opposition to the institution, they were not willing to abolish it summarily. Their arguments turned toward legal questions, primarily those involving states' rights.

Democrats questioned whether congressional power to amend the Constitution extended to those issues historically under individual state jurisdiction.⁷² In conjunction Democrats pointed to the 1860 Republican national platform promising nonintervention with slavery in the states where it legally existed. Section 4 stated "That the maintenance inviolate of the rights of the states, and especially the right of each state to order and

⁷¹Alfred Avins, *The Reconstruction Amendments Debates* (Richmond: Virginia Commission on Constitutional Government, 1967), 70-86.

⁷²*Congressional Globe*, 38th Cong., 1st sess., 2941.

control its own domestic institution according to its own judgment exclusively, is essential to that balance of powers on which the perfection and endurance of our political fabric depends."⁷³ Considering that President Lincoln had been elected based on this platform, it was only legal and fair, according to the Democrats, that the platform promises be honored.

Unfortunately, the Democrats suffered from a moral conflict of their own: how to balance slavery and states' rights. Although opponents of slavery, the Democrats were staunch supporters of a state's right to decide domestic issues. The constitutional guarantee of states' rights necessarily prevailed over the Democratic abhorance of enslavement. Fortunately for the Democrats, they believed that slavery was a doomed institution and if left alone would disappear, avoiding a conflict between slavery and states' rights. These arguments opened the Democrats to continual Republican accusations as proslavery Southern sympathizers, placing the Democrats in an awkward position.

A secondary argument the Democrats supported concerned the detrimental effects of abolition versus the gradual elimination of slavery. Democrats feared that a constitutional amendment would continue to do what they accused the Emancipation Proclamation of doing: fuel Southern resistance, deny opportunities for peace negotiation and prolong the war. Additionally, the Democrats were concerned with the detrimental and unnecessary impact abolition would have on the Southern economy and future restoration. Gradual elimination—allowing slavery to perish as a victim of war—they argued, was the route of least resistance and would achieve the same results without

⁷³Porter, *National Party Platforms*, 1840-1956, 32.

sacrificing the Constitution or the Union. These Democratic arguments were serious considerations within the political arena.

The eventual balloting for the Thirteenth Amendment met with strong resistance. Elected in 1862, the Thirty-eighth Congress witnessed an increase in the number of Democratic members. The first vote in the House of Representatives failed to obtain a two-thirds majority. Only after Lincoln's reelection in 1864, which also resulted in an increase in House Republican members, did a two-third majority exist to support the Thirteenth Amendment. Yet passage was neither assured, nor easy.⁷⁴ Eventually, the shift of a few Northern Democrats made the Thirteenth Amendment possible.⁷⁵ This shift resulted after considerable negotiations and lobbying by conservative Republicans, as well as a hesitant belief on the behalf of a few legitimist Northern Democrats that for the party's sake it was best to acknowledge the inevitable. Democratic Congressman Samuel Cox supported the Thirteenth Amendment "with a view to the upbuilding of the party he cherished, to drive this question, which had become abstract by the death of slavery through powder and ball, from the political arena."⁷⁶

⁷⁴ "Bloc and Party in the United States Senate, 1861-1863," *Civil War History* 13 (Sept. 1967): 221-41.

⁷⁵ Avins, *The Reconstruction Amendments Debates*, v.

⁷⁶ Silbey, *A Respectable Minority*, 183.

Newspaper Editorials

It is understandable—considering the lengthy debate in Congress and the stated Democratic platform—that the same arguments would be carried out in the party press. As in the congressional debates, slavery had ceased to be the issue. Democratic opponents of the Thirteenth Amendment focused their editorials on constitutional issues and went on the offensive.

Congressional Arguments

The Michigan Democratic press reflected the major arguments presented in the Congressional debates and stated party platform policies. The *Detroit Free Press* espoused the major arguments forwarded in Congress as its two primary objections to the proposed amendments. First there was "no power in the people to make such an amendment," and second, it was "inexpedient at this present moment to undertake to alter or change the Constitution."⁷⁷ All the Michigan Democratic papers were unified and presented similar objections to the Thirteenth Amendment. This continuity revealed a strong party heritage regardless of existing divisiveness and reflected the strong belief the Democrats possessed for their traditional view of government and the Constitution. There continued to be a growing recognition of the Republican party's strength and the beginning of a strong Democratic opposition.

⁷⁷*Detroit Free Press*, 21 January 1865.

The press portrayed a Democratic party appalled by a blatant violation of the Constitution. Considerable concern was expressed for the Republican disregard of that most sacred document and the eager, uncaring desire to alter it. Appealing to Democrats and conservative Republicans, the *Marshall Democratic Expounder* asked: "What then is the duty of conservative men? Should they stand idly by and see the rich heritage of constitutional and civil liberty swept away at a blow? For these objects of abolitionism cannot be accomplished without a total disruption the Constitution and of the whole frame work of society."⁷⁸ The Thirteenth Amendment was a violation of states' rights guaranteed in the Constitution and, perhaps more frightening, represented a broadening of the federal government's powers. According to the *Detroit Free Press*, the situation was simple: "Union with peace if possible, but Union and the constitution, at all hazards"⁷⁹

The Democratic press predicted a dire future if the Republican measures were adopted. A violation of the Constitution, such as the Thirteenth Amendment represented, giving the federal government responsibility for civil liberties that traditionally belonged to the states, would destroy the fabric of the federal government. It would subvert the entire constitutional system and lead to a future of centralized control and corruption.⁸⁰ This dark and frightening future had little to do with slavery, but with the question of the

⁷⁸*Marshall Democratic Expounder*, 23 July 1863.

⁷⁹*Detroit Free Press*, 6 September 1864.

⁸⁰*Marshall Democratic Expounder*, 23 July 1863, and *Western Chronicle*, 7 September 1862.

power that the ability of the Republicans to alter the Constitution represented to the Democrats.

Historically champions of local and state liberties, the Democrats preferred to see slavery die as it had in the free states by the enforced action of the states, not by the usurpation of states' rights. The ability of the Republicans to alter the Constitution would destroy slavery, but in the opinion of the Democrats, it would also threaten to destroy freedom. In the words of the *Marshall Democratic Expounder*, the American Revolution was fought for "nationality and state sovereignty . . . the right of the States to form, regulate and control their domestic institutions was unequivocally recognized while the national government was prevented from assuming despotic power over the citizen by the strong safeguards of a written constitution."⁸¹ The Democrats wondered what safeguards were left, if the party in power could alter the Constitution, ignoring the will of the people. They asked, what if it were decided that there should be one state religion and all must convert to it? Some Democrats argued that that possibility was not far behind. The abolitionists had "denounced the constitution [as] a league with death and a covenant with hell."⁸² The continuity of these fears among the papers reflected a continuous concern for the party's position and a strength and unity that was questionable in reality.

The second argument, that slavery should be allowed to die gradually, was also addressed in the Democratic press. The Democrats did not see the desperate need to undertake such a questionable and revolutionary step that required altering the

⁸¹*Marshall Democratic Expounder*, 23 July 1863.

⁸²*Jackson Eagle*, 18 July 1863.

Constitution. Such an action was "inexpedient," declared the *Detroit Free Press*.⁸³ Although it was clear to the Democrats that the institution of slavery was doomed, its hesitancy toward supporting the Thirteenth Amendment was not based on a moral objection to abolition as some Republicans implied. The editors objected to the methods of abolition. The Democrats, as detailed by the *East Saginaw Courier*, preferred to "have seen slavery die . . . by the enforced action of the States, as it has died in the now free States, and not by the rough usages of war, which destroys the slave with slavery, not by the usurpations upon the rights of the States and the people, which destroy both freedom and slavery, but by the sovereign intelligence of the people of the States, who alone are responsible for the existence of their own domestic institutions."⁸⁴

Additional Arguments

Beyond the stated party platforms, the Michigan Democratic newspapers also expressed more personal concerns for their opposition to the Thirteenth Amendment. Drawing on a strong belief in the sanctity of the Constitution, the Democrats spoke of economic and moral issues. Reflecting their strong tradition of advocating states' rights, the Democrats continued to display empathy for the South.⁸⁵ The Democratic concern for the Southern economy demonstrated a compassionate interest in returning as quickly

⁸³*Detroit Free Press*, 21 January 1865.

⁸⁴*East Saginaw Courier*, 6 April 1863.

⁸⁵*Marshall Democratic Expounder*, 13 August 1863.

as possible to a restored Union.⁸⁶ This union did not include thousands of newly freed Negroes, unable to take care of themselves in broken and barren a South, with little or no economic vibrancy. According to the *Detroit Free Press*, "No man with the proper feelings, will desire to see slavery abolished in 1865, if its effect will be not only to destroy four millions of human beings, but to make the South for years a barren waste, and the people there a burden, when it could be effectually done gradually without producing any of the evils, any of the sufferings or calamities, soon to follow its sudden overthrow, before any system to take its place can be devised."⁸⁷ The Democrats warned that the Thirteenth Amendment would produce more problems than it would solve and unnecessarily subject the Negro and the South to misery and hardship.

The inconsistency of Republican economic efforts concerning the Negro and the South was criticized harshly. The Democrats argued that irrefutable evidence of Negro suffering went unaddressed by the Republicans, whose concern was not for the black man. Their concern was for their own engrandizement and whatever political advantages the Negro could help them attain. Why else, argued the *Detroit Free Press*, would the Republican party consider such an issue as suffrage, for a people who could not even feed themselves?⁸⁸

The Democrats recognized that the Thirteenth Amendment would lead to the further expansion of Negro rights in the future. The Democrats believed that not all slaves

⁸⁶*Jackson Eagle*, 27 February 1864.

⁸⁷*Detroit Free Press*, 21 January 1865.

⁸⁸*Detroit Free Press*, 9 November 1865.

were prepared for the freedom that was being offered to them. In many respects, the freedom guaranteed by the Thirteenth Amendment was nothing more than a physical condition that included few benefits to the Negro population. "Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction."⁸⁹ Slavery no longer existed, but there were guarantees beyond that fact.

The freedom offered by the Thirteenth Amendment was an abstract freedom that, according to the *Monroe Monitor*, changed the status of the freed Negro to little more than that of a "degraded, helpless class of people."⁹⁰ The *East Saginaw Courier* queried, "What shall we do with them?"⁹¹ Such a freedom prompted the *Courier* to proclaim that "we had better[,] in mercy to them, decree that as fast as emancipated they be shot." ⁹² The Democratic concern for the Negroes' well-being stemmed from their fear of the further expansion of black rights. They clearly assumed that the Thirteenth Amendment would guarantee to the Negro a minimum of rights, legal equality and protection of life and property.⁹³ Although Republicans claimed the Thirteenth Amendment as "the final

⁸⁹Senate Committee on the Judiciary, *Amendments to the Constitution: A Brief Legislative History*, 25. Section 1. of the Thirteenth Amendment.

⁹⁰*Monroe Monitor*, 4 February 1863.

⁹¹*East Saginaw Courier*, 24 May 1865.

⁹²*Ibid.*

⁹³Jacobus tenBroek, *Equal Under the Law* (New York: Collier, 1965), 762.

step" and the "consummation of abolitionism," Democrats feared that this was only the beginning. They were soon proven correct.⁹⁴

The Democrats anticipated that the Republicans would not be satisfied with the Thirteenth Amendment. The Republicans would continue to seek political and social equality for the Negro, leading the country into a situation without precedent. According to the Democrats, no superior race had ever successfully elevated an inferior race to its level. The inferior race had been either exterminated or the superior race sank.⁹⁵

What disturbed the Democrats most, and what was most insistent in the Democratic press, was the progression of the war and the reasons for the expansion of Negro rights. The Democrats were not as concerned about the war's continuance, as about the reasons for its continuance.⁹⁶ The concerns over constitutional integrity and power, although well-founded and historically documented, also reflected a natural response to an adversary. In short, the Democrats were fighting a political battle against what they perceived to be a party obsessed with power and blind to the best interests of both white and black populations. Certainly, the press portrayed the political scene and Republican party in an extreme fashion. "Demagogues" and "vile cabal" are common phrases when referring to the Republican administration.⁹⁷ Even the Democrats' humanitarian concern for the Southern economy and the fate of the Negro after emancipation were motivated

⁹⁴*Niles Democratic Republican*, 12 March 1864.

⁹⁵*Detroit Free Press*, 3 February 1865.

⁹⁶Silbey, *A Respectable Minority*, 97.

⁹⁷*Detroit Free Press*, 4 January 1863 and *East Saginaw Courier*, 2 March 1863.

in part by political interests and simple Negrophobia. These arguments reflected a larger political battle, as the Democrats adjusted to the role of the opposition.

Ever since the preliminary Emancipation Proclamation, Democrats had attacked the administration's lack of interest in preserving the Union. As evidenced in earlier editorials, the Democrats had lost faith in Lincoln, considering him a hapless victim of the power-hungry Radical Republicans. "They [the Radical Republicans] praise him [Lincoln], kick him, spit on him, coax him, and beckon him. . . . They keep constantly ahead of him. . . . But the great fact, after all, is, that he follows them."⁹⁸

Consequently, Lincoln was charged with waging a war not to preserve the Union but to expand Negro rights. According to the *Monroe Monitor*, "The great question is how to perpetuate the laws and proclamations relating to slavery; and the questions of peace and Union he [the president] makes wholly secondary to that . . . the legislation relating to the Negro is that which alone he labors to make effective."⁹⁹ The Thirteenth Amendment was one more measure—the most frightening to date—in the progression of expansion. The detrimental effects of extending such privileges were well-outlined in the press during the controversy over the Emancipation Proclamation and were repeated throughout the debate over the Thirteenth Amendment. According to the editors, such measures would only strengthen the bond of Southern resistance and unite the South in its aggression toward the North, promoting war and curtailing the possibility of peace negotiations.

⁹⁸*Western Chronicle*, 11 March 1863.

⁹⁹*Monroe Monitor*, 30 December 1863.

Democrats, as well as numerous non-Democratic Northerners, stumbled over the Radical Republicans' concern for Negro equality. According to the *Marshall Democratic Expounder*, the Radical Republicans did "not care a straw for the Union" and wished that the war would "not cease nor the Union be restored until slavery is abolished in all the states."¹⁰⁰ Although sympathy for the Negro situation existed and was widespread, Negrophobia was a prominent fact in the North, and equality and the presumed rights provided by the Thirteenth Amendment were not the goals of most Northerners. The press portrayed the Radical Republicans' push for Negro rights as a blatant bid for power. Rather than being the selfless concerned champions of an abused race, Republicans were selfishly after their own engrandizement, placing themselves in a power position they hoped the Democrats could not assail. The *Niles Democratic Republican* summarized the situation in this way: "These abolition leaders have been more intent on serving themselves and their party, than on saving the Union . . . intent only on their own and their party's aggrandizement."¹⁰¹

The Democratic editors believed that the Republicans' concern for the fate of the Negro went no further than the power it would render that party. The *Detroit Free Press* clearly vocalized the Democratic position when it declared: "Already there are indications that they will not rest satisfied with what has been done. They have been and are seeking social and political equality for this race. . . . Was the present ascendant party sure that

¹⁰⁰*Marshall Democratic Expounder*, 23 July 1863 and *Monroe Monitor*, 30 December 1863.

¹⁰¹*Niles Democratic Republican*, 24 January 1863.

they could retain their administration of affairs, they would want no amendments: they would do what they chose, regardless of the Constitution."¹⁰² The Democrats were certain that the Republicans were acting for their own power and position, and had disregarded the Negroes and their interests. The Democrats' accusations were intended not only to cause disillusionment among conservative Republicans and blacks alike, but also to reaffirm Democratic philosophies as reasonable and humane.

The Democratic press blatantly echoed the prevailing belief in the inequality of the races. There was no shame or embarrassment connected to the recognition of white supremacy and Negrophobia. All legal and theoretical discourse aside, the Democrats were proud of their white heritage and did not wish to have Negroes as social and political equals. There was a real fear that the Negro represented a threat to the old order and the future peace and prosperity of the white race. This was not so much a matter of prejudice as of simple natural law.¹⁰³ According to the *Detroit Free Press*, "social distinctions do exist and must forever . . . nature itself creates these distinctions for the wisest of purposes, and no human laws can ever remove them."¹⁰⁴ If the Republicans succeeded in winning social and political rights for the Negro, the *Detroit Free Press* saw "absolutely no hope for him [the Negro] but a lingering death more terrible than that of the poor Indian. It is not within the power of human legislation to place the slave upon an equality with the whites in this country . . . for the Anglo Saxon race will never place

¹⁰²*Detroit Free Press*, 3 February 1865, and 1 August 1865.

¹⁰³Gary Nash, and Richard Weiss, *The Great Fear* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1970), 100.

¹⁰⁴*Detroit Free Press*, 8 March 1865.

itself on an equality with the Negro race in this country."¹⁰⁵ The Democrats refused to acknowledge that the social structure was open to change.

Summary

The 1860 Democratic platforms were vague and simplistic. The Democratic congressional arguments concerning the Thirteenth Amendment were lengthy and centered on propriety and law. The Democratic press was more direct and personal. There was considerable continuity among the newspapers researched. The preceding issues of states rights and gradual emancipation were common to all. Only one or two random editorials dealt with unique issues; these involved the consideration of immigrant rights in relation to Negro rights and the issue of suffrage. The *Detroit Free Press* was the only paper that continually discussed the issue of suffrage. It was obvious, at least to that Democratic leader, that the real issue was yet to come. In fact the majority of the editorials in the Michigan Democratic press that dealt with the Thirteenth Amendment were not in the Democratic leader, the *Detroit Free Press*. Conversely, the number of suffrage-related editorials in other papers was limited. The *Detroit Free Press* had already moved ahead to the suffrage issue, leaving the other papers to fight the current battle. As the largest influential daily newspaper in Michigan, the *Detroit Free Press* was more politically astute and recognized that the battle over the Thirteenth Amendment was not the real issue. The Democrats could not halt the abolition of slavery. But as the *Detroit Free*

¹⁰⁵*Detroit Free Press*, 4 February 1865.

Press recognized, the issue of black suffrage was in the future and the Democrats knew the Republican party had the power to secure it.

The Democratic press argued the historical grounds of constitutional heritage and states' rights. And although strongly rooted in the old Jacksonian ideology, the press was also well-aware of the adversary it faced and the need to do battle wherever possible. Arguments were grounded on three fundamental concerns: the deep-rooted belief in the system of government, the nature of the Constitution and the fear of some kind of revolution. The consistency of these arguments portrayed a party confident in tradition and self, as stated by the Democratic platform. It also reflected a party that—despite internal problems—was successfully developing a cohesive communication network to provide stability to deliver to its constituency the basic party philosophies. The variations and differing responses concerning the Emancipation Proclamation were no longer evident. This increasingly cohesive press not only reflected a renewed party unity, but also the beginnings of an effective political opposition.

By the time the Thirteenth Amendment was ratified and Secretary of State Seward had issued the Certificate of Adoption on 18 December 1865, the Democrats had accepted its inevitable outcome. In reality, they accepted much of the Thirteenth Amendment on moral grounds but feared the future it foretold. The press, however, accepted the outcome without bitterness or harsh criticism such as that displayed after the issuance of the Emancipation Proclamation. This was a result of a Democratic acknowledgement that the Thirteenth Amendment was inevitable. As the *Detroit Free Press* stated: "While we could have wished that the end might have been more judiciously accomplished, we accept it

with gratification only modified by anxiety from its suddenness, and the—we hope, temporary—distress and difficulty it may create."¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁶*Detroit Free Press*, 24 December 1865.

CHAPTER V. THE FOURTEENTH AMENDMENT

July 28, 1868

SECTION 1. All persons born or naturalized in the United States and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside. No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.

SECTION 2. Representatives shall be apportioned among the several States according to their respective numbers, counting the whole number of persons in each State excluding Indians not taxed. But when the right to vote at any election for the choice of electors for President and Vice President of the United States, Representatives in Congress, the Executive and Judicial officers of a State, or the members of the Legislature thereof, is denied to any of the male inhabitants of such State, being twenty-one years of age, and citizens of the United States, or in any way abridged, except for participation in rebellion, or other crime, the basis of representation therein shall be reduced in the proportion which the number of such male citizens shall bear to the whole number of male citizens twenty-one years of age in such State.

SECTION 3. No person shall be a Senator or Representative in Congress, or elector of President and Vice President, or hold any office, civil or military, under the United States, or under any State, who having previously taken an oath, as a member of Congress, or as an officer of the United States, or as a member of any State legislature, or as an executive or judicial officer of any State, to support the Constitution of the United States, shall have engaged in insurrection or rebellion against the same, or given aid or comfort to the enemies thereof. But Congress may by vote of two-thirds of each House, remove such disability.

SECTION 4. The validity of the public debt of the United States, authorized by law, including debts incurred for payment of pensions and bounties for services in suppressing insurrection or rebellion, shall not be questioned. But neither the United States nor any State shall assume or pay debt or obligation incurred in aid of insurrection or rebellion against the United States, or any claim for the loss or emancipation of any slave; but all such debts, obligations and claims shall be held illegal and void.

SECTION 5. The Congress shall have power to enforce, by appropriate legislation, the provisions of this article.

The end of 1865 brought the end of slavery. The previous war years had been hard for the Democrats. The lack of electoral support and cohesiveness had cost them considerable political clout. They had been unable to control the Border states and had lost Southern Democratic votes. In addition, they had been unable to count on a large number of conservative and Northern Democratic members, whose support was conditional due to wartime considerations and pressures. These were measures that the Democratic party did not condone, yet conservatives felt were necessary for the war effort.¹⁰⁷ With the ratification of the Thirteenth Amendment and the end of the war, the Democrats had numerous reasons to believe that they would once again have the opportunity to rebuild and recover control of the federal government.

Legislative History

By December 1865 numerous changes had occurred that led to Democratic optimism. The Confederacy had surrendered, President Abraham Lincoln had been assassinated and Andrew Johnson, a former Democrat, was now the president of the United States. This opened the possibility that the Democratic ranks would swell with restored Southerners, returning soldiers, and conservatives who, now that war was no longer a concern, would be offended by the aggressive Radical Republican reconstruction

¹⁰⁷Silbey, *A Respectable Minority*, 177.

policies.¹⁰⁸ Unfortunately for the Democrats, such expectations were too simplistic and did not equate with political success.

When Congress convened in December 1865 it was dominated by a coalition of pro-civil rights, anti-Southern Radical Republicans. These men were at constant odds with not only the Democratic party, but with President Johnson and his reconstruction policies. Termed blood-thirsty and vengeful by their Democratic counterparts, the Radical Republicans criticized Johnson for not adequately punishing former Confederates. Johnson was also attacked for not taking the necessary steps to ensure the civil rights for the recently freed Southern slaves. Most importantly, the Radicals opposed allowing the Southern states to resume their congressional status; such an action would allow Southerners to join the Democrats and block Republican reconstruction.

The Republican goals of ensuring the civil rights of Freedmen and controlling Southern readmission, were addressed as early as 1863 when two bills were reported to the Senate by Lyman Trumbull of Illinois, chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee. These two bills were important influences on framing the Fourteenth Amendment and dealt with the issues that were incorporated into the amendment.

The first of the two bills sought to enlarge the power of the Freedmen's Bureau, an agency created during the war to deal with the numerous newly freed slaves who had come North into the Union lines. The bureau's expansion would grant military protection of civil rights to the former slaves. Union troops would be stationed in the South to guarantee these rights. The concern for the expansion of this bureau and civil rights

¹⁰⁸Ibid., 117.

intensified after the war in response to the continued existence of black codes in Southern states. These codes denied former slaves certain legal rights, including the right to sue in court, to own real or personal property or to enjoy the same legal protection as white persons. Freedmen also were subject to punishments and offenses to which white persons were not.¹⁰⁹ According to Republican interpretation, the passage of the Thirteenth Amendment and the abolition of slavery empowered Congress to strike down these state legislations that denied rights to former slaves and essentially kept the Negro unemancipated.

The Civil Rights Bill, the second of the two bills, was even more closely tied to the elimination of black codes. Fashioned to nullify the famous Dred Scott decision and to eliminate black codes, the bill defined Negroes as United States citizens, guaranteeing their rights to own or rent property, to make and enforce contracts, and to have access to the courts and equal benefit of all laws and proceedings for the security of person and property.¹¹⁰ The bill did not, however, enfranchise Negroes, enable them to sit on juries or desegregate schools and public accommodations.¹¹¹ Both the Freedmen's Bureau Bill and the Civil Rights Bill passed through Congress with near unanimous Republican support and a near total lack of Democratic support. In the case of the Civil Rights Bill, "not one Democratic vote had been cast for the bill in either house."¹¹²

¹⁰⁹Avins, *The Reconstruction Amendments Debates*, vi.

¹¹⁰James McPherson, *Ordeal by Fire* (New York: Knopf, 1982), 515.

¹¹¹Ibid.

¹¹²Cox and Cox, *Politics, Principle & Prejudice, 1865-1866: Dilemma of Reconstruction America*, 195.

Republicans believed these measures conformed to traditional beliefs, including state responsibility for law enforcement, and consequently expected President Johnson to sign the bills. When he vetoed both measures, Republicans were shocked and the Democrats elated. The president's primary argument was that Congress possessed no power to pass civil rights legislation, which he interpreted as an infringement of states' rights.¹¹³ The argument was similar to the position taken by the Democrats, who argued against the bill on the familiar constitutional grounds of states' rights. They reasoned that while slavery was abolished, the rights of states to discriminate with regard to civil rights still existed. Congress overrode President Johnson's veto of the Civil Rights Bill and the Freedmen's Bureau Bill on 9 April and 3 July 1866. Since the issue of constitutionality remained a question with the Civil Rights and Freedmen's Bureau Bills, Radical Republicans now proposed a constitutional amendment to ensure the civil rights of the Freedmen.

The president's veto of the Civil Rights Bill was the final tear in the fabric connecting Johnson to the Radical Republicans; from that point on they dismissed serious efforts to compromise their measures. Desiring to see that the fruits of victory were immune to further presidential veto or a changing political majority, the Radicals proposed a constitutional amendment providing a guarantee of the rights and liberties of

¹¹³Ibid., 198.

the freedmen, guarding against a resurgence of "neo-Confederate" power and establishing the sanctity of the national debt.¹¹⁴

As early as December 1865, a Joint Committee on Reconstruction was established to consider the method and manner of reconstructing the Southern states. Specifically, they were to "inquire into the condition of the States which formed the so-called Confederate States of America."¹¹⁵ The committee was composed of nine representatives and six senators, including several Radical Republicans.¹¹⁶ During the first month of their inquiry, Congressmen Thaddeus Stevens of Pennsylvania and John Bingham of Ohio proposed amendments outlining legal equality and disallowing discrimination on the basis of race or color. Both proposals were considered in the Joint Committee on Reconstruction. The House and Senate chose to await the committee report and did not act on either Stevens's or Bingham's proposals. When the committee did report on 30 April 1866, the essence of Bingham's proposal had been incorporated into House Joint Resolution 127, a five-part comprehensive constitutional amendment. After considerable debate in the House and Senate, the resolution was passed by the Senate and sent back to the House, where it was passed on 13 June 1866.

¹¹⁴Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution 1863-1877* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988), 516.

¹¹⁵*Congressional Globe*, 39th Cong., 1st sess., 1866, 6.

¹¹⁶Joseph B. James, *The Framing of the Fourteenth Amendment* (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1956), 37.

Party Platform

The 1864 Democratic party platform stressed two basic issues, neither new. First, the Democrats stressed their "unswerving fidelity to the Union under the constitution as the only solid foundation of our strength, security, and happiness as a people,"¹¹⁷ a dedication that the Democrats believed the Republicans did not display. Upset by their failure to impact on the Thirteenth Amendment and appalled by the Republicans' continuing efforts to legislate on behalf of the Negro, the Democrats questioned their intentions and stated these concerns for the Constitution within their platform.

Under the pretense of a military necessity of war-power higher than the Constitution, the Constitution itself has been disregarded in every part, and public liberty and private right alike trodden down, and the material prosperity of the country essentially impaired, justice, humanity, liberty, and the public welfare demand that immediate efforts be made for a cessation of hostilities, with a view of an ultimate convention of the States, or other peaceable means, to the end that, at the earliest practicable moment, peace may be restored on the basis of the Federal Union of the States.¹¹⁸

Constitutional legality continued to a major discussion point. Secondly, the Democrats restated their concern for states' rights. Specifically in their platform they declared:

That the aim and object of the Democratic party is to preserve the Federal Union and the rights of the States unimpaired, and they hereby declare that they consider that the administrative usurpation of extraordinary and dangerous powers not granted by the Constitution.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁷Porter and Johnson, *National Party Platforms*, 1840-1956, 34.

¹¹⁸Ibid.

¹¹⁹Ibid.

The Democrats refused to acknowledge the legitimacy of the Radical Republican measures and meant to continue to oppose such efforts that violated their belief in the Constitution and states' rights.

In Congress the expansion of the Freeman's Bureau and the creation of the Civil Rights Act, as well as the proposed Fourteenth Amendment, were consistently argued by Democrats as unconstitutional, unjust and unnecessary infringements on states' rights. These basic arguments reflected the national party stance—the same stance that had been expressed in Congress concerning the Thirteenth Amendment. The difference between the Thirteenth and the Fourteenth amendments was simply that the Thirteenth was less controversial. Even though Democrats fought against its passage (only a very few crossed over to vote in its favor), the Thirteenth Amendment was accepted after its ratification as an unavoidable constitutional sanction of the inevitable end of slavery.¹²⁰ What the Democrats did not foresee was that the Republicans would interpret section 2 of the Thirteenth Amendment as empowering Congress to enact protective legislation such as the expansion of the Freedman's Bureau, the Civil Rights Act, and ultimately, the Fourteenth Amendment. This was not constitutionally sanctioned power and consequently, according to the Democrats, not legitimate. If the Democrats had interpreted section 2 as granting such power, they would never have allowed the Thirteenth Amendment to be ratified. The Democrats argued in Congress that reconstruction was not necessarily a congressional function, especially when Southern states were exempt.

¹²⁰Rembert W. Patrick, *The Reconstruction of the Nation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), 132.

These familiar issues of constitutionality and states' rights were the Democrats' primary arguments and they forwarded them in Congress in many shades and forms. However, proper, legal and ideological issues of constitutional empowerment and states' rights were questions the Republicans evaded. Their chief emphasis was on the right and necessity for Congress to design reconstruction—claiming that Southern whites were unrepentant and bent on oppressing freedmen and white unionists, eager for representation to Congress so they could regain the power they had lost.¹²¹ A good portion of the congressional debates centered on the Republicans who argued among themselves, particularly with regard to the issues of suffrage and readmittance of the Southern states into the Union.

Outnumbered, the Democrats offered only token resistance against the Republican majority. Consequently much of their effort focused on preventing an alliance between moderate and Radical Republicans. Democrats voted with one Republican faction on one vote and switched for the next, tactics intended to scuttle Republican legislation.¹²² In retrospect, it only led to harsher legislation. Radical Republicans were ultimately disappointed with the Fourteenth Amendment, as it did not accomplish Negro suffrage. It was a moderate amendment in comparison to the one desired by such Radical Republicans as Thaddeus Stevens and Charles Sumner. This fact spurred the eventual push for what became the Fifteenth Amendment.

¹²¹William Dunning, *Reconstruction, Political and Economic 1865-1877* (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), 66.

¹²²Robert Cruden, *The Negro in Reconstruction* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1969), 31.

Newspaper Editorials

Reflecting Democratic platform concerns, the Democratic press provided a rainbow of reasons supporting the basic constitutional and states' rights issues. In addition to these traditional concerns the Democrats also expressed doubts concerning the mechanics of the amendment. Unlike the Thirteenth Amendment's objective of abolition, the Fourteenth Amendment's objectives were less clear and more questionable. The Democrats found nothing about the Fourteenth Amendment that was warranted.

Many of the arguments forwarded in the Democratic editorials were basic continuations of the arguments forwarded during the debates over the Thirteenth Amendment. The continuity reflected the consistency evident in the party platform and congressional arguments, centering on constitutionality and states' rights. The Democrats continued to disregard the need to adjust and compromise in order to alter their position and regain political ascendancy.

The fact that President Johnson was not a Radical Republican and favored policies in line with democratic philosophies provided an ideal situation for the Democratic party. According to the *Detroit Free Press*: "If harmony prevails, if there is a cordial union in our own ranks, if we take advantage of all the ill feeling which now exists in the ranks of the radicals, there is a reasonable certainty that we can elect all of our State officers, a majority of our Congressmen, a majority of the State Legislature, and thus lay the foundation of the continued ascendancy of our principles in the administration of our

State affairs."¹²³ This optimism, evident in all the newspapers, continued to belie the divisiveness within the party, implying current cohesiveness and future success.

Conservative Republicans considered a coalition with President Johnson and consequently the Democrats, but found the Democrats uncompromising. The Democratic party, especially in the pages of the *Detroit Free Press*, believed that old political issues and dogmas were not dead. They were unwilling to compromise their strict views on the sanctity of the Constitution and states' rights in order to achieve a coalition with the Republicans. This inflexibility was why the cohesiveness promoted by the press was not evident in political reality. The party never sought the political center to attract the widest range of voters.¹²⁴ Democratic purists refused to recognize the fact that they needed to amend their political stand in order to regain political power. Internal conflict dogged the Democrats as more open-minded individuals campaigned to accept some of the Negro rights issues, even suffrage, if it would put the past behind the Democrats and promise future success for the party as a political power.¹²⁵

Unable to compromise and achieve a coalition with conservative Republicans, the Democratic party entered the political battle over the Fourteenth Amendment; the 1868 election saw a disappointed and divided party. Facing a reunited Republican front, the Democrats were harshly criticized for their reconstruction philosophies. The Democrats' desire to allow the Southern states to quickly resume their constitutional rights and

¹²³*Detroit Free Press*, 31 July 1866.

¹²⁴Silbey, *A Respectable Minority*, 171.

¹²⁵*Ibid.*, 184-5.

congressional representation fueled Republican charges of Southern sympathizers. In keeping with their congressional efforts many prominent Republicans perceived only two stands to the present issue, "the unrepentant rebel and the loyal."¹²⁶ Republican criticism of the Democrats reached a peak during the presidential elections of 1868. Internally the Democrats could not find common, compromising ground, and they continued to promote hard-line Democratic philosophies, which only made them an easier target.

Congressional Arguments

The editorials surrounding the debate on the Fourteenth Amendment may be crystallized into two basic areas of concern: traditional democratic philosophies surrounding constitutionality and legality, and anti-Republican positioning.

The Democrats' arguments concerning constitutionality and legality reflected the basic congressional arguments, but the editorials also brought an added personal emotion to the battle. The primary concern of the Democratic press was that the Republicans were successfully expanding—and seeking to further expand—the power of the federal government. In the opinion of the *Detroit Free Press*, all the troubles facing the Union were a result of doubtful powers and questionable efforts to place authority in the federal government that rightfully and logically belonged to the states.¹²⁷ Amending the Constitution, especially concerning rights that the Democrats believed were states' rights,

¹²⁶Ibid., 228.

¹²⁷*Detroit Free Press*, 7 January 1866.

was not a step to be taken lightly. Certainly the press did not feel it was the proper time for making such changes.

As a result of the Republican dominance during the war, a dominance that the Democrats believed would wane now that peace had been obtained, the present Congress was not, in Democratic opinion, representative of the nation. The *Detroit Free Press* spoke for all Democrats, calling Congress "rubbish cast up by the storm that has been surging over the country."¹²⁸ As the Democrats had already pointed out, what was tolerated in war would not necessarily be tolerated in peace. The aggressive constitutional manipulating tolerated during the war would not be accepted in the future. Eventually Americans, now that drastic measures were no longer necessary, would forsake the Republicans and seek the solid and traditional pathway that the Democrats proffered.

The Democratic press continued its familiar argument that the Constitution was a sacred instrument that had already witnessed too much meddling during the war years. The Fourteenth Amendment represented further aggressive tampering that was not only unnecessary, but hurried and ill-advised. The *Marshall Democratic Expounder* claimed: "We can now see to what the nation is drifting. We are on a point of anarchy and ruin which is indeed fearful to contemplate."¹²⁹ From the Democratic point-of-view, the end of hostilities should have meant a quick and smooth restoration of the Southern states. The fact that the Fourteenth Amendment inhibited, rather than facilitated, this easy restoration angered and frustrated the Democrats. The *Detroit Free Press* reiterated that

¹²⁸Ibid.

¹²⁹*Marshall Democratic Expounder*, 27 September 1866.

"the war was for the Union and the Constitution; . . . the suppression of the rebellion restored the Union, with all the rights of the states unimpaired."¹³⁰ The South needed to be restored quickly and without qualification; the Fourteenth Amendment prevented this from occurring.¹³¹

The Democrats found the Fourteenth Amendment entirely unwarranted. Even in less volatile times, amending the Constitution required serious deliberation and these were far from normal times. Eleven Southern states remained unrepresented and excluded from Congress. All eleven, with the exception of Texas, had applied by June 1866 for representation, but had been rejected. Consequently, these states had no say or impact upon an amendment that affected them. There was no visible justice in amending the Constitution while eleven states remained outside the Union. The *Marshall Democratic Expounder* succinctly expressed the Democratic position when it proclaimed: "That it [the exclusion of state representation] is unjust, and republican, monarchical, oppressive and contrary to the fundamental principles of liberty and our form of government, and the basis of our Union, is self-evident."¹³² In addition, the press pointed out that the people had not been given the chance to comment on this amendment. In the interest of harmony and national order, an amendment should not be pressed on state legislatures while much of the Union remained unrepresented.¹³³

¹³⁰*Detroit Free Press*, 30 June 1866.

¹³¹*Ibid.*, 15 August 1866.

¹³²*Marshall Democratic Expounder*, 14 June 1866.

¹³³*Ibid.*, 26 June 1866.

The Republican argument for forwarding the Fourteenth Amendment without representation of the Southern states in Congress stemmed from the belief that the rebels were unrepentant and would reassert themselves once they resumed their seats in Congress. The Democrats did not accept this; whether they feared a resurgence of Southern power or not is unclear. Certainly they did not object to Southern representation, insofar as it was more in line with their own philosophies than those of the Radical Republicans, especially with respect to black suffrage. The Democrats argued relentlessly that the Constitution was not a simple piece of writing to be changed by the whims of the party in power. Editors offered occasions when the Constitution could be amended: when it was (1) just, expedient and necessary, and (2) done in the manner, letter and spirit that the Constitution prescribed.¹³⁴ According to the Democrats, neither of these reasons were being met. There was no immediate necessity to change the Constitution and certainly the spirit of that great organ was not being upheld. The *Detroit Free Press* charged that it was not from open violence or direct assault upon the field of battle, that the Union was in danger of destruction, but from the insidious efforts of pretended friends to abridge, alter or amend the fundamental principles of the Constitution.¹³⁵

The Michigan Democratic press struggled with the Republicans' two-sided requirement for the Fourteenth Amendment. How can it be, questioned the *Detroit Free Press*, that the Southern states are states for one purpose and yet not for another? The fact that the Southern states were excluded from representation, yet required and asked to

¹³⁴*Detroit Free Press*, 14 June 1866.

¹³⁵*Ibid.*, 3 June 1866.

ratify a constitutional amendment, was illogical to the Democrats.¹³⁶ "Representation in Congress is a duty imposed on the States; [sic] as well as a right granted by the Constitution," the *Coldwater Sentinel* argued.¹³⁷ This denial proved contrary to all the basic philosophies of the Democratic party; not only were states' rights being abridged, but the states were being manipulated against themselves. Whether arguing from a legal aspect or from an anti-Republican aspect, it was clear that the Democrats were struggling to find a chink in their opposition's armor. There appeared to be several from a legal standpoint, but they were not large enough for the Democrats to stop the Republican advance.

In addition to the manner with which the Fourteenth Amendment was being framed, the Democrats criticized the specifics of the amendment. In contrast to future years, the first section of the amendment did not generate the most controversy. The second and third sections commanded the most discussion and were consistently attacked by the Democratic press.

The first section identified citizenship to include all those born or naturalized in the United States, and although the Democrats did not approve of this, it was not discussed at length by any of the papers. The only discussion regarding this issue was to point out the unfairness this section represented with respect to Native Americans, who were excluded, and immigrants, who had to wait years to achieve citizenship. The *Coldwater Sentinel* argued that these groups were more educated than the poor blacks,

¹³⁶Ibid., 30 June 1866.

¹³⁷*Coldwater Sentinel*, 7 September 1866.

who could not read and did not display any educated interest in the country and its heritage.¹³⁸ Clearly the Democrats were insulted that the Freedmen would be enfranchised, an honor that many were denied based on much less justification, demonstrating the Democratic belief in a white man's government.

Sections 2 and 3 of the Fourteenth Amendment generated considerable comment from the various Democratic newspapers. Both sections were seen as deliberate actions against the South and its white population. Section 2 represented the Republican effort to reestablish the qualifications for representation in Congress. According to the Democrats, it effectively denied the South readmittance into Congress unless the Negro was given the right to vote. In the press, as in Congress, the Democrats voiced their disapproval of this section, displaying their Southern ties and Republican opposition. Traditionally, the Democrats argued against section 2 based once again on states' rights. Although the amendment did not directly address the suffrage issue, the *Coldwater Sentinel* believed, "Its effect is to regulate suffrage in the States."¹³⁹ Considered reasonable by Radical Republicans, the amendment was nonetheless compelling suffrage throughout the South and ultimately the rest of the country. The *Detroit Free Press* accused the Republicans of "Obtaining indirectly—what they dare not openly."¹⁴⁰ The Radical Republicans had been unable to openly achieve suffrage, yet they continued to try.

¹³⁸*Detroit Free Press*, 19 January 1866.

¹³⁹*Coldwater Sentinel*, 31 July 1866.

¹⁴⁰*Detroit Free Press*, 3 July 1866.

The press also pursued more emotional grounds than questionable legality and states' rights. All the papers continued their attack on the sensitive Negrophobia of the Northern states and revived specters of a great black migration Northward, such as that predicted at the time of the Emancipation Proclamation. It appeared obvious, according to the *Detroit Free Press*, that with peace large numbers of blacks would move northward, escaping their bitter slavery roots. The result would not only decrease jobs and opportunities, but also Northern white political power, as the total population would grow, but congressional representation would not. This opinion was based on the fact that the North was opposed to suffrage. The *Detroit Free Press* warned that the North should hesitate before ratifying an amendment that would detrimentally effect itself.¹⁴¹ The Democrats accused the Republicans of ignoring these concerns in exchange for the Southern Negro vote. Conversely, there was the chance that Southern blacks might support the Republicans. If this proved true, the Republicans would not gain the power they anticipated. The Democrats maintained the hope that somewhere there was a silver lining.

Section 3 of the Fourteenth Amendment was even more offensive to Democrats. It forbade specified Southern individuals, who had taken part in the rebellion, from holding national or state offices unless pardoned by the Congress. The Democratic press again portrayed the party as sympathetic to their Southern brothers. They argued that the fiber of section 3 proved contrary to one of the great beliefs of this country—that a man was innocent until proven guilty. According to the *Detroit Free Press*, the section was

¹⁴¹Ibid., 17 June 1866.

a blatant "attempt to punish for acts already committed, by establishing and enforcing new penalties."¹⁴² This was a harsh and severe punishment, one the Democrats viewed as an intentional effort to continue hostilities between the North and the South.

Section 4 of the Fourteenth Amendment, which verified the validity of the public debt, enjoyed some coverage in the *Detroit Free Press*, but was not discussed extensively in any other Michigan Democratic newspaper. The second and third sections were the real considerations at the time, and the lack of attention paid to the remaining sections demonstrated the Democrats disregard for their importance. The *Detroit Free Press* illustrated this when it declared the fourth section "absurd." The newspaper proclaimed the debt of the United States sacred in "honor," and should the people ever chose to repudiate it, no provision in the Constitution could prevent or provide a remedy.¹⁴³

Additional Arguments

All of the arguments regarding the Fourteenth Amendment and philosophies forwarded in the Democratic press follow defined lines established well before the amendment was framed. The various Democratic concerns with respect to the manner and specifics of the Fourteenth Amendment reflected stated party ideals and concerns over the Constitution and states' rights issues. The Democrats' limited and narrow constitutionalism was continually expounded. The consistency of their attitudes and the

¹⁴²Ibid., 15 August 1866.

¹⁴³Ibid., 17 June 1866.

static quality of their arguments were clear throughout the discourse concerning the Emancipation Proclamation, Thirteenth Amendment and Fourteenth Amendment. The emotional and positional arguments concerning the black race itself, and their political adversaries the Republicans, were also consistent with concerns expressed in preceding years.

Apart from the traditional, platform rhetoric, the Democrats continued their aggression against the Republican party during the debates over the Fourteenth Amendment. Although this aggression was not new, it took on a stronger voice in 1866. Perhaps motivated by their weakened position and consequential need to discredit the Republicans, the Democratic press hit the Republican policies hard, especially the latter's selfish pursuit of power. In the words of the *Detroit Free Press*, "The gist and purpose of the entire mass of Republican legislation, from the moment it assumed power to the last minute of the late session of Congress, has been devoted to one great purpose—to establish and perpetuate the reign of class and monopoly legislation, to make the rich richer, and the poor poorer."¹⁴⁴ This was not a new argument, but it enjoyed renewed vigor during the debates surrounding the Fourteenth Amendment.

The Democrats continued to accuse the Republicans of corrupting the political process and suppressing individual liberties. Some Democrats reasoned that the Republicans had no desire to see the North and South reunited and were doing all in their power to hinder restoration. "Peace, order, law and a democratic form of government is

¹⁴⁴Ibid., 13 August 1866.

utterly hostile to their existence as a party," claimed the *Detroit Free Press*.¹⁴⁵ Other newspapers carried this to an extreme, seeking to frighten readers into supporting a Democratic administration. The Republicans, they warned, will destroy civil liberty, erect a despotism and involve the entire country in civil strife. The *Monroe Monitor* reflected the fear when it warned, "Civil war is threatened. We firmly believe that any attempt to fasten, unconstitutionally, these radical measures . . . will lead to civil war."¹⁴⁶ The Democrats believed that much of the Republicans' popularity was a result of their favorable wartime image and it was to their advantage to promote hostilities. If the Republicans continued to destroy the Constitution, civil strife would inevitably result.

In pursuing their engrandizement, claimed the *Coldwater Sentinel*, the Republicans would sacrifice anything, including the welfare of the Negro. The Democratic press argued that to maintain political power, the Republicans promoted hostilities between the North and the South, the white and the Negro. These hostilities were at the root of their success as a political party. No matter how the Republicans chose to disguise it, they were consumed with devising ways to retain power using sectional and racial prejudice. According to the *Coldwater Sentinel*, "If Northern prejudice can still be played upon, and the Southern States kept from participation in the next Presidential election, the [Republican] party supremacy is secured. The restoration of the Union and the national interests are subordinate questions."¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁵Ibid., 6 April 1866.

¹⁴⁶*Monroe Monitor*, 4 April 1866.

¹⁴⁷*Coldwater Sentinel*, 31 July 1866.

The Democrats accused the Republicans of blatantly denying political rights to Southerners. Somehow Southern rights had been destroyed by the rebellion, and by some mystery Negroes now possessed those rights. In the opinion of the *Detroit Free Press*, the Republicans wished to "sweep the Southern people into political oblivion, and to elevate the Negro to the position they occupied."¹⁴⁸ The Republicans were not, according to the Democratic press, the party of equal rights, not unless you considered black rights before white rights and placed black suffrage before the restoration of the Union. Yet the Democrats went one step further in attacking the Republicans. Not only were they obvious enemies of Southern whites—and all who desired to see the Union restored and peaceful—but also of the Negro.

The Democratic press believed that for all the talk and atrocities performed in the name of the Negro, the Republicans were no friend to that race. The *Detroit Free Press* claimed the Republicans "neither care for nor believe in Negro equality except so far as that dogma may assist their political maneuvering."¹⁴⁹ The Fourteenth Amendment provided the perfect example. Promises of suffrage went unanswered in the Fourteenth Amendment, with the Republicans claiming it was the best they could do, and it was a step further toward their greater goal. The Democrats were certain that the Republican failure to offer suffrage was because the Republicans knew such an amendment would fail. The Republicans dared not make suffrage an open condition of restoration, especially

¹⁴⁸*Marshall Democratic Expounder*, 27 September 1866.

¹⁴⁹*Detroit Free Press*, 4 May 1866.

in an election year, and so they surrendered their ideals to acceptability.¹⁵⁰ This was harsh criticism from a party that would have greatly benefitted from a similar philosophy, but the Democrats were unyielding in their stubborn attachment to traditional dogmas and attitudes.

The Democrats portrayed the Republicans as still uncaring toward the Negro, just as they did not care for them earlier during the war. All Republican efforts were made not for the Negro, but for the party. First, there was emancipation. Whatever the moral wrong of slavery, nothing compared to the cruelty inflicted by immediate unqualified emancipation.¹⁵¹ The *Detroit Free Press* labeled the Republicans "hypocrites and pharisees [who] are today as much the enemies of the black man as they have always been, because they persist in shoving him more violently into a contest—into a struggle for political and social equality—the result of which must necessarily be still more disastrous than what has already overtaken him."¹⁵² The Fourteenth Amendment was just one more example of unjust and unnecessary legislation that was not only constitutionally wrong and illegal, but damaging to the white and black race alike, unless you were a Republican.

¹⁵⁰Ibid., 19 May 1866.

¹⁵¹Ibid., 27 April 1866.

¹⁵²Ibid., 7 June 1866.

Summary

The continued consistency of the various Democratic papers was impressive. For a party that suffered from various opinions as to how to reorganize, compromise and rebuild political ascendancy, the consistency of the press was unexpected. Arguments concerning the Fourteenth Amendment reflected the same basic arguments concerning the Thirteenth Amendment and the Emancipation Proclamation. Although some of the issues were new, the Democrats responded in the same consistent way, continually promoting the same limited and narrow constitutionalism. Stressing reverence for the Constitution, the Union and states' rights, the Democrats foresaw doom in altering those time-honored institutions. Suffrage, dealt with extensively by the *Detroit Free Press* during the debates over the Thirteenth Amendment, was now considered by all the Democratic papers as an issue concerning the Fourteenth Amendment and as a future battleground. Evidently the Democrats recognized that the issue of suffrage was their best hope at defeating the Republicans. It was the one major issue on which they had popular support.

The press consistently portrayed the Democratic party as unswerving in its beliefs. The arguments against the Fourteenth Amendment were static and repetitive. The Democratic platform philosophies of 1864 were supported and delineated. In addition to supporting the stated platform philosophies, the Democrats warned their constituents of the failure to do likewise. The rhetoric was sometimes extreme, foreseeing destruction of

the government, desolation of the South and civil strife in part utilizing these fear tactics as ways to maintain and attract votes.

Although the attitudes were consistent and persistent, Democratic perceptions about the future were exaggerated. The negative perceptions of how altering the Constitution would effect their existence and that of the country reflected a party seeking cohesion and emphasizing extremes to maintain its constituency. The warnings of the collapse of the government, and social revolution, were examples of inaccurate perceptions that seemed directed at building cohesion and following.

The press, with its unity and traditionalism, maintained a consistent portrayal of the Democratic party. The press also revealed an additional emotional aspect as the editorial rhetoric often played on such feelings as patriotism and racism. As such, the arguments over the Fourteenth Amendment were more harsh rhetorically than those concerning the Thirteenth Amendment or the Emancipation Proclamation. This was a logical result when considering that the basic moral question involved in the Thirteenth Amendment and the Emancipation Proclamation—namely slavery—was not an issue. The Democrats did not sanction slavery as an institution. This was not true of the Fourteenth Amendment and the moral issues it involved, especially suffrage.

Perhaps most importantly, the consistency of the press portrayed a party united in opposition to a dominant Republican party, a unity that was not apparent during the early war years. This belied the popular perception of the Democratic party as fractured. If the party's structure was still in disarray, it was not apparent through the pages of the newspapers. The communication network successfully maintained a forceful challenge for

the Republican administration and revealed the Democratic party as a viable political opponent.

CHAPTER VI. THE FIFTEENTH AMENDMENT

March 30, 1870

SECTION. 1. The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude.

SECTION 2. The Congress shall have power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation.

The Fifteenth Amendment to the Constitution was the final legislative action taken during the 1860s concerning the expansion of black rights. Its subject, that of suffrage, was not a new concern in Washington, D.C., or in the nation. Legislatively the roots of the Fifteenth Amendment lie in the ratification of the Fourteenth Amendment.

Background

Despite Democratic opposition, the Fourteenth Amendment was ratified on 20 July 1868. A total of twenty-eight states was needed to ratify the amendment; twenty-four ratified it within the first year, all Northern states. Initially the Fourteenth Amendment failed to accomplish what Radical Republicans believed to be a necessary privilege of equality, the right to vote. The possible reduction in representation that the Fourteenth Amendment outlined for the Southern states pridefully did not guarantee suffrage to the

Negro population.¹⁵³ Proudful Southern states rejected the Fourteenth Amendment, in response to President Johnson's urging, refusing to voluntarily grant suffrage to blacks in order to gain representation. The Radical Republicans demanded that congressional intervention was once again needed to guarantee the Freedmen their basic civil rights.

In partial response to the pressure, Congress passed on 2 March 1867, the Military Reconstruction Act (House Resolution 1143, Thirty-ninth Congress), which divided the Southern states, with the exception of Tennessee, into five military districts under military rule. In addition it outlined the procedure by which states could organize new state governments acceptable to Congress.¹⁵⁴ These procedures included manhood suffrage and ratification of the Fourteenth Amendment. With the promise of readmission to Congress and relief from military rule, several Southern states eventually ratified the amendment.¹⁵⁵ The perceived acceptance of black suffrage in the South left the nation with an awkward double standard as blacks were denied suffrage in the North. The Fifteenth Amendment rectified this incongruity.

Long before the Military Reconstruction Act pressured the South to accept the Fourteenth Amendment and black suffrage, the issue of suffrage had been a focal point in congressional proceedings. During the debates over the Thirteenth Amendment, the *Detroit Free Press* spent considerable space discussing the issue. Insightful Democrats

¹⁵³Patrick, *The Reconstruction of the Nation*, 134.

¹⁵⁴Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution 1863-1877*, 276.

¹⁵⁵Senate Committee on the Judiciary, *Amendments to the Constitution: a Brief Legislative History*, 35.

foresaw, even before formal emancipation, that suffrage was one of the ultimate issues that they would have to face.

Throughout the congressional debates concerning the Fourteenth Amendment suffrage was discussed. Several proposals were introduced attempting to address the issue. Two of the more successful ones included those proposed by Senator John Henderson of Missouri and Senator Charles Sumner of Massachusetts. Both proposals disallowed discrimination in granting voting rights to any individual on the basis of race or color.¹⁵⁶ Neither proposal survived in Congress, an outcome based primarily on the opposition to suffrage in both the Northern and Southern states. The Joint Committee on Reconstruction stated that three-fourths of the nation was not yet ready to accept such fundamental change.¹⁵⁷ As a compromise, Congress deleted the words "race and color" from section 2 of the Fourteenth Amendment, and established the terms of representation in Congress based on eligible male voters. Intended to secure black suffrage in return for congressional weight, these requirements were not strictly enforced, and the South showed little inclination to voluntarily enfranchise blacks.

Slowly, Congress continued its efforts to secure black suffrage, disregarding public opinion. The elections of 1866 had left the Republicans with an enlarged congressional majority and on the brink of action. The first effort was in Washington. Although the residents of the District of Columbia, who were not allowed congressional representatives, had voted down suffrage in a special election in January 1865, Congress enacted a bill

¹⁵⁶*Congressional Globe*, 39th Cong., 1st sess., 1866, 362, 1287.

¹⁵⁷*Ibid.*, 2766.

granting suffrage to blacks in the district in December 1866.¹⁵⁸ In January 1867, Congress passed legislation requiring manhood suffrage in all federal territories, and as a requirement of statehood for Nebraska.¹⁵⁹ But the Military Reconstruction Act of March 1867 was Congress's most ambitious legislation on suffrage. In section 5, black suffrage was a required condition for the readmission of former Confederate states to the Union and representation in Congress.¹⁶⁰ With this piece of legislation, only the North and Border states remained outside suffrage legislation. Section 2 of the Fourteenth Amendment, which based congressional representation on the number of eligible voters, indirectly promoting suffrage, was the only legislation that affected those areas. With an insignificant black population the impact was negligible.

Eventually Southern states accepted the terms, rejoined the Union and sent their representatives to Congress. As Southern representation increased, Radical Republicans feared that their control would weaken to the extent that they would lose the ability to direct the progress of Reconstruction.¹⁶¹ Democrats had seen significant gains in the congressional elections of 1867 and hoped for further success in the 1868 elections. Although suffrage was a key objective of Republican reconstruction, it deliberately was not an issue during the campaign of 1868. The Republicans were well aware of the

¹⁵⁸Patrick, *Reconstruction of the Nation*, 135.

¹⁵⁹Senate Committee on the Judiciary, *Amendments to the Constitution: a Brief Legislative History*, 36.

¹⁶⁰*Congressional Globe*, 40th Cong., 1st Sess., 1868, 13.

¹⁶¹Senate Committee on the Judiciary, *Amendments to the Constitution: a Brief Legislative History*, 36.

popular sentiment against black suffrage and knew that it would damage their campaign to run on a suffrage platform.

The Republicans met in May 1868 in Chicago to choose their presidential nominee. Unlike the Democrats, the Republicans had no difficulty nominating Ulysses S. Grant, who ran unopposed. Their platform was a carefully worded document that—while clear in its criticism of President Johnson and its praise of the late President Lincoln—was vague on controversial issues. Suffrage was politically sensitive and, despite the fact that many radicals favored nationwide Negro suffrage, conservative Republicans recognized Northern opposition to candidates supporting such legislation. Consequently, while the Radical Republicans wished to see Grant run on an outspoken platform including suffrage, conservatives were more cautious. The Republican platform justified suffrage in the Southern states on the basis of the "consideration of public safety, of gratitude, and of justice," leaving the question of suffrage in the Northern states in the hands of the people. "The question of suffrage in all the loyal States," they reasoned, "properly belongs to the people of those States."¹⁶² Adroitly, the Democratic party was disarmed of one of their more powerful political weapons against the Republican candidacy. The Democrats could not manipulate Northern opposition to suffrage to defeat the Republican party.

The Democratic convention was held in July 1868; after extensive debate and consideration of numerous candidates, Horatio Seymour received the nomination. In comparison to the 1864 platform, the Democratic platform was considerably more critical

¹⁶²Porter and Johnson, *National Party Platforms, 1840-1956*, 39.

and expansive. The platform denounced the efforts of Republican reconstruction as "unconstitutional, revolutionary, and void."¹⁶³ It criticized the usurpations of Congress and the Radical Republicans as a "disregard of right, and . . . unparalleled oppression and tyranny which have marked its career."¹⁶⁴ Instead of restoring the Union, the Republican administration had dissolved it, putting ten states under military despotism and Negro supremacy. It was time for reunion, amnesty, restoration of states' rights and recognition of state control over suffrage.¹⁶⁵

Unfortunately for the Democrats, Seymour proved a poor, lackluster choice and his running mate, Francis P. Blair, Jr., of Missouri, compounded the problem. Grant easily won the 1868 presidential election, while Democrats made gains in Congress. It was clear to pro-suffrage Republicans that time was running out to accomplish their goal, the Fifteenth Amendment.

Michigan

In Michigan sentiment against Negro suffrage was obvious. Unlike the issues concerning earlier congressional efforts, Negro suffrage was put to a popular vote in the state and suffered a resounding defeat.

¹⁶³Ibid., 38.

¹⁶⁴Ibid.

¹⁶⁵Ibid., 37-38.

The 1850 Michigan Constitution required that the question of constitutional revision be forwarded to the people every sixteen years. In 1866 a majority voted for revision and a convention was convened. The new revision included one radical departure from the 1850 text, the elimination of the word "white" on the matter of voting. Just one month after Senator John Henderson of Missouri, introduced Senate Joint Resolution 8, the basis of the Fifteenth Amendment, Michigan roundly defeated the predominately Republican legislature's attempt to initiate a new constitution that eliminated race restrictions on voting, 110,582 to 71,729.¹⁶⁶ Michigan was not the only Northern state to send such a message to Congress, as sentiment ran strong in the Northern states against giving the vote to Negroes. Republicans did not need to be told the political consequences of promoting the enfranchisement of blacks.

Legislative History

The third session of the Fortieth Congress met after the fall elections in December 1868. Although the Chicago platform had indicated that the issue of suffrage would be left to the individual states, numerous proposals for a constitutional amendment to give the black man the vote were introduced. Suffrage proponents recognized the necessity of moving on an amendment while Republicans still maintained control in the majority of state legislatures. If they failed to act quickly, the Democrats could tap Northern

¹⁶⁶Willis Dunbar and William Shade, "Centennial of 'Impartial Suffrage' in Michigan," *Michigan History* LVI(1) (1972): 46.

sentiment and make suffrage an issue in the next elections, possibly capturing control of enough state legislatures to block ratification of a constitutional amendment.¹⁶⁷

On 7 March 1868 Henderson introduced Senate Joint Resolution 8, disallowing states to deny the vote on the basis of color, race or previous condition.¹⁶⁸ In January 1869 it was reported out of the Senate Judiciary Committee. During that time the House was also considering a similar measure. On 17 February 1869 the Senate passed Senate Joint Resolution 8 and, after a slight alteration by the House, a conference was appointed that reported out the final version of the Fifteenth Amendment. The amendment was sent to the states on 27 February 1869.

Initially, the congressional debates did not follow party lines as closely as those concerning the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Amendments. The question of Negro suffrage was not widely accepted by conservative Republicans, and the morality of taking such action, right after the Chicago platform had secured victory, bothered many. Democrats and conservative Republicans alike argued that the dominant Radical Republicans were showing bad faith so soon after their election promises.

The Democrats centered their opposition once again on the issue of states' rights. Congress, they declared, did not have the right through the Constitution to impose suffrage, nor did the Fourteenth Amendment cover the right to vote.¹⁶⁹ These were familiar arguments questioning the constitutional ability of Congress to force unwarranted

¹⁶⁷Avins, *The Reconstruction Amendments Debates*, xvi.

¹⁶⁸Senate Committee on the Judiciary, *Amendments to the Constitution: a Brief Legislative History*, 36.

¹⁶⁹Avins, *The Reconstruction Amendments Debates*, xvi.

legislation over the will of the people, and the related rights of states to control their own institutions.

The Democrats also accused the Republicans of being inconsistent on many levels. In Congress they were accused of inconsistency concerning their stated platform promises and of refusing to consider universal suffrage. Not only were they violating their own promises to leave suffrage to the discretion of the individual states, but also they intended to deny the vote to the Chinese. It seemed illogical to the Democrats to promote suffrage for the Negro, whose level of civility—they argued—was far inferior to that of most Chinese. The Democrats even voted for a proposal of universal suffrage made by Republican Senator Joseph S. Fowler of Tennessee.¹⁷⁰ Although Fowler was a Republican, the proposal was roundly dismissed by his peers, and the sincerity behind the Democratic vote was questioned.¹⁷¹

Such incidents demonstrated that the Democrats were well aware of their minority status, and they continued their efforts to block legislation by playing the devil's advocate. The Fifteenth Amendment appeared a perfect issue over which to divide the Republican party. Many Northern Republican states refused to eliminate voting restrictions and qualifications and congressional Democrats argued on their behalf. Literacy and property restrictions were no different to them than race restrictions. The

¹⁷⁰Equal or impartial suffrage meant either restricted or unqualified suffrage. Universal suffrage meant unrestricted manhood suffrage except for age and residence requirements. Negro suffrage could be used to mean either universal or impartial. In Michigan impartial was most commonly used of the loose terms.

¹⁷¹Avins, *The Reconstruction Amendments*, Debates, xix.

House Democrats played one fluctuating faction of Republicans against the other with considerable success.¹⁷²

Unfortunately for the Democrats, the division in the Republican ranks was not sufficient to allow the Democrats to stop the momentum. Recognizing the timeliness of their case, congressional Republicans agreed to a compromise, allowing Negro suffrage. The Radicals criticized the compromise because it did not provide for universal manhood suffrage, allowing for educational, intelligence, polltaxes and property tests.¹⁷³ As the Radicals feared, these tactics were eventually employed by the South to restrict Negro voters. But at the time this was the best compromise that could be reached among Republicans.

Newspaper Editorials

The Democratic press during the debate over the Fifteenth Amendment reflected the stated party platform more than any other period under consideration. This was a direct result of the more expansive, verbal and critical platform of 1868, which was neither vague nor mild in its support of states' rights and condemnation of the Republican administration and its reconstruction policy. Such forceful language more accurately mirrored the critical and verbal role the papers played in the political arena. This

¹⁷²Gillette, *The Right to Vote: Politics and the Passage of the Fifteenth Amendment*, 78.

¹⁷³Dunbar and Shade, "The Black Man Gains the Vote: The Centennial of 'Impartial Suffrage' in Michigan," 50.

similarity, in connection with increased criticism and forewarning by the press, indicated a continued healing and strengthening of the Democratic party from its disrapture of the late 1850s. Still plagued by divisions between purist and legitimist elements, the Democrats nonetheless were successfully evolving into a strong political adversary, growing into their role as the opposition. As the *Detroit Free Press* indicated: "The minority reserves to itself the inalienable right to find fault . . . to condemn the mistakes of the majority."¹⁷⁴ Emboldened by the party's apparent success in the 1867 and 1868 elections, the Democrats were ready, at least mentally, to seriously challenge the Republicans. As indicated by the homogeneity of the newspapers and the continued criticism of the Republican party, the Democrats were doing just that.

The goal of the Fifteenth Amendment, Negro suffrage, was not a new issue, and consequently the Democratic arguments used familiar terminology. Long before the Fifteenth Amendment was debated, newspapers discussed the possibility of Negro suffrage. The *Detroit Free Press* accused the Republican party of such aspirations during the debate over the Thirteenth Amendment; by the time of the Fourteenth Amendment all Democratic papers forewarned of the Republican plot to enfranchise blacks. Unlike the Thirteenth and Fourteenth amendments, the Fifteenth Amendment had no redeeming elements for the Democrats, who considered its framing deceitful; its content, revolutionary; and its outcome, destruction. There was no question that the Democratic party perceived the Fifteenth Amendment as the most despotic act of the Republican party

¹⁷⁴*Detroit Free Press*, 30 December 1866.

as reflected in the vehemence and condemnation of the press. The amendment was the most unconstitutional, treacherous and disastrous of all reconstruction legislation.¹⁷⁵

Like congressional Democrats, the Democratic press espoused time-honored Democratic philosophies. The structure of their arguments on states' rights and the sanctity of the Constitution was familiar. Their rhetoric, however, grew increasingly violent. The editors argued with renewed vengeance concerning the constitutional right of Congress to meddle in affairs of the states. "Democracy," the *Detroit Free Press* declared, "would have no objection to a fair and distinct proposition to amend the Constitution so as to confer Negro political equality, provided the proposition was, as required by the Constitution, submitted to the people of the several States."¹⁷⁶ Not only were the people not accorded a vote, but past elections left no doubt as to their preference.

Since 1865 suffrage had been defeated at the ballot box in numerous Northern states, including Colorado, Connecticut, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Nebraska, Tennessee, Kansas, Ohio and Michigan.¹⁷⁷ The Republican party, which often justified its policies as the will of the people, was now disregarding public opposition to suffrage. The Democrats were outraged. The question of suffrage was for the states to answer, editors claimed. The *Marshall Democratic Expounder* was representative when it stated, "It is the

¹⁷⁵Gillette, *The Right to Vote: Politics and the Passage of the Fifteenth Amendment*, 88-9.

¹⁷⁶*Detroit Free Press*, 18 February 1869.

¹⁷⁷Dunbar and Shade, "The Black Man Gains the Vote: The Centennial of "Impartial Suffrage" in Michigan," 46.

right of the State in the exercise of its sovereignty under the Constitution."¹⁷⁸ The fact that the Republican Congress was forcing suffrage on the Northern states, against their wishes, was the worst form of treachery. "What you have solemnly condemned, a radical Congress may impose upon you in spite of your condemnation," the *Clinton County Independent* railed.¹⁷⁹ The Democrats continued to fight for their basic beliefs; the additional Republican affront merely motivated their defense.

The Democrats were embittered and frustrated by the Republicans' refusal to attend to the will of the people, especially since the Republicans' actions violated their own party platform. The Democratic newspapers expressed their dismay with the Republican treachery. "Swindle" and "trickery," declared the *Coldwater Sentinel* and *Detroit Free Press*.¹⁸⁰ Similar sentiments were voiced in all the Democratic papers. This was a clear violation of the peoples' trust, the basis of their vote. This violation was even more objectionable to the Democrats because they had lost the election. The Democrats contended that if the Republicans had run on a suffrage platform, they would have lost. The *Detroit Free Press* reasoned that recent political success had left the Democrats confident that the people "voted regardless of that question [suffrage] and in a different manner from what they would have voted had they supposed it was a question involved in any shape or form." The Democrats could see no rationale for the Republican

¹⁷⁸*Marshall Democratic Expounder*, 2 November 1865.

¹⁷⁹*Clinton County Independent*, 19 February 1868.

¹⁸⁰*Coldwater Sentinel*, 12 March 1869, and *Detroit Free Press*, 18 February 1869.

turnaround but one—self engrandizment. "So much for devotion to principle," said the *Detroit Free Press*.¹⁸¹

The Democrats had high hopes for the 1868 presidential elections. Considerable wind was taken out of their sails when the Republican party decided not to make suffrage a campaign issue. It was obvious, at least to the Democrats, that the Republicans had lied in their party platform to capture an otherwise uncertain victory and were now promoting Negro suffrage only as a means to maintain power. The Republican party, formed during an unstable time from a variety of factions, believed they needed the Negro vote to remain in power. There was clear indication in the congressional debates of the Republicans' political motivation.¹⁸² Although history would show this to be an exaggeration, it fueled Democratic criticism, popular during the debate over the Fourteenth Amendment, of the self-interested Republican party. Only too true was the *Coldwater Sentinel's* warning that "the issue, Negro suffrage, repudiated in this election, like the stone rejected by the builders, will after election become the head of the corner in the Republican edifice."¹⁸³

The Democrats were unrelenting in their condemnation of the Republican policy and its potential repercussions. Although undeniably in part an effort to improve their own status among Northern Democrats and Republicans, who opposed Negro suffrage, there

¹⁸¹*Detroit Free Press*, 12 October 1867.

¹⁸²LaWanda Cox and John Cox, "Negro Suffrage and Republican Politics: The Problem of Motivation in Reconstruction Historiography," *Journal of Southern History* XXXIX (1954): 304.

¹⁸³*Coldwater Sentinel*, 12 October 1866.

was a continuing adherence to basic Democratic philosophies and the belief that the Negro was unqualified for political responsibility. The Democrats considered the white race superior to the black and could not comprehend the Republicans believed otherwise. The Republican Congress was violating the laws of nature.¹⁸⁴

The press repeatedly identified the Negro race as inferior, uneducated, uninterested and incompetent. "A race so inferior to ourselves," the *Detroit Free Press* declared, "that in no other relations of life will they ever be recognized as our equals."¹⁸⁵ The Detroit daily spoke for all the papers when it noted: "[We] do not believe . . . Negroes should have any part or parcel in a government for white men. . . . No Democrat . . . proposes such an idea."¹⁸⁶ The Democrats blatantly exploited racial prejudice, an activity evident throughout the 1860s that crescendoed as Reconstruction continued. While this activity sought to attract popular support, it also reflected a basic perception. The Democrats' negative opinion of the Negro, regardless of political considerations, condemned support for black suffrage. For the Democrats there was no rationale for giving suffrage to such a supposedly unworthy group. If the Republicans promoted suffrage, it was only as a stepping stone to maintain power. Here, declared the Democratic press, was a large group whose vote the Republicans could control. According to the *Jackson Eagle*, the Radicals

¹⁸⁴*Detroit Free Press*, 28 July 1868.

¹⁸⁵*Ibid.*, 28 September 1866.

¹⁸⁶*Ibid.*, 12 July 1867.

were aware of the Negroes' political ignorance and by granting them suffrage, sought to assure their own ascendancy.¹⁸⁷

As a result, the Democrats continued their critical portrayal of the Republicans as false champions of the Negro. Republicans were accused of imposing suffrage on the South for no other reason than "to spite whites."¹⁸⁸ Their decision to reject Negro suffrage in the 1868 campaign platform was only to achieve victory: their wish to extend suffrage to the rest of the states was, not for the Negro, but for themselves. According to the *East Saginaw Courier*, the Republicans were "schemers and intriguers," offering the Negro the vote only to strengthen their own numbers.¹⁸⁹ "They offer them as a bribe, as pay for services to be rendered," charged the *Detroit Free Press*.¹⁹⁰ The Republicans were not sincerely concerned with the Negro, they were only willing to accord them rights in principle, so long as they did not claim them in practice.¹⁹¹ Editors alleged that a Republican would no sooner allow a Negro into his house as allow him to vote, unless that vote were for him.

To support their accusations, the Democrats pointed to the lack of consideration given to women and foreigners. If the Republicans were truly such champions of civil and political rights, queried the Democratic press, why did they do not accord similar rights

¹⁸⁷*Jackson Eagle*, 24 March 1866.

¹⁸⁸*Monroe Monitor*, 1 November 1865.

¹⁸⁹*East Saginaw Courier*, 1 November 1868.

¹⁹⁰*Detroit Free Press*, 26 May 1867.

¹⁹¹*Clinton County Independent*, 25 December 1867.

to women and immigrants? The Democrats were not ready themselves to accord suffrage to women, and such propositions were not to be found in the formal platforms or congressional proposals; from a political standpoint it was a powerful argument. Certainly it had a good percentage of the population in its favor. Women were, in general, more educated, genteel and knowledgeable than the Negro, claimed the press. The *Coldwater Sentinel* argued that "The Negro may vote, but the woman who knows enough to train up a family of boys until old enough to be electors, and finally teach them how to vote, cannot."¹⁹² The *Detroit Free Press* queried, why deny to the knowledgeable, intelligent woman what is granted so freely to the unknowledgable Negro?¹⁹³

The argument in favor of immigrants, although different from that for women, also had legitimacy. The Chinese, German and Irish were recognized by the Democrats as better educated than the Negro and deserved equal treatment. The Republicans were accused by the *Detroit Free Press* of believing that "the Negroes are more intelligent than the foreigners."¹⁹⁴ The Democratic press did not doubt that the Republican refusal to extend the vote to these groups had nothing to do with the groups themselves but rather with the Republicans' ability to control them.

The Democratic press hammered the Republicans, portraying them as anti-foreign and anti-woman. Republican actions clearly indicated that women and immigrants were beneath the Negro and were not worthy of the same rights and privileges. Whether the

¹⁹²*Coldwater Sentinel*, 17 January 1868.

¹⁹³*Detroit Free Press*, 14 December 1866.

¹⁹⁴*Ibid.*, 12 September 1867.

Democrats in fact believed Republicans to be anti-foreign and anti-woman was irrelevant. The political motivation for their argument was to show the Republicans as a self-centered party. Again the simple explanation for Republican promotion of Negro suffrage, in flagrant affront to educated women and immigrants, was that they could control the Negro vote. Women and educated immigrants were not so culpable, and, the press indicated, would not blindly support that radical political faction.¹⁹⁵ It had nothing to do with rights. The *Marshall Democratic Expounder* went even further and proposed promoting suffrage to eighteen-year-old males. Many educated, working eighteen-year-old males had better voting qualifications than most Negroes.¹⁹⁶ This was why the Republicans would never consider granting eighteen-year-olds suffrage; their vote could not be controlled.

These Democratic arguments against the Republicans were an effort to discredit the Republicans rather than promote any strongly held principles. In reality, the Democrats had no intention of promoting suffrage for any of these groups, but the rationale behind their arguments was clear. There was a reason why these groups did not enjoy the same privileges as white American males, and that was because suffrage was a political right not a natural one. And a political right had to be earned. According to the *Detroit Free Press*, "The mind must be emancipated, the intellect must be elevated, the self-reliance must be acquired that grows out of the independent intercourse of man with

¹⁹⁵Ibid., 29 November 1868.

¹⁹⁶*Marshall Democratic Expounder*, 16 May 1867 and 23 May 1867.

man."¹⁹⁷ If suffrage was a natural right there was no reason to deny it to all; if a political right, there was no reason to grant it to inexperienced, socially uneducated Negroes.

During all the controversy over suffrage, the Democratic press insisted that suffrage was not, as stated by the *Detroit Free Press*, a party issue.¹⁹⁸ Regardless of politics, the Constitution and states' rights, Negro suffrage itself was inherently wrong. It had nothing to do with Democrat versus Republican. Suffrage, claimed the Democrats, was of personal and state interest. Negro suffrage would surely bring hardship and violence to all Michigan residents, regardless of political affiliation. This argument benefitted the Democrats because many Northern Republicans were uneasy with the idea of Negro suffrage, and their support could not be won by advocating strict party lines. The Democrats realized that a future with Negro suffrage hit emotional chords and fears that had little to do with party affiliations. Yet Democratic conclusions accurately reflected deep-rooted party principles. So although they argued suffrage as a nonpartisan issue, their stand was a direct result of their beliefs.

The most exploitative rhetoric of the Democratic editorials was found in their predictions. If Negro suffrage was successful, the press foresaw three outcomes. Initially, the Democrats feared that the Michigan State Legislature would grant suffrage before any of its Northern neighbors. If this happened, the flood of Negroes to Michigan would be inevitable. Jobs belonging to white men would be taken by the Negro, said the *Detroit*

¹⁹⁷*Detroit Free Press*, 25 July 1868.

¹⁹⁸*Ibid.*, 4 July 1867.

Free Press, and an economic crisis would befall the state.¹⁹⁹ Even after several Northern states, including Michigan, ratified the Fifteenth Amendment, these fears still existed. The *Marshall Democratic Expounder*, in recalling the charge of the Light Brigade, declared, "Negroes will be on the right [of] us—Negroes on the left of us—Negroes behind us—Negroes around us."²⁰⁰

This prejudicial and economic concern was not limited to the homefront. The Democratic press also feared for the South. Once again the Democrats allowed some of their Southern empathy to show, and many of the papers expressed concern for the viability of the Southern economy. An abstract principle such as suffrage was not worth, in the opinion of the *Detroit Free Press*, "ruining the prosperity of the most fertile and valuable section of the Union."²⁰¹ The *Niles Democratic Republican* already feared that "the industry and the agriculture of that section have been paralyzed."²⁰² Economically, suffrage had no redeeming value for the Democrats.

The second, and more frightening, outcome of Negro suffrage was the possibility of a race war with its accompanying violence and bloodshed. According to the Democrats, this was not just a possibility but a fact. The *Detroit Free Press* claimed that the current congressional policy would "reawaken the prejudices of race" that had died down since

¹⁹⁹Ibid., 25 November 1866.

²⁰⁰*Marshall Democratic Expounder*, 21 November 1869.

²⁰¹*Detroit Free Press*, 28 September 1867.

²⁰²*Niles Democratic Republican*, 28 December 1867.

the war.²⁰³ Republicans were "fools . . . madmen" to encourage such social hostility. "Will they," asked the editor, "sustain a policy that, as certain as the sun shines, will either lead to a war of races, and the extermination of the blacks in this country, or to the vision of a Negro President, a Negro Congress, and Negro Governors and Legislatures?" The *Jackson Eagle* screamed "Blood, blood! Revolution upon revolution!"²⁰⁴ According to the Democrats, the outcome was certain and the Republicans, who claimed to so adore the Negro, were merely leading them to the slaughter. Extermination of the Negro was the inevitable result of the radical policy.²⁰⁵

The third fear that the Democratic press expressed was tied to its concern for the democratic system of government. Considering their beliefs in the rights of states and their citizens, it is understandable that they feared a continued Republican ascendancy and increasing congressional power. The Democratic press warned of the coming revolution. The Republicans were attempting the "lowest meanest and most contemptible swindling of the people," ushering in a future more bleak than ever before.²⁰⁶ The *Grand Rapids Daily Democrat* referred to the Republican-dominated Congress as a "popular despotism."²⁰⁷ The *Detroit Free Press* accused Congress of "revolutionizing the entire institutions of the country, creating an oligarchy"; it was "an act of tyranny," "despotic"

²⁰³*Detroit Free Press*, 12 September 1867.

²⁰⁴*Jackson Eagle*, 22 July 1865.

²⁰⁵*Clinton County Independent*, 19 February 1868.

²⁰⁶*Coldwater Sentinel*, 12 March 1869.

²⁰⁷*Grand Rapids Daily Democrat*, 20 March 1869.

and "crazy fanaticism."²⁰⁸ Democrats could not comprehend how Congress could succeed in this attempt. Such a success spelled doom for the white-dominated government; power would no longer rest with the people but with Congress.²⁰⁹ Soon people would not be able to chose their own congressmen.

Summary

During the lengthy debate over suffrage and the Fifteenth Amendment, the Democratic press portrayed the Democratic party as a strong and viable political body. Consistent in their unity, Democratic newspapers depicted a strong, philosophically consistent party that in reality was still mending its tears. Differences between legitimist and purist beliefs were not as apparent in the editorials as they were in reality. The predominately purist rhetoric, with its promotion of hardline philosophies, belied the efforts of compromise promoted by many legitimists. There was continuing praise and promotion of the democracy and its principles. According to the *Coldwater Sentinel*, every Democrat "should now feel that he is anointed of God." The *Detroit Free Press* concurred, confidently proclaiming, "the glorious principles of the Democratic party are still enshrined in the hearts of a majority of the people."²¹⁰ The only indication of party differences were the rare calls for unity, as when the *Detroit Free Press* pleaded, "Let us

²⁰⁸*Detroit Free Press*, 16 December 1866.

²⁰⁹*Ibid.*, 29 July 1866.

²¹⁰*Coldwater Sentinel*, 20 November 1867, and *Detroit Free Press*, 7 November 1867.

sink all minor issues, bury all past differences, and combine for the one great day of driving from power the faction which is the sole obstacle to the restoration of the republic on a wise, constitutional, and equitable basis."²¹¹ The overall impression, however, was that the Democratic party continued as a strong and united political entity. If it suffered from internal dissention, it was not apparent in the Michigan press.

Beyond accurately supporting the stated party platform and the Congressional arguments, the press increased its attacks and criticism of the Republicans. Different from the assault leveled at the Republicans during the debate over the Fourteenth Amendment, these attacks were better organized and more critical. The rhetoric was vituperative, and a serious effort to discredit the Republicans was pursued. The press demonstrated a concentrated emotion that was only minimally apparent in the platform and congressional records. The fact that the newspapers implied acceptance of ideas that they themselves denied—such as woman suffrage—demonstrated the concentrated goal of discrediting the Republicans at all costs. They clearly recognized the Republicans' weakened condition and knew that there was an opening where none existed only a few years ago. The Democrats were correct in their assessment of the divisiveness of the Republican party on the issue of suffrage. Their ability to use it to their advantage, however, was not as powerful as the Republicans' rallying cry.

In response, the majority of the Democratic press focused on the Republicans rather than on the mechanics of suffrage. Although there was no lack of exaggerated predictions of revolution and destruction, they were similar to the predictions made years

²¹¹*Detroit Free Press*, 22 December 1867.

ago. Their attention to the Republicans' method and motive, and the resultant Democratic criticism, was much more intense. The Republicans, according to the press, were nothing more than a group of hypocrites at a variety of levels. They said one thing and proceeded with another, whether betraying their party platform or the trust of Negro. Whatever the issue, the Republicans pursued only one thing—self-enlargement.

The Democratic press accurately identified the Republicans' political plans for the Negro. Considerable research on the framing of the Fifteenth Amendment revealed various theories as to its motivation.²¹² Central to all was the acknowledgement that the Republicans were motivated by the need to attract the Negro vote. The readmittance of the Southern states and the expected addition of Southern representatives to the Democratic ranks indicated a possible Democratic resurgence. Republicans believed that the Negro, particularly in the North, could provide additional Republican votes. Similar to the Democratic fears concerning them, the Republicans harbored strong concerns that a return to a Democratic administration would spell doom for the nation. So, although in part a concern for the equality of man, the Republican motivation was something less than altruistic.

The Democrats' lack of success did not adversely affect the press, either in consistency or strength. After the ratification of the Fifteenth Amendment, the Democrats simply proceeded, as they had after each controversial piece of legislation, with the issues of the day, and the promotion of the party. As for black suffrage, the *Marshall*

²¹²Cox and Cox, "Negro Suffrage and Republican Politics: The Problem of Motivation in Reconstruction Historiography," 330.

Democratic Expounder stated that it "may be best to let the whole matter drop out of politics."²¹³ Reluctantly, Michigan Democrats gave the Negro the vote.

²¹³*Marshall Democratic Expounder*, 14 April 1870.

CHAPTER VII. CONCLUSION

In 1861 the Democratic party was fighting a number of different battles. Internally, it was struggling with serious divisions that in November 1860 had lost it the presidency. Externally, it was faced with a serious political opponent in the form of the dominant Republican party. Compounding all this was a civil war that demanded cooperation from all Northern political factions just to save the Union. It was a time ripe for disorganization and change. The Radical Republicans reflected this in their innovative philosophies and promotion of revolutionary structural alterations. Logically, the Democratic party and its press should portray similar progression. Yet, this research proves such logic not only inadequate but incorrect. Throughout the war years and postwar reconstruction the Democrats remained rooted in established philosophies that continued to steer the party. While these hard-line philosophies were argued as a reason for the Democrats' failure to regain political ascendancy for many years, they lent a strength and consistency to a beleaguered political identity.

The Democratic press was an excellent reflection of its party and its principles. Not only were these newspapers the self-proclaimed servants of the Democratic party and its ideals, but they also were the primary mode that "The truths and principles of

democracy must be got before the people."²¹⁴ The newspapers involved in this research provide an exhaustive and representative sample of Michigan Democratic party papers for the years under consideration. Examination of leading Democratic organs like the *New York World* indicated that the Michigan papers were largely in step with their Northeastern peers and reflected the Northern Democratic party. In the words of the *Detroit Free Press*, "The general truths of Democracy are the same everywhere. They will be found in every Democratic paper."²¹⁵ In consideration of the structural disruption of the party the consistency and continuity of the papers' contents and convictions were remarkable.

The Democratic press maintained two impressive avenues of consistency—its devotion to Democratic principles and ideals, and its uniform method of argumentation against black rights legislation. The formation of the arguments and rationale remained consistent and reflected the principles held so dear. Despite internal party divisiveness, the Democratic press remained united in opposition to the Republican Negro policy.²¹⁶

In 1860 the Democratic party experienced a voter realignment—infrequent in American political history—that favored the Republicans.²¹⁷ The fracture of the Democratic party in 1860 with two national candidates, serious internal divisions between

²¹⁴*Clinton County Independent*, 19 February 1868.

²¹⁵*Detroit Free Press*, 10 November 1867.

²¹⁶Lawrence Grossman, *The Democratic Party and the Negro* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1976), 1.

²¹⁷For a discussion on voter realignment in Michigan see Formisano, *The Birth of Mass Political Parties, Michigan, 1827-1861*.

purists and legitimists and member disillusionment, resulted in a party suffering serious organization problems. Yet the press did not display this divisiveness. Other than infrequent rallying calls to unite, it portrayed an image of a party consistent and strong in its unity and philosophy. The fact that the Democrats maintained their forceful political press throughout a difficult time illustrates a powerful loyalty by editors and constituents throughout the state.

The Democratic image portrayed by the press was similar to that of thirty-odd years earlier. It reflected the strong principles that had characterized the Democrats since the election of Andrew Jackson, proud defenders of their democratic form of government, the U.S. Constitution and its liberties.²¹⁸ They had a strong belief in government by the people and aligned themselves closely with the masses, maintaining that the people were the ultimate source of power. Legislation not supported by a majority of the people was invalid. As one *Detroiter* observed years before, "Under a Government where the law is but the embodied spirit of public opinion, it becomes, in a great degree, inoperative, where that opinion does not sustain it."²¹⁹ The Democratic arguments during the 1860s continued to reflect these values.

This was an important, yet often ignored, underlying strength of the Democratic party. Regardless of the physical divisions, and the voter realignment that kept them out of the White House, the Democrats remained a strongly supported and philosophically

²¹⁸Roger Rosentreter, "To Free Upper Canada: Michigan and the Patriot War, 1837-1839" (Ph.D. dissertation, Michigan State University, 1983), 205.

²¹⁹*Ibid.*, 208. Unidentified correspondent, 13 January 1838, in *National Intelligencer*, 27 January 1838.

rooted entity. The press portrayed this reality more clearly than the formal documentation of platforms, congressional records and general history treatments. The Democrats consistently adhered to their established Jacksonian ideology, listening to the editorial voices; war and postwar reconstruction did not weaken these beliefs but reinforced their importance.

These results support the work of Angus Campbell and associates on American voting behavior in the nineteenth century. These studies indicated that political parties were strong structures that demanded and received loyal support.²²⁰ Party identification for many was a tie as binding as religion and family. Political parties became recognized as representative of certain values and beliefs, and resisted change. Subsequently, party-sanctioned candidates and proposals consistently enjoyed mass support of party members regardless of their real value. This was illustrated by the consistency of the Democratic press and the apparent lack of impact produced by the political structure disruptions of the 1860s. Despite considerable disagreement and upheaval, the editors remained loyal to the party and its stated platform.

In the 1860s the Democrats' basic philosophy was simple. In the party platforms, congressional arguments and the press, the principles were consistent and clear. The Democrats remained concerned with the sanctity of the Constitution and the maintenance of state and individual rights. These principles were common threads in all Democratic arguments, and the rationale behind all their stands. From this base they attacked the Republican method of change, condemning every piece of legislation for its impact on the

²²⁰ Angus Campbell et al., *Elections and the Political Order* (New York: 1966), 126.

Constitution and the political process. The arguments concentrated on issues of legality and civil rights, initially avoiding emotional ground.

The Democrats were clearly cognizant of the sensitive situation the Negro question presented. Partly for this reason, the Negro was rarely considered an individual, for that would personalize the debate and evoke sympathy that only the Negro and the Republican party could harvest. As time progressed and the Democratic use of emotional tones increased, the Negro was still rarely seen as an individual. He remained representative of a barbarian race, the integration of which would bring economic and social disaster. In this manner, the Democrats successfully defused some of the emotionalism of the Negro issue in Michigan by arguing against practical considerations, such as the structure of citizenship and legal and political rights. The Democrats recognized that it was more difficult to get emotional over the legalities of citizenship than the treatment of the less fortunate. In many ways it was a matter of approach, but for the Democrats it reflected belief.

In response to the research question—how did the Michigan Democratic press portray Democratic party positions on the expansion of black rights?—the Democrats indeed had a clear, if often unstated, position on the issue of black rights. Although in reality the issue was far more complex, the Democrats did not believe the Negro deserved substantial rights expansion, least of all political rights. The Democratic position against the Emancipation Proclamation, the Thirteenth Amendment, the Fourteenth Amendment and most vehemently, the Fifteenth Amendment, reflected this. In response to every piece of legislation, the press claimed that there was no reason to involve the nation in a

crusade for an unworthy and irrelevant race at the cost of individual liberties and the political process. The Emancipation Proclamation and the Thirteenth, Fourteenth and Fifteenth amendments all violated deeply rooted Democratic perceptions of politics and society that had not altered over the decade.

In 1861 the Democratic party took no stated stand regarding the Negro as an individual; politically he did not count. The issue was the reason for—and method of—emancipation. With their condemnation, the Democrats began a ten-year crusade to limit the expansion of black rights and the Negroe's inclusion into the Democratic definition of a political individual. During this period, however, the Democratic press did not remain static. The editorials displayed considerable developments that did not diminish the continuity or structure of the Democratic arguments, but reinforced their strength. The developments were illustrative of change, but a change that could only have been accomplished with a firm foundation underfoot. The strength of the Democratic party philosophy allowed for modulations and a crescendo of its voice. The decade witnessed increased cohesion and rhetorical violence in the press, as it attacked the Republican party and institutionalized racial prejudice.

Initially, the Democratic press, although consistent, lacked the cohesion that was evident by the end of the 1860s. In 1861 the new Republican administration had not yet revealed itself to the Democrats and Lincoln was an unknown entity. Lincoln was unclear regarding black rights and emancipation; at times he seemed to agree with the Democratic position. As a result of the ongoing Civil War, internal dissension and the new position as the opposition, the Democratic press had not established a strong party line. Even after

the announcement of the Emancipation Proclamation, some Democratic editorials maintained faith in the president's desire to override it. When it became obvious that Lincoln would do no such thing, the call was sounded and the Democratic press, which had vacillated in its support of Lincoln and the Republican administration, began to unify. The press from that point on argued collectively against all legislation that restricted state and individual rights. As the Republicans' intentions became clear, these Democratic voices crescendoed. This increase in volume was not a result of additional papers but of increased similarity and repetition. During the debate over the Fifteenth Amendment, the Democratic arguments of states' rights and individual rights were familiar, consistent and prevalent. All Democratic factions united in opposition to the issue of suffrage. Whether arguing biological inferiority or Republican bad faith, they stood as one.²²¹

Within this cohesion, the Democratic press displayed an increase in racial prejudice demphasized in political debate. Initially, the primary Democratic directive did not verbalize racial convictions but dealt with constitutional principles and the political process. The morality of the Emancipation Proclamation and the Thirteenth Amendment presented the Democrats with minor racial concerns. The Democrats agreed that the peculiar institution was wrong, but they argued against the measures on the grounds of states' rights and constitutional authority.

The Democratic argument against the Fourteenth Amendment, although bringing the issue of suffrage forward, still tended to focus on method and the restriction of rights. Although the Democrats habitually stimulated negrophobia, racial considerations—beyond

²²¹Grossman, *The Democratic Party and the Negro*, 16.

observations that the Negro was not ready for such legislation—were not apparent to any great extent.²²² It was the Fifteenth Amendment that completely unleashed the racial bias that reflected, and more clearly defined, Democratic principles. All their time-honored beliefs were in some manner hinged on the ideal of a white man's government. The black man had no place in this scheme and consequently enjoyed no political rights. Democratic racial prejudice was evident in almost every editorial, leaving no question as to its opinion of the black man.

The Democrats' inherent prejudice of the black man did not change over the years, but their perception of him did. The Emancipation Proclamation represented a political effort, the outcome of which had questionable effects on the political and economic system. The Fifteenth Amendment turned the political effort into a human threat. The press took on a more racist tone, continually degrading and exposing the Negro as an ignorant, lazy race. Since the eve of the war, the press had warned that freedom would mean extermination of the Negro race. Now, the concept of Negro inferiority was blended into economic and moral issues that foretold similar consequences for the white race.²²³ The future of an integrated society was an exaggerated disaster of destruction, degradation and extinction.

As the Republicans continued to expand black rights, the Democrats continued to oppose them. This situation exacerbated itself until the Democratic attacks on the Negro

²²²Ronald Formisano, "The Edge of Caste: Colored Suffrage in Michigan, 1827-1861," *Michigan History* LVI(1) (1972): 35.

²²³Berwanger, "Negrophobia in Northern Preslavery and Antislavery Thought," 266, 27.

no longer represented a fair picture of the Democratic party. The press portrayed a racism that was not readily apparent in other formal documents. Despite Republican legislation, the Democrats also continued to identify the Republicans—who were charged with using blacks for their own gain—as the true enemies of the Negro race. Amid the anti-Negro rhetoric was the Democratic conviction that they were doing what was best for the race, specifically, by delaying the expansion of rights until desired by the majority of the people, and only when the Negro had proven his worthiness. Regardless of this backhanded support, racial appeals and fear tactics became institutionalized in the Democratic arsenal.

It was not fair, however, to attach to the Democrats alone the tag of racist. In reality, so were many Republicans. In defense Democrats argued that their prejudice was founded in simple logic and precedent. Their fear for their governmental system and social structure was real and not necessarily unwarranted. The Negro was in many respects, unprepared for the revolution that befell him. And considering the years that followed, the legislation of the Civil War and Reconstruction brought little equality to the Negro. The Democrats recognized a social structure that legislation could not erase, regardless of Republican dreams. Although the Democrats' vision of the ultimate destruction of the two races was greatly exaggerated, it was no more unrealistic than the Republican vision of a society of equals. Integration and true political and social equality were many decades away.

While anti-Negro rhetoric increased as the years passed, so did the Democratic response to the Republican party. The Republicans were cast as self-interested power

mongers who used the Negro only to maintain power. After Lincoln's failure to withstand the Radical Republican influence, the Democratic press positioned itself firmly to oppose to the Republican party. Although the Republican party was larger than its small vocal radical faction, the Democrats continued to label the party with that description. The ability of the press to maintain and circulate established democratic principles allowed the Democrats to powerfully attack the Republican party's innovations as hypocritical and inconsistent. And while this cohesion gave them the stability to seriously challenge the Republicans, it also denied them the ability to restructure and compromise, a fact that would keep them in the opposition seats for many years.

Summary

By 1861 the Democratic party was in disarray and of minority status. By 1868 their situation had not changed dramatically. The war only further divided the Democrats and disharmony continued between the factions. Although party positions on the method and manner of war and reconstruction were clear in party platforms and congressional records, their position with regard to black rights was less evident. Even after stating their opposition to suffrage in the 1868 platform, the Democrats' congressional arguments remained rooted in uninventive constitutional and legal ramifications. These facts did not depict an emotionally vibrant or cohesive party with regard to any issue, including black rights. Careful study of the party press portrayed a different reality.

The Michigan Democratic press displayed an impressive pattern of continuity in their arguments against the expansion of black rights. The foundation of the editorial arguments remained the same and the editorial faith in the party remained unshaken. Even after defeat, the press continued to address the next issue with the same arguments and vitality. In direct opposition to the facts, the press was strong and cohesive. If the party was undergoing serious internal struggles, they did not affect the press' response to the expansion of black rights. There was no indication of purist versus legitimist ideology debates, nor was there indication of disillusionment or insecurity. The party principles were clearly defined and reflected those in past years. There was a continuity and consistency attributed to the party that secured its foundation and allowed for unexpected strength. Not only did this permit the press to reflect and diffuse the party line, but it also permitted the press to move beyond the static, proper political rhetoric of the times. The emotional vibrancy of the Democratic party and its continuing mass support was clearly evident in the press. The ability of the press to maintain a cohesion attested to its importance and power. The Democratic editors recognized the role of the newspapers as a political necessity.

As a result of its cohesion the Democratic press was able to do more than report facts. They actively criticized and questioned the Republican administration and its legislation. Although a political minority, the Democrats' success at hampering and delaying black rights expansion was considerable. By 1870, after a wavering start in 1861, the Democratic press had established a continuity of behavior and function that stymied further legislation for many years. The increased aggressive rhetoric against the

Republican party and Negro suffrage indicated a competitive minority party. The Civil War and Reconstruction reinforced the Democrats' commitment to their ideology, a devotion so deep that it made compromise impossible. Not until the promulgation of the Fifteenth Amendment in March 1870 did the Democrats begin to recognize the correlation between moderation and success.²²⁴

Further Considerations

This research suggests the existence of a cohesive Democratic party structure that is in direct contrast to the factional division of the era. Further study should be undertaken to assess whether this cohesion extended beyond the issue of black rights. The Democratic party may display the disjuncture in other areas of discourse. In addition, measurement of the quantity of editorials per newspaper may be useful in identifying intensity levels of geographic regions. This could reveal regional attitude variations that may have existed within the state. Biographies of the various editors could also provide additional insight.

²²⁴Grossman, *The Democratic Party and the Negro*, 21.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

The Emancipation Proclamation

APPENDIX A: THE EMANCIPATION PROCLAMATION

Whereas, on the 22nd day of September, in the year of our Lord 1862, a proclamation was issued by the President of the United States, containing, among other things, the following, to wit:

That on the 1st day of January, in the year of our Lord 1863, all persons held as slaves within any state or designated part of a state, the people whereof shall then be in rebellion against the United States, shall be then, thenceforward, and forever free; and the executive government of the United States, including the military and naval authority thereof, will recognize and maintain the freedom of such persons and will do no act or acts to repress such persons, or any of them, in any efforts they may make for their actual freedom.

That the executive will, on the 1st day of January aforesaid, by proclamation, designate the states and parts of states, if any, in which the people thereof, respectively, shall then be in rebellion against the United States; and the fact that any state or the people thereof shall on that day be in good faith represented in the Congress of the United States by members chosen thereto at elections wherein a majority of the qualified voters of such states shall have participated shall, in the absence of strong countervailing testimony, be deemed conclusive evidence that such state and the people thereof are not then in rebellion against the United States.

Now, therefore, I, Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States, by virtue of the power in me vested as commander in chief of the Army and Navy of the United States, in time of actual armed rebellion against the authority and government of the United States, and as a fit and necessary war measure for suppressing said rebellion, do, on this 1st day of January, in the year of our Lord 1863, and in accordance with my

purpose so to do, publicly proclaimed for the full period of 100 days from the day first above mentioned, order and designate as the states and parts of states wherein the people thereof, respectively, are this day in rebellion against the United States the following, to wit:

Arkansas, Texas, Louisiana (except the parishes of St. Bernard, Plaquemines, Jefferson, St. John, St. Charles, St. James, Ascension, Assumption, Terrebonne, Lafourche, St. Mary, St. Martin, and Orleans, including the city of New Orleans), Mississippi, Alabama, Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, and Virginia (except the forty-eight counties designated as West Virginia, and also the counties of Berkeley, Accomac, Northampton, Elizabeth City, York, Princess Anne, and Norfolk, including the cities of Norfolk and Portsmouth), and which excepted parts are for the present left precisely as if this proclamation were not issued.

And, by virtue of the power and for the purpose aforesaid, I do order and declare that all persons held as slaves within said designated states and parts of states are, and henceforward shall be, free; and that the executive government of the United States, including the military and naval authorities thereof, will recognize and maintain the freedom of said persons.

And I hereby enjoin upon the people so declared to be free to abstain from all violence, unless in necessary self-defense; and I recommend to them that, in all cases when allowed, they labor faithfully for reasonable wages.

And I further declare and make known that such persons of suitable condition will be received into the armed service of the United States to garrison forts, positions, stations, and other places, and to man vessels of all sorts in said service.

And upon this act, sincerely believed to be an act of justice, warranted by the Constitution upon military necessity, I invoke the considerate judgment of mankind and the gracious favor of Almighty God.

APPENDIX B

Democratic Party Platforms

APPENDIX B: DEMOCRATIC PARTY PLATFORMS

Democratic Platform of 1856

Resolved, That the American Democracy place their trust in the intelligence, the patriotism, and the discriminating justice of the American people.

Resolved, That we regard this as a distinctive feature of our political creed, which we are proud to maintain before the world, as the great moral element in a form of government springing from and upheld by the popular will; and we contrast it with the creed and practice of Federalism, under whatever name or form, which seeks to palsy the will of the constituent, and which conceives no imposture too monstrous for the popular credulity.

Resolved, therefore, That, entertaining these views, the Democratic party of this Union, through their Delegates assembled in a general Convention, coming together in a spirit of concord, of devotion to the doctrine and faith of a free representative government, and appealing to their fellow-citizens for the rectitude of their intentions, renew and re-assert before the American people, the declarations of principles avowed by them when on former occasions in general Convention, they have presented their candidates for the popular suffrage.

1. That the Federal Government is one of limited power, derived solely from the Constitution; and the grants of power made therein ought to be strictly construed by all the departments and agents of the government; and that it is inexpedient and dangerous to exercise doubtful constitutional powers.

2. That the Constitution does not confer upon the General Government the power to commence and carry on a general system of internal improvements.

3. That the Constitution does not confer upon the General Government the power to commence and carry on a general system of internal improvements.

4. That justice and sound policy forbid the Federal Government to foster one branch of industry to the detriment of any other, or to cherish the interests of one portion to the injury of another portion of our common country; that every citizen and every section of the country has a right to demand and insist upon an equality of rights and privileges, and to complete and ample protection of persons and property from domestic violence or foreign aggression.

5. That it is the duty of every branch of the Government to enforce and practice the most rigid economy in conducting our public affairs, and that no more revenue ought to be raised than is required to defray the necessary expenses of the Government, and for the gradual but certain extinction of the public debt.

6. That the proceeds of the public lands ought to be sacredly applied to the national objects specified in the Constitution; and that we are opposed to any law for the distribution of such proceeds among the States, as alike inexpedient in policy and repugnant to the Constitution.

7. That Congress has no power to charter a national bank; that we believe such an institution one of deadly hostility to the best interests of the country, dangerous to our republican institutions and the liberties of the people, and calculated to place the business of the country within the control of a concentrated money power, and above the laws and the will of the people; and that the results of Democratic legislation in this and all other financial measures upon which issues have been made between the two political parties of the country, have demonstrated to candid and practical men of all parties, their soundness, safety, and utility, in all business pursuits.

8. That the separation of the moneys of the Government from banking institutions is indispensable for the safety of the funds of the Government and the rights of the people.

9. That we are decidedly opposed to taking from the President the qualified veto power, by which he is enabled, under restrictions and responsibilities amply sufficient to guard the public interests, to suspend the passage of a bill whose merits cannot secure the approval of two-third of the Senate and House of Representatives, until the judgment of the people can be obtained thereon, and which has saved the American people from the corrupt and tyrannical domination of the Bank of the United States, and from a corrupting system of general internal improvements.

10. That the liberal principles embodied by Jefferson in the Declaration of Independence, and sanctioned by the Constitution, which makes ours the land of liberty and the asylum of the oppressed of every nation, have ever been cardinal principles in the Democratic faith, and every attempt to abridge the privilege of becoming citizens and the

owners of soil among us, ought to be resisted with the same spirit which swept the alien and sedition laws from our statute-books.

And Whereas, Since the foregoing declaration was uniformly adopted by our predecessors in National Conventions, an adverse political and religious test has been secretly organized by a party claiming to be exclusively American, it is proper that the American Democracy should clearly define its relation thereto and declare its determined opposition to all secret political societies, by whatever name they may be called.

Resolved, That the foundation of this union of States having been laid in, and its prosperity, expansion, and pre-eminent example in free government, built upon entire freedom in matters of religious concernment, and no respect of person in regard to rank or place of birth; no party can justly be deemed national, constitutional, or in accordance with American principles, which bases its exclusive organization upon religious opinions and accidental birth-place. And hence a political crusade in the nineteenth century, and in the United States of America, against Catholic and foreign-born is neither justified by the past history or the future prospects of the country, nor in unison with the spirit of toleration and enlarged freedom which peculiarly distinguishes the American system of popular government.

Resolved, That we reiterate with renewed energy of purpose the well considered declarations of former Conventions upon the sectional issue of Domestic slavery, and concerning the reserved rights of the States.

1. That Congress has no power under the Constitution, to interfere with or control the domestic institutions of the several States, and that such States are the sole and proper

judges of everything appertaining to their own affairs, not prohibited by the Constitution; that all efforts of the abolitionists, or others, made to induce Congress to interfere with questions of slavery, or to take incipient steps in relation thereto, are calculated to lead to the most alarming and dangerous consequences; and that all such efforts have an inevitable tendency to diminish the happiness of the people and endanger the stability and permanency of the Union, and ought not to be countenanced by any friend of our political institutions.

2. That the foregoing proposition covers, and was intended to embrace the whole subject of slavery agitation in Congress; and therefore, the Democratic party of the Union, standing on this national platform, will abide by and adhere to a faithful execution of the acts known as the compromise measures, settled by the Congress of 1850; "the act for reclaiming fugitives from service or labor," included; which act being designed to carry out an express provision of the Constitution, cannot, with fidelity thereto, be repealed, or so changed as to destroy or impair its efficiency.

3. That the Democratic party will resist all attempts at renewing, in Congress or out of it, the agitation of the slavery question under whatever shape or color the attempt may be made.

4. That the Democratic party will faithfully abide by and uphold, the principles laid down in the Kentucky and Virginia resolutions of 1798, and in the report of Mr. Madison to the Virginia Legislature in 1799; that it adopts those principles as constituting one of the main foundations of its political creed, and is resolved to carry them out in their obvious meaning and import.

And that we may more distinctly meet the issue on which a sectional party, subsisting exclusively on slavery agitation, now relies to test the fidelity of the people, North and South, to the Constitution and the Union-

1. Resolved, That claiming fellowship with, and desiring the co-operation of all who regard the preservation of the Union under the Constitution as the paramount issue- and repudiating all sectional parties and platforms concerning domestic slavery, which seek to embroil the States and incite to treason and armed resistance to law in the Territories; and whose avowed purposes, if consummated, must end in civil war and disunion, the American Democracy recognize and adapt the principles contained in the organic laws establishing the Territories of Kansas and Nebraska as embodying the only sound and safe solution of the "slavery question" upon which the great national idea of the people of this whole country can repose in its determined conservatism of the Union—NON-INTERFERENCE BY CONGRESS WITH SLAVERY IN STATE AND TERRITORY, OR IN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA.

2. That this was the basis of the compromises of 1850—confirmed by both the Democratic and Whig parties in national Conventions—ratified by the people in the election of 1852, and rightly applied to the organization of Territories in 1854.

3. That by the uniform application of this Democratic principle to the organization of territories, and to the admission of new States, with or without domestic slavery, as they may elect—the equal rights, of all the States will be preserved intact—the original compacts of the Constitution maintained inviolate—and the perpetuity and expansion of this Union insured to its utmost capacity of embracing, in peace and harmony, every

future American State that may be constituted or annexed, with a republican form of government.

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.

Resolved, Finally, That in view of the condition of popular institutions in the Old World (and the dangerous tendencies of sectional agitation, combined with the attempt to enforce civil and religious disabilities against the rights of acquiring and enjoying citizenship, in our own land)—a high and sacred duty is devolved with increased responsibility upon the Democratic party of this country, as the party of the Union, to uphold and maintain the rights of every State, and thereby the Union of the States; and to sustain and advance among us constitutional liberty, by continuing to resist all monopolies and exclusive legislation for the benefit of the few, at the expense of the many, and by a vigilant and constant adherence to those principles and compromises of the Constitution, which are broad enough and strong enough to embrace and uphold the Union as it was, the Union as it is, and the Union as it shall be, in the full expansion of the energies and capacity of this great and progressive people.

1. Resolved, That there are questions connected with the foreign policy of this country, which are inferior to no domestic question whatever. The time has come for the people of the United States to declare themselves in favor of free seas and progressive

free trade throughout the world, and, by solemn manifestations, to place their moral influence at the side of their successful example.

2. Resolved, That our geographical and political position with reference to the other States of this continent, no less than the interest of our commerce and the development of our growing power, requires that we should hold as sacred the principles involved in the Monroe Doctrine: their bearing and import admit of no misconstruction; they should be applied with unbending rigidity.

3. Resolved, That the great highway which nature, as well as the assent of the States most immediately interested in its maintenance, has marked out for a free communication between the Atlantic and the Pacific oceans, constitutes one of the most important achievements realized by the spirit of modern times and the unconquerable energy of our people. That result should be secured by a timely and efficient exertion of the control which we have the right to claim over it, and no power on earth should be suffered to impede or clog its progress by an interference with the relations it may suit our policy to establish between our government and the Governments of the States within whose dominions it lies. We can, under no circumstances, surrender our preponderance in the adjustment of all questions arising out of it.

4. Resolved, That, in view of so commanding an interest, the people of the United States cannot but sympathize with the efforts which are being made by the people of Central America to regenerate that portion of the continent which covers the passage across the Interoceanic Isthmus.

5. Resolved, That the Democratic party will expect of the next Administration that every proper effort be made to insure our ascendancy in the Gulf of Mexico, and to maintain a permanent protection to the great outlets through which are emptied into its waters the products raised out of the soil and the commodities created by the industry of the people of our Western valleys and the Union at large.

Resolved, That the Democratic party recognizes the great importance, in a political and commercial point of view, of a safe and speedy communication, by military and postal roads, through our own territory, between the Atlantic and Pacific coasts of this Union, and that it is the duty of the Federal Government to exercise promptly all its constitutional power to the attainment of that object, thereby binding the Union of these States in indissoluble bonds, and opening to the rich commerce of Asia an overland transit from the Pacific to the Mississippi River, and the great lakes of the North.

Resolved, That the administration of Franklin Pierce has been true to the great interests of the country. In the face of the most determined opposition it has maintained the laws, enforced economy, fostered progress, and infused integrity and vigor into every department of the government at home. It has signally improved our treaty relations, extended the field of commercial enterprise, and vindicated the rights of American citizens abroad. It has asserted with eminent impartiality the just claims of every section, and has at all times been faithful to the Constitution. We therefore proclaim our unqualified approbation of its measures and its policy.

Democratic Platform of 1860

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:

2. Inasmuch as difference of opinion exists 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,

Resolved, That the Democratic party will abide by the decision of the Supreme Court of the United States upon these questions of Constitutional law.

3. Resolved, That it is the duty of the United States to afford ample and complete protection to all its citizens, whether at home or abroad, and whether native or foreign born.

4. Resolved, That one of the necessities of the age, in a military, commercial, and postal point of view, is speedy communication between the Atlantic and Pacific States; and the Democratic party pledge such Constitutional Government aid as will insure the construction a Railroad to the Pacific coast, at the earliest practicable period.

5. Resolved, That the Democratic party are in favor of the acquisition of the Island of Cuba on such terms as shall be honorable to ourselves and just to Spain.

6. Resolved, That the enactments of the State Legislatures to defeat the faithful execution of the Fugitive Slave Law, are hostile in character, subversive of the Constitution, and revolutionary in their effect.

7. Resolved, That it is in accordance with the interpretation of the Cincinnati platform that during the existence of the Territorial Governments the measure of 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 promptness and fidelity by every branch of the general government.

Democratic (Breckinridge Faction) Platform of 1860

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

1. 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 persons or property, being destroyed or impaired by Congressional or Territorial legislation.

2. That it is the duty of the Federal Government, in all its departments, to protect, when necessary, the rights of persons and property in the Territories, and wherever else its constitutional authority extends.

3. That when the settlers in a Territory, having an adequate population, form a State Constitution, the right of sovereignty commences, and being consummated by admission into the Union, they stand on an equal footing with the people of other States, and the State thus organized ought to be admitted into the Federal Union, whether its Constitution prohibits or recognized the institution of slavery.

Resolved, That the Democratic party are in favor of the acquisition of the Island of Cuba, on such terms as shall be honorable to ourselves and just to Spain, at the earliest practicable moment.

Resolved, That the enactments of State Legislatures to defeat the faithful execution of the Fugitive Slave Law are hostile in character, subversive of the Constitution, and revolutionary in their effect.

Resolved, That the Democracy of the United States recognize it as the imperative duty of this Government to protect the naturalized citizen in all his rights, whether at home or in foreign lands, to the same extent as its native-born citizens.

WHEREAS, One of the greatest necessities of the age, in a political, commercial, postal and military point of view, is a speedy communication between the Pacific and Atlantic coasts. Therefore be it

Resolved, That the National Democratic party do hereby pledge themselves to use every means in their power to secure the passage of some bill, to the extent of the constitutional authority of Congress, for the construction of a Pacific Railroad from the Mississippi River to the Pacific Ocean, at the earliest practicable moment.

Democratic Platform of 1864

Resolved, That in the future, as in the past, we will adhere with unswerving fidelity to the Union under the Constitution as the only solid foundation of our strength, security, and happiness as a people, and as a framework of government equally conducive to the welfare and prosperity of all the States, both Northern and Southern.

Resolved, That this convention does explicitly declare, as the sense of the American people, that after four years of failure to restore the Union by the experiment of war, during which, under the pretense of a military necessity of war-power higher than the Constitution, the Constitution itself has been disregarded in every part, and public liberty and private right alike trodden down, and the material prosperity of the country essentially impaired, justice, humanity, liberty, and the public welfare demand that immediate efforts be made for a cessation of hostilities, with a view of an ultimate convention of the States, or other peaceable means, to the end that, at the earliest practicable moment, peace may be restored on the basis of the Federal Union of the States.

Resolved, That the direct interference of the military authorities of the United States in the recent elections held in Kentucky, Maryland, Missouri, and Delaware was a shameful violation of the Constitution, and a repetition of such acts in the approaching election will be held as revolutionary, and resisted with all the means and power under our control.

Resolved, That the aim and object of the Democratic party is to preserve the Federal Union and the rights of the States unimpaired, and they hereby declare that they consider that the administrative usurpation of extraordinary and dangerous powers not granted by the Constitution—the subversion of the civil by military law in States not in insurrection; the arbitrary military arrest, imprisonment, trial, and sentence of American citizens in States where civil law exists in full force; the suppression of freedom of speech and of the press; the denial of the right of asylum; the open and avowed disregard of State rights; the employment of unusual test-oath; and the interference with and denial of the right of the people to bear arms in their defense is calculated to prevent a restoration of the Union and the perpetuation of a Government deriving its just powers from the consent of the governed.

Resolved, That the shameful disregard of the Administration to its duty in respect to our fellow-citizens who now are and long have been prisoners of war and in a suffering condition, deserves the severest reprobation on the score alike of public policy and common humanity.

Resolved, That the sympathy of the Democratic party is heartily and earnestly extended to the soldiery of our army and sailors of our navy, who are and have been in the field and on the sea under the flag of our country, and, in the events of its attaining power, they will receive all the care, protection, and regard that the brave soldiers and sailors of the republic have so nobly earned.

Democratic Platform of 1868

The Democratic party in National Convention assembled, reposing its trust in the intelligence, patriotism, and discriminating justice of the people; standing upon the Constitution as the foundation and limitation of the powers of the government, and the guarantee of the liberties of the citizen; and recognizing the questions of slavery and secession as having been settled for all time to come by the war, or the voluntary action of the Southern States in Constitutional Conventions assembled, and never to be renewed or reagitated; does, with the return of peace, demand,

First. Immediate restoration of all the States to their rights in the Union, under the Constitution, and of civil government to the American people.

Second. Amnesty for all past political offenses, and the regulation of the elective franchise in the States, by their citizens.

Third. Payment of the public debt of the United States as rapidly as practicable. All moneys drawn from the people by taxation, except so much as is requisite for the necessities of the government, economically administered, being honestly applied to such payment, and where the obligations of the government do not expressly state upon their face, or the law under which they were issued does not provide, that they shall be paid in coin, they ought, in right and in justice, to be paid in the lawful money of the United States.

Fourth. Equal taxation of every species of property, according to its real value, including government bonds and other public securities.

Fifth. One currency for the government and the people, the laborer and the office-holder, the pensioner and the soldier, the producer and the bond-holder.

Sixth. Economy in the administration of the government, the reduction of the standing army and navy; the abolition of the Freedmen's Bureau; and all political instrumentalities designed to secure negro supremacy; simplification of the system and discontinuance of inquisitorial modes of assessing and collecting internal revenue, so that the burden of taxation may be equalized and lessened, the credit of the government and the currency made good; the repeal of all enactments for enrolling the State militia into national forces in time of peace; and a tariff for revenue upon foreign imports, such as will afford incidental protection to domestic manufactures, and as will, without impairing the revenue, impose the least burden upon, and best promote and encourage the great industrial interests of the country.

Seventh. Reform of abuses in the administration; the expulsion of corrupt men from office; the abrogation of useless offices; the restoration of rightful authority to, and the independence of the executive and judicial departments of the government; the subordination of the military to the civil power, to the end that the usurpations of Congress and the despotism of the sword may cease.

Eighth. Equal rights and protection for naturalized and native-born citizens at home and abroad; the assertion of American nationality, which shall command the respect of foreign powers, and furnish an example and encouragement to people struggling for

national integrity, constitutional liberty, and individual rights, and the maintenance of the rights of naturalized citizens against the absolute doctrine of immutable allegiance and the claims of foreign powers to punish them for alleged crimes committed beyond their jurisdiction.

In demanding these measures and reforms we arraign the Radical party for its disregard of right, and the unparalleled oppression and tyranny which have marked its career.

After the most solemn and unanimous pledge of both Houses of Congress to prosecute the war exclusively for the maintenance of the government and the preservation of the Union under the Constitution, it has repeatedly violated that most sacred pledge, under which alone was rallied that noble volunteer army which carried our flag to victory.

Instead of restoring the Union, it has, so far as in its power, dissolved it, and subjected ten States, in time of profound peace, to military despotism and negro supremacy.

It has nullified there the right of trial by jury; it has abolished the habeas corpus, that most sacred writ of liberty; it has overthrown the freedom of speech and of the press; it has substituted arbitrary seizures and arrests, and military trials and secret star-chamber inquisitions, for the constitutional tribunals; it has disregarded in time of peace the right of the people to be free from searches and seizures; it has entered the post and telegraph offices, and even the private rooms of individuals, and seized their private papers and letters without any specific charge or notice of affidavit, as required by the organic law; it has converted the American capitol into a Bastille; it has established a system of spies

and official espionage to which no constitutional monarchy of Europe would now dare to resort; it has abolished the right of appeal, on important constitutional questions, to the Supreme Judicial tribunal, and threatens to curtail, or destroy, its original jurisdiction, which is irrevocably vested by the Constitution; while the learned Chief Justice has been subjected to the most atrocious calumnies, merely because he would not prostitute his high office to the support of the false and partisan charges preferred against the President. Its corruption and extravagance have exceeded anything known in history, and by its frauds and monopolies it has nearly doubled the burden of the debt created by the war; it has stripped the President of his constitutional power of appointment, even of his own Cabinet. Under its repeated assaults the pillars of the government are rocking on their base, and should it succeed in November next and inaugurate its President, we will meet, as a subjected and conquered people, amid the ruins of liberty and the scattered fragments of the Constitution.

An we do declare and resolve, That ever since the people of the United States threw off all subjection to the British crown, the privilege and trust of suffrage have belonged to the several States, and have been granted, regulated, and controlled exclusively by the political power of each State respectively, and that any attempt by congress, on any pretext whatever, to deprive any State of this right, or interfere with its exercise, is a flagrant usurpation of power, which can find no warrant in the Constitution; and if sanctioned by the people will subvert our form of government, and can only end in a single centralized and consolidated government, in which the separate existence of the States will be entirely absorbed, and an unqualified despotism be established in place

of a federal union of co-equal States; and that we regard the reconstruction acts so-called, of Congress, as such an usurpation, and unconstitutional, revolutionary, and void.

That our soldiers and sailors, who carried the flag of our country to victory against a most gallant and determined foe, must ever be gratefully remembered, and all the guarantees given in their favor must be faithfully carried into execution.

That the public lands should be distributed as widely as possible among the people, and should be disposed of either under the pre-emption or homestead laws, or sold in reasonable quantities, and to none but actual occupants, at the minimum price established by the government. When grants of the public lands may be deemed necessary for the encouragement of important public improvements, the proceeds of the sale of such lands, and not the lands themselves, should be so applied.

That the President of the United States, Andrew Johnson, in exercising the power of his high office in resisting the aggressions of Congress upon the Constitutional rights of the States and the people, is entitled to the gratitude of the whole American people; and in behalf of the Democratic party, we tender him our thanks for this patriotic efforts in that regard.

Upon this platform the Democratic party appeals to every patriot, including all the Conservative element, and all who desire to support the Constitution and restore the Union, forgetting all past differences of opinion, to unite with us in the present great struggle for the liberties of the people; and that to all such, to whatever party they may have heretofore belonged, we extend the right hand of fellowship, and hail all such co-operating with us as friend and brethren.

Resolved, That this convention sympathize cordially with the workingmen of the United States in their efforts to protect the rights and interests of the laboring classes of the country.

Resolved, That the thanks of the convention are tendered to Chief Justice Salmon P. Chase for the justice, dignity, and impartiality with which he presided over the court of impeachment on the trial of President Andrew Johnson.

APPENDIX C

Selected Newspaper Editorials

APPENDIX C: SELECTED NEWSPAPER EDITORIALS²²⁵

Monroe Monitor, 1 November 1865

"Negro Suffrage"

The Radicals are urging negro suffrage with a blindness truly characteristic of the party. They shut their eyes to the effect it may have on the whites, and to the condition of the blacks, who are poorly prepared for its intelligent exercise. No one complains of the colored men of Hayti and Liberia for denying the right to the whites, for the experience of the world justifies the policy. De Tocqueville says the two races never have in any country or at any time lived on terms of equality—that where the whites have had a majority they have invariably enslaved or degraded the blacks, and where the blacks have had the large majority they have invariably murdered off the whites. The same prejudices exist in America that have always existed in other countries and will accomplish the same results if radical policy prevails. It may not be right that it is so. But it is so, and we must meet the question as a practical one, and not be led by blind theory.

²²⁵These editorials are a random selection of representative editorials in chronological order.

Every person knows that in the south, where the radicals are the most anxious to force negro suffrage, more out of a feeling of spite to the whites that love to the blacks, not one in a hundred is prepared for it, even if they can prosper in freedom, which is yet to be determined. Surely it would be bad policy, while other States reject negro suffrage, for Michigan to adopt it, and by so doing invite a large ingress of the colored people, unless, as some contend, they need them as servants. The more this question is considered the more careful the people will be to reject negro suffrage; and this they may do out of pure philanthropy to the colored man. Intelligent blacks admit that a separation of the races is best, and the abolition of slavery in name amounts to nothing unless this can be effected. Let the effort, then, be to colonize the blacks in Liberia or some other country where they can be men. They have been used quite long enough for partizan imposition. By making them the instruments of civilization in Africa this country and the world may be greatly benefitted, and another expensive war—a war of races if radical policy prevails—may be avoided. In America they can hope for no better fate than that of the Indian tribes, which means robbery and extermination under the plea of necessity and progress, or, as radicalism would have it, in the name of "God and Humanity."

The Marshall Democratic Expounder, 27 September 1866

"The Radical Scheme"

Differences in political opinions are to be expected, and in ordinary times the issues involved in their settlement excites little apprehension because not of a vital character; but the question now before the American people have much more than mere party significance, the issue involved in them is not whether this or that party is to fall or succeed, but whether this Government is to stand, the Constitution remain; and the union of the States be perpetuated, upon the principle of fraternal regard, through all time; or we are to have a Government subject to the caprice of party, built upon the ruin of the Constitution framed by the fathers of the Republic, and open to all the objections of the Governments of the South American States.

In the avowed plans of the Radicals every right thinking man has ground for grave apprehension for the future of his country because he must see that these designs are revolutionary in their scope, and calculated to subvert the very foundation of our political fabric; and, if successful, will bring about a fundamental change in our national organization. Hence we are indisposed to look with indifference at the Radical moves on the political chess-board, and do nothing to checkmate them. During the war their real designs were cunningly covered up. On the start very little, if anything, was seen of them. The Radicals professed a virtuous indignation at the rebellious attempt at the life of the Government and resolved and declared that their only goal was to put down the armed resistance to the laws and authority of the Government; that they had no purpose of

conquest, subjugation, or of interfering with any of the existing rights and established institutions of the rebellious States. But, from that time forward, their plans have been gradually unfolded: First we had the employment of negro soldiers (to make bancomb for the future use of Radical orators), then the emancipation proclamation, then the confiscation act, then the central directory, or committee of fifteen, then the constitutional amendment, or restoration (!) policy of Congress; and now the whole scheme of constitutional overthrow and Radical away culminate and is made apparent in the recent speech of Thad Stevens, at Lancaster, Pa., an abstract of which will be found in another column, taken from the *N.T. Times* (Republican), who lays down with force and earnestness, and in a manner which leaves no doubt of his determination to push forward this nefarious scheme with all that rampant zeal for which he is celebrated.

We can now see to what the nation is drifting. We are on a point of anarchy and ruin which is indeed fearful to contemplate. We now see what these desperate and designing men have in view. There is no air drawn dagger aimed at the heart of the nation. Can there be anything more hideous or revolting to true manliness or patriotism? We have before an unhappy picture of our country's desolation. and why is all this—merely to raise the negro to a political equality with the white man! To accomplish this end, the Radicals are willing to sacrifice every interest of the country, all constitutional obligations, all laws, all established usages, all fundamental principles, and to rear upon their broken and dismantled altars their own hideous and monstrous idol, NEGRO EQUALITY! Are the freemen of the nation, are those who fought for the Union and the preservation of the thirty-six stars on its bright and glorious banner, going to

permit a scheme so fraught with evil, so revolting to every sense of justice, and at variance with every idea of right—a scheme not only unjust in its measures but revolutionary in its designs and effects—to prevail? Let all men reflect upon these things and beware of those who would overthrow the Government.

East Saginaw Courier, 29 November 1866

"The New National Raid"

Now that the election is over and it is seen that the Constitutional Amendment is likely to go to the wall for want of a sufficient number of States disposed to adopt it, another National raid is made on the negro. It is not this time, negro slavery—that has departed,

"Some—glimmering like a dream of things that were

A school-boy's tale—the wonder of an hour—"

It is not Freedmen's Bureau Bills—Congress has already secured them—secured them in spite of Executive vetoes—in spite of common sense. It is not African education, for Massachusetts is attending to that. In fact, that good and pious State monopolizes that whole matter, and she rather enjoys it, for it furnishes a splendid field of labor wherein to employ her super-abundant female population. It is none of these things. Of course not. It is NEGRO SUFFRAGE. This is the National raid of to-day—a raid that is being pushed forward with an energy, zest and confidence that betoken splendid and brilliant results.

In former times, when the Constitution was regarded as the fundamental law of the land, and its mandates were considered as obligatory both upon legislators and people, such a raid could not have been conceived of except by such astute and patriotic citizens as Wendall Phillips, Frederick Douglass and their confreres. Then the question of suffrage was regarded as exclusively under the control of the people of the several States,—that

it was for them to prescribe the qualifications of electors and the eligibility of persons to office. Such ideas were of course very stupid. To be sure the Constitution sanctioned them—and it does to-day, but what of that? Has that instrument any force against a revolution endorsed by the Republican majority? Can it be supposed to have power enough to withstand a Republican decree? No sane person, could for a moment, entertain so foolish an idea. Is not the Republican majority the people, and are not the people greater than Constitutions? Of course. Then if that majority design to secure Negro Suffrage through Congressional legislation isn't it nonsense to say that they are estopped by the Constitution from doing so; what hinders this new raid from achieving success? Certainly no rights of the minority, no principles of the Constitution, no considerations of reason, no hopes of benefit to the negro; for it is pushed forward in entire and absolute disregard of all these. The only question for consideration is, will it benefit the great Republican party? Answer that in the affirmative, and success is certain.

Now, while this is the Radical view of this question of Negro Suffrage, we are disposed to adhere to the old time doctrine of the Constitution regarding it. We believe in National legislation only upon such subjects as Congress has a clear Constitutional right to legislate upon. This matter of suffrage is exclusively under the control of the States. We believe it should be kept there. If any State desires to confer upon her negroes the elective franchise, it is her undoubted right to do so. And whether it is desirable or not, none but the citizens of such State have a right to determine. If to-day Michigan is disposed to act upon the question, we haven't the slightest objection to her doing so. We know personally of some Democrats who are in favor of extending suffrage to our negro

population, and we know of some Republicans who are opposed to. Beyond all doubt, men of both parties, looking simply to the result of their action upon the interests of this state will act so as, in their judgment, most effectually to promote those interests. And the citizens here are entirely competent to decide intelligently upon the question. But whether the elective franchise should be extended to the negroes of South Carolina; or any other Southern State, we don't think the people of Michigan are either competent or have any right to determine. Therefore we don't believe in this new threatened raid to secure Negro Suffrage by Congressional legislation—There is no warrant for it in the Constitution and there is no demand for it in the necessities of the nation.—and we don't know of but one party willing to espouse it simply on the grounds of party expediency and that is the party of the Radicals. Certainly, the Democracy can be guilty of such conduct.

Detroit Free Press, 12 July 1867

"Negro Suffrage in Michigan"

The *Chicago Tribune* has interested itself in the question of negro suffrage in Michigan, and as is usual with papers of its political persuasion, its article contains much more of assertion than of argument, to say nothing of some misrepresentation. For instance, it says "the whole argument, if there be any, against equal suffrage is abandoned by the Democratic proposition to admit to that right the negroes not in that State." We should like to know the authority of the *Tribune* for stating this as a Democratic proposition. We know of no Democrat who proposes it, or who believes in its wisdom or policy. We do not believe it would secure a single Democratic vote in this State. They do not believe generally that negroes should have any part or parcel in a government for white men. They do not believe generally that the negroes, as a race, are capable of ever becoming intelligent voters. They certainly do not deem them so yet, and have never made a proposition to grant them the privilege except in the unprincipled suggestion contained in the *Chicago Times* some time ago in its article of advice to the South. In Michigan no Democrat, so far as we know, either desires, approves, or proposes any such idea. More than this, we do not believe that half of the Republican voters wish any such thing, and if the question can be divested of others with which it is sought to mix it up in order that these Republicans may shut their eyes and swallow the dose whole, we believe that it will be voted down next fall. The radical leaders and organs know this, and

therefore try to make it a partisan question. Their majority in this State insures the granting of the privilege if all can be shipped into voting for it, and hence they seek to conceal or deny its inevitable result, and to keep out of sight the effect of it as a policy on the welfare of the people. This the Democracy are determined they shall not do, and it shall not be our fault if the people of Michigan are taught to look upon it as something more than a mere partisan or political question.

It is very easy for the *Chicago Tribune* and the *Detroit Post* to assert that the negro population in the Northern States will never be largely increased; that the great body of the freedmen will remain where they were born or raised; that they will never as a people come North. We might even concede these statements, and it would not weaken our opinion that Michigan, surrounded as it is by Canada, Ohio, Indiana and Illinois, all of which are abundant in negroes who have left where they were born or raised, and who are denied that equality which has been held out to them as the greatest of boons, would by granting them the political equality hold out the inducement of social equality and attract them within her borders. It is not necessary to go among the freedmen of the South to find the accession to our negro population, which would flock in, if Michigan, in advance of her neighbors, offered them such an inducement. And it is on this ground that we have thus far opposed granting them the privilege, not because we have not several other grounds which we shall, at the proper time, advance, but because this is the ground that affects everybody's interest, and hurts no person's prejudices or predilections, political or otherwise.

We submit that if the negroes are capable of appreciating either political or social equality they would be attracted by the offers of them. And we offer this argument against the mere assertion of partisan journals that they would not come here. By trying to show that they would not come, these journals virtually admit the evils which would follow their settlement among us. They cannot deny that an addition of fifty or a hundred thousand adult male negroes would be disastrous to the interests of the white laborers and population of this State. They, therefore, deny that they would come. We offer our opinion to the contrary, and we ask our readers to judge for themselves whether, if Michigan says to that race, this fall, that they shall immediately enjoy political equality (and that this will lead to social equality, at least with the laboring classes, none can deny), it is not offering a great inducement for the negroes of Canada and Ohio to immigrate within our borders, and thus avail themselves of the dearly coveted position? If it does not, then they are not human beings. If it does, and they come, we defy any one to argue that they will not contest in everything from political preferment to daily labor, with the white laboring population now in our midst. We ask that population if they desire such a competition, and we have no doubt of their answer. We leave it to them if there is not danger of it if the privilege is granted.

Niles Democratic Republican, 22 November 1867

"A War of Races"

The why in which the recent elections have been conducted in the South, will, sooner or latter bring on a war of races in that unhappy portion of the country. It need not be expected that the once haughty and proud people of the south are going to always submit to being governed by their former ignorant slaves; but on the contrary will make a desperate effort to clear their country of the black race. The election returns from the south shows that the blacks voted in a mass for the radical ticket, while the whites voted the conservative ticket. A few negroes in Richmond did vote the conservative ticket, and were notified by a negro vigilance committee to leave the city at once, and not content with that the same committee ordered two prominent white citizens to leave or take the consequences, -This shows conclusively that the ignorant negro has no idea of the real meaning of franchise. The unanimity with which the negroes vote the radical ticket has been effected by means of the union leagues, which have been organized by the northern emissaries. The massacre of St. Domingo was brought about by just such an agency as this, and the blacks of the South to-day are ripe for any outrage that may be put under way. When the republican party conferred suffrage upon the southern blacks, they did the worst thing for them that could possibly have been done. Now that the right has been conferred on them, we do not see how it can ever be taken from them without serious trouble, and the idea of one million ignorant negroes having control of the political

destinies of the south is horrible to contemplate, and will soon receive the disapproval of the northern people. In three of the southern states, at least, the negroes are in the majority and can elect Governor, U. S. Senator, Congressmen, etc. In Virginia twenty-five negroes have been elected to the State Convention. Nice law makers those southern negroes will make. Oh what a commentary on free government.

The people of this country would not have allowed things to go thus far, if it had not been that the democratic party has been misrepresented by a class of loud mouthed politicians, who identified the party with southern rebels. These men have misrepresented the sentiments of nine tenths of their party, and are as much to blame for the deplorable condition of the country as any other class of men.

The Coldwater Sentinel, 31 July 1868

"The Fourteenth Amendment"

Congress, by resolution, on the 21st Inst. declared the fourteenth amendment to the Constitution adopted. To be consistent Congress should have declared it defeated. All turns upon the action of Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana, North Carolina and South Carolina. When those States ratified the thirteenth amendment, under their '65 governments, Congress accepted those ratifications as valid, and by them that amendment became a part of the Constitution. When, still under the same governments, they reject the fourteenth amendment Congress disregards those rejections. if it can lawfully do this, and then lawfully set up such governments as we now see there, and then lawfully accept ratifications thereunder as valid, then is the fourteenth amendment valid, and not otherwise. Its effect is to give Congress power to regulate suffrage in the States, and whether so hateful a jurisdiction is to be thimblerrigged into the Constitution is a question that must be answered in November. Unless the people crouch houndlike to this new aggression, this Congressional declaration of the final adoption of the fourteenth amendment is of no more potency than rotten tow.

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