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A History of Negro Voting in Louisiana, 1877-1906.

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1962

A HISTORY OF NEGRO VOTING IN LOUISIANA, 1877-1906

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Department of History

by

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ABSTRACT

Negro voting was the most revolutionary feature of the Reconstruction of the Southern states. To perpetuate their power Republicans secured the disfranchisement of whites and tried to control Negro votes.

The Constitution of 1868 placed the government of Louisiana in the hands of Negroes and Radicals. The major objective of white Louisianians during Reconstruction was to overthrow the Negro-Radical regime and to restore white rule. The "bargain" or "compromise" connected with the disputed presidential election of 1876 resulted in the removal of the Federal troops which had sustained Negro-Radical rule and in the recognition of Francis T. Nicholls, Democrat, as governor. The Republicans turned their attention to issues other than Negro voting, and white Louisianians grasped control of the state government.

The post-Reconstruction era was ushered in by a violent political revolution which redeemed the entire state for the whites. Bloody riots occurred in all areas in which Negro population was concentrated. Federal Justice officials were unsuccessful in their efforts to punish perpetrators of crimes against Negro voters. During the first decade following Reconstruction, Negro voters were controlled by fraud, purchase, cajolery, statutory devices and like expediencies.

The Bourbon Democrats considered it simpler to count the Negro's ballot for the Democratic Party than to prevent him from casting it.

The resentment of the white hill farmers at this use of Negro voters to the detriment of themselves led to competition between poor white Populists and rich white Bourbons to exploit Negro voters. The gubernatorial election of 1896 was a bitter struggle for Negro votes. The rich whites won the contest. Following their defeat, the poor whites initiated a demand for legal disfranchisement of Negroes. The Bourbons, weary of the corruption and expense connected with Negro voting, acquiesced in the demands of the Populists.

Legal disfranchisement was achieved by the restrictive provisions of the Constitution of 1898 and by the statute providing for compulsory white primaries in 1906. The Primary Act of 1906 empowered the State Central Committee of political parties to fix qualifications for voting. The Louisiana Democratic Central Committee prescribed that voters supporting the Democratic Party should be white Democrats.

There were no Republican primaries in Louisiana. The Lily-white movement had left the Republican Party so badly disorganized that it failed to poll the necessary proportion of the total vote of the state to be eligible to hold primaries. All nominations were made at white primaries. All candidates were white Democrats. The exclusion of Negroes

from Democratic primaries in 1906 meant virtually the end of Negro voting in Louisiana for over two decades.

CHAPTER I

PRELUDE TO NEGRO VOTING IN LOUISIANA

The most revolutionary feature of Reconstruction was Negro voting. The attempt of Northern Radicals to use Negro suffrage to destroy the political power of the planter aristocracy united southern whites politically and contributed to racial unrest in the South for generations. The Radical leaders of the Republican Party, who were in control of the national government, desired to perpetuate their power and hoped to use Negro voting as one means of continuing and strengthening their control. Since the Radicals were sponsoring Negro suffrage for selfish and mercenary reasons, they felt it necessary to insure Negro voting by an amendment to the United States constitution. The fifteenth amendment, which forbade the denying or abridging of the right of citizens to vote on account of race, was ratified in 1870 and became an effective partisan tool during Reconstruction.

In the state of Louisiana, however, Negro voting of a limited nature antedated Reconstruction by many years. Soon after its admission into the union in 1812, Louisiana became an agricultural frontier characterized by white cotton and black slaves. Small isolated groups of "free

persons of color" also contributed to the Negro population of the state. Although every ante-bellum constitution of Louisiana restricted suffrage to white men,¹ local elections were so bitter that rival candidates sometimes called free Negroes to their aid. These Negroes constituted a potential reserve of voters which unscrupulous politicians used during closely contested elections.

The best authenticated cases of this practice occurred in the central Louisiana parish of Rapides, at "Ten Mile Precinct." Here free Negroes, used as the tools of corrupt officeseekers, voted in certain elections from 1838 to 1860.² These free Negroes had descended from a few North Carolina slaves who had migrated to Louisiana in 1804 after their emancipation and had squatted on public lands located deep in the piney wood wilderness along Ten Mile Creek, then located in Rapides Parish. (This creek now is in the northwestern part of Allen Parish.) The free Negroes of this locality miscegenated with the poor whites of the piney woods, and color of their progeny was admitted to be no clue to their race.³ Their children were so closely related that

¹ Constitution of Louisiana, 1812, Article II, Constitution of Louisiana, 1845, Article X, Constitution of Louisiana, 1852, Article X.

² Roger Wallace Shugg, "Negro Voting in the Ante-bellum South," The Journal of Negro History, XXI (1936), 359.

³ New Orleans Crescent, Sept. 14, 1857, cited in Shugg, "Negro Voting," 359-362.

only a dozen answered to different surnames when, during Reconstruction, some sixty-odd voted at "Ten Mile Precinct."

The scandalous use of Negro votes in ante-bellum Louisiana, first publicized by the Know Nothing Party during the 1850's, also led to the exposure of the fraudulent use of Negro votes by the Whigs twenty years prior to that time. The Know Nothings made their appearance in Louisiana sometime between 1852 and 1854 and rapidly spread through the state.⁴ They directed their main attack against the political activities of ignorant and unnaturalized foreigners, but also protested against the corrupt practice of voting free Negroes by unscrupulous Democratic Party bosses. Colonel Robert A. Hunter, Democratic candidate for State Treasurer in 1857, was described as an "African Suffragate" and was accused of having armed the Negroes and mustered them to the polls in the presidential election of 1856. In 1857 several old settlers of Rapides Parish informed the Know Nothings that more than forty Africans had voted in previous elections, that their names could be found on a register known as "Boyce's List," and that "Ten Mile Precinct" had been especially created to provide them a safe and ostensibly legal polling place⁵ some forty miles from the parish seat at Alexandria.

⁴W. Darrell Overdyke, "History of the American Party in Louisiana," The Louisiana Historical Quarterly (XV), 1932, 581-588.

⁵Shugg, "Negro Voting," 361.

Hunter, not denying the Democrats' efforts to win Negro votes, replied that the Whigs had been the first offenders. He stated that the Whigs had marched Negroes to the polls in 1838; and that, since the Louisiana constitution at that time had limited suffrage to white men who paid taxes or purchased public lands, Whig politicians had entered public land in the names of non-landholding and non-taxpaying Negroes of "Ten Mile Precinct" to give them some legal grounds for voting.⁶

The Louisiana Whig Party had consisted mainly of slaveholding planters who, having elected a complete ticket in 1834, had challenged the Democratic hold upon the state. Goaded by the loss of the presidential election of 1836, the Whigs had marshalled Negro votes in 1838 and had thereby achieved victories in the presidential and congressional elections of 1840. Both Whigs and Democrats had considered granting suffrage to the free Negroes of New Orleans who applied for admission to municipal franchise in the 1840's. Among New Orleans' free Negroes at that time reportedly were "men of property and intelligence who were much more worthy of suffrage than the ignorant white immigrant or farmer and who owned one-fifth of the taxable property of New Orleans and claimed the right to vote for the assessor who taxed that

⁶ Ibid.

property."⁷ The Whigs had conceded that those who paid taxes should levy them.

In the political controversy of 1857, Colonel Hunter, defending the actions of the Democratic Party, denounced the Whigs' use of Negro votes in Rapides Parish, saying ". . . some of the Democratic boys got in among them and changed them over to their side. The Whigs, surprised and indignant, kicked up against it and a trial ensued."⁸ The Democrats, however, never failed to collect all free Negro votes in Rapides Parish following the election of 1840.⁹ "Ten Mile Bob" (as Hunter's opponents called him) carried Rapides by 68 votes, presumably colored,¹⁰ in his campaign for State Treasurer in 1857. Elsewhere the Democratic ticket swept the state with a majority of several thousand unquestionably white votes. Hunter's victory was interpreted as indicative of the Negroes' holding the balance of political power in Rapides Parish where Negro suffrage cajoled rural Negroes and helped needy whites.

As late as 1860, "about 80 colored men voted at 'Ten Mile Precinct' by the unterrified Democracy whenever an

⁷C. P. de Gournay, "The F. M. C.'s of Louisiana," Lippincott's Monthly Magazine, LIII (1894), 513.

⁸New Orleans Crescent, September 18, 1857, cited in Roger Wallace Shugg, "Negro Voting," 362.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Roger Wallace Shugg, "Negro Voting," 362.

emergency demanded their loyal aid in carrying an election.¹¹ About 1860, however, the Negro voting issue ended abruptly in a "conspiracy of silence." Louisianians had become alarmed by the mere presence of free Negroes within the state and had passed laws to prevent their increase by manumission or immigration.¹² New Orleans free Negroes were denied suffrage as it was feared this concession would lead them to demand other privileges.¹³ The polling of Negroes in Rapides Parish remains the only verified case of fraudulent Negro voting in the slaveholding South.¹⁴ Southern Negroes, subordinate to whites economically and socially, were equally subordinate to them politically in this isolated example of ante-bellum voting.

In 1864, the desperate Confederacy fought a losing battle and the fate of the South became paramount in the minds of Southerners. N. P. Banks, the Union general in charge of subjected Louisiana, issued a proclamation calling for a gubernatorial election¹⁵ in parishes within the federal

¹¹New Orleans Crescent, June 13, 1860, cited in Shugg, "Negro Voting," 362.

¹²Louisiana Session Laws, 1857, Act No. 69; Ibid, 1859, Act No. 87.

¹³F. P. deGournay, "The F. M. C.'s of Louisiana," Lippincott's Monthly Magazine, LIII (1894), 513.

¹⁴Shugg, "Negro Voting," 362.

¹⁵Leslie Murray Norton, Readings in Social Science: Louisiana, 1699-1876, (Baton Rouge, 1935), 183.

lines, roughly defined as the territory bounded by the Teche on the west and the Amite on the east. Outside of New Orleanians very few people voted. Michael Hahn, a Bavarian by birth, was elected governor of Louisiana. He called an election for a convention to revise the state constitution with a view of readmitting Louisiana into the Union. Lincoln, under his Ten Per Cent Plan, recognized any state government formed by ten per cent of the voters of 1860 who took a loyalty oath. The Louisiana constitution of 1864 extended suffrage to white male citizens who had taken the oath prescribed by President Lincoln and who could meet age and residence requirements. An additional suffrage article, intended to apply to Negroes,¹⁶ (and for that reason struck out but later reintroduced and finally adopted) read: "The legislature shall have the power to pass laws extending suffrage to such other persons, citizens of the United States, as by military service, by taxation to support the government, or by intellectual fitness may be deemed entitled thereto."

This constitution was approved by a majority of those who voted. An extremely light vote was cast, since only a minority of Louisiana citizens lived within the Union-occupied area.¹⁷

¹⁶William A. Russ, Jr., "Disfranchisement in Louisiana, 1862-1870," Louisiana Historical Quarterly, XVIII (1935), 591.

¹⁷Leslie Murry Norton, Readings in Social Science: Louisiana, 1699-1876 (Baton Rouge, 1935), 185.

Following the election a new registration of voters was made, many of them Negroes.¹⁸ Louisiana Confederates opposed the constitutional power of the radical legislature to extend suffrage to all deemed fit to exercise such a right. Following the Civil War, when Southerners regained control of the state and reassumed their ante-bellum position in politics they rejected the constitution of 1864. The Radicals remaining in the state attempted unsuccessfully to convene a new constitutional convention in 1866 for the purpose of disfranchising white male voters and enfranchising Negroes.¹⁹

Two years after the Civil War, the government of Louisiana fell into the hands of Northern Radicals, native scalawags, and Negroes. Most Louisianians of 1867 were in despair over the Reconstruction acts which imposed military rule upon the state and required a new registration of voters and a new state constitution embodying Negro suffrage. Since Negroes outnumbered whites in Louisiana, Negro voters could by free exercise of franchise dominate any election. The constitution of 1868, written by the new Radical regime, was the first in the history of Louisiana to contain a bill

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 186.

¹⁹ William A. Russ, Jr., "Disfranchisement in Louisiana, 1862-1870," Louisiana Historical Quarterly, XVIII (1935), 591.

of rights. This guaranteed Negroes not only suffrage, but also citizenship, liberty, admission to all public offices, and privileges in all public places. It was ratified by the eligible voters, the majority of whom were Negroes. Article 99 of the Constitution of 1868 excluded from franchise" . . . those who held office, civil or military, for one year or more under the organization styled "The Confederate States of America"; those who registered themselves as enemies of the United States; those who acted as leaders of guerilla bands during the late rebellion; those who, in advocacy of treason, wrote or published newspaper articles or preached sermons during the late rebellion; and those who voted for and signed an ordinance of secession"

Immediately following the Civil War, the white people of Louisiana had not greatly feared Negro suffrage, for they felt they could dominate the Negro's vote as they had dominated his activities during slavery. The early fear held by the Radicals that the whites would control Negro voting proved groundless during Reconstruction. The Radicals were able to organize the Negro vote, mass it, carry it to the polls, and vote it for the Republican Party. Disfranchised ex-Confederates in sweeping statements denounced the Radicals as "shameless, heartless, vile, grasping, deceitful, creeping, crawling, wallowing, slimy, slippery, hideous, political pirates who, in the name of God and Liberty had

put the Southern states under a black government."²⁰

Bitterness between former master and former slave grew rapidly. A dangerous situation developed between whites and Negroes of Louisiana. Led by Alcibiades DeBlanc, many white men of Louisiana joined a secret society called the Knights of the White Camelia. Organized on May 22, 1867, at the town of Franklin in St. Mary Parish,²¹ its avowed objects were upholding white supremacy and preventing political power from passing to the Negroes.²² The camelia, a night-blooming flower characterized by the purity of its beautiful whiteness, was regarded as the perfect symbol of white supremacy. A fragmentary preamble to the charter of the society, drafted at the time of inception, stated in part:

There is a fact which stands beyond denial . . . the Radical Party, the freedmen and the colored population of the whole Republic have coalesced against the white race . . . Their unjust unreasonable opposition forces us upon the ground of necessity and for our own protection to similar [methods] of opposition. Let it therefore be recognized . . . that from the colored [population] and from the radical faction to which it is [attaching] itself, have sprung the first of . . . the inimi [cable factions] which have divided into two hostile camps . . . the races which inhabit the American Repub[lic].

²⁰ Leslie Murry Norton, Readings in Social Science: Louisiana, 1699-1876 (Baton Rouge, 1935), 191.

²¹ Breda Family Papers, Department of Archives, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

²² Leslie Murry Norton, Readings in Social Science: Louisiana, 1966-1876 (Baton Rouge, 1935), 191.

During the initiation ceremony each prospective Knight took the following oath:²³

. . . I swear to maintain and defend the social and political superiority of the [white race] . . . to vote for none for any office of trust . . . but white men . . . and to protect and defend persons of the white or Caucasian race . . . against the encroachments and aggressions of persons of an inferior race.

To counteract the work of the Knights, the Northern Radicals who had descended upon Louisiana organized the Negroes into Union Leagues, distributed arms among them, and urged resistance by force.²⁴ White Louisianians, through a message sent out by the Democratic Party State Central Committee, denounced the Radicals in these terms: ". . . even the most implacable of the Negro population . . . are not half as much deserving of our aversion and nonintercourse with them as the debased whites who encourage and aid them and who become through their votes the office-seeking oppressors of the people."²⁵

The centers of the greatest White Camelia activity were the plantation areas, in which Negro population was concentrated. Preceding and during the presidential election of November, 1868, rioting occurred along Bayou Teche

²³Breda Family Papers, Department of Archives, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

²⁴Leslie Murry Norton, Readings in Social Science: Louisiana, 1699-1876 (Baten Rouge, 1935), 193.

²⁵Ibid.

in St. Mary Parish, in the delta parishes of Ouachita and Tensas, and in the Red River parishes of Bossier and Caddo. Rioting became violent at Opelousas in St. Landry Parish on September 28, 1868. F. Perrodin, White Camelia leader of Opelousas, blamed the riot on Captain John Amrein of the Freedmen's Bureau who headed a procession of between 500 and 600 Negroes parading the streets, "yelling and whooping." Investigation of the riot later revealed the partially interred bodies of eighteen freedmen "sticking up through the dirt" in a ravine on the outskirts of the town. As a result of this riot, Negroes sought their former masters and begged protection. In Lafayette Parish, masked Knights patrolled the countryside and marched along the streets nightly bearing flaming torches. Four Negroes were killed and Republican meetings were broken up. One of the more sensational of the White Camelia riots occurred along Red River in Bossier Parish on September 30, 1868, and numerous of lesser importance proceeded the November election.²⁶ Such terror struck the Negroes that not a single one of them voted the Republican ticket in some parishes at the November election.²⁷

By 1869, the Negroes had become the tools of the Radicals, the Freedmen's Bureau agents, and the federal soldiers

²⁶Allie Bayne Webb, "Organization and Activities of the Knights of the White Camelia," The Proceedings of the Louisiana Academy of Sciences, Vol. XVII (1954) 111-115.

²⁷Ibid., p. 115.

occupying the state. A Negro-Radical regime ruled Louisiana. The violence during the presidential election of 1868 resulted in the creation of an Election Board, appointed by the governor and empowered to throw out votes deemed fraudulent or secured by violence.²⁸ The Election Board law placed dictatorial powers over voting in the hands of the governor who, in 1868, was the notorious Carpetbagger, Henry Clay Warmoth.

Serious controversy arose within the ranks of the Negro-Radical governing body of Louisiana in 1871. The Warmoth faction was opposed by United States Marshal S. B. Packard.²⁹ The general elections in the fall of 1872 gave the two factions an opportunity to measure their relative strength. Warmoth used his Returning Board to his faction's advantage; the Packard faction, having established a rival Returning Board, contended its candidates had been elected. As a result, dual governments existed in Louisiana from 1872 to 1877. White Democrats and conservative Republicans supported John McEnery, the Warmoth faction candidate for governor; but William Pitt Kellogg, candidate of the Packard faction, was recognized by President Grant and sustained by

²⁸ Leslie Murry Norton, Readings in Social Science: Louisiana, 1699-1876 (Baton Rouge, 1935), 194.

²⁹ Ibid.

federal troops.³⁰

The majority of the white people of Louisiana believed that their only salvation lay in the overthrow of Negro-Radical rule. Determined "to rectify the blunder of Negro suffrage and annul the pernicious influence of his vote,"³¹ the semi-military White League of Louisiana was organized at Opelousas in St. Landry Parish on April 27, 1874.³² In place of the secrecy of the Knights of the White Camelia, the more powerful White League resorted to direct action, and openly avowed its object to be the establishment of a dominant White Man's Party, or Democratic Party, throughout the State. Its preamble advocated a division of the races on the color line:

We, the white people of Louisiana, menaced by stupid Africanization . . . call upon the men of our race . . . to unite in a concerted effort to re-establish a white man's government in . . . the state . . . It is worse than idle to reason with the Negroes . . . and it has become our duty to save ourselves by . . . resuming that just and legitimate superiority in the administration of our state affairs to which we are entitled by superior responsibility and superior intelligence . . .³³

³⁰ Ibid., p. 196.

³¹ Albert Phelps, Louisiana: A Record of Expansion (New York, 1905), 376.

³² Ibid.

³³ New Orleans Picayune, July 2, 1874.

The opening words of the White League preamble, "We the white people," proved an incentive in the political organization of the whites throughout the state. Originating in the southern parishes, the White League spread rapidly throughout the central and northern portions of the state. By the close of the year 1874, there were 14,000 enrolled in its ranks.³⁴ The degree of organization of the whites of the central section of the state is revealed by the following warning addressed to "Our Colored Citizens":

We desire you to take warning and act accordingly. The whites intend to carry the election this fall. We simply ask that you assist us in redeeming our state from the degradation and ruin she is now in³⁵

The White League showed the Negroes that, if they voted at all, they must vote the Democratic ticket. Some Negroes were permitted to enroll as members of the White League. The determination of the whites was further expressed in these lines: "We tell the colored Republicans . . . that . . . nothing can save them but the nomination of competent men, not such asses and ignoramuses as they have hitherto put in office."³⁶

³⁴ Leslie Murry Norton, Readings in Social Science: Louisiana, 1699-1876 (Baton Rouge, 1935), p. 196.

³⁵ Natchitoches Vindicator, July 18, 1874.

³⁶ Alexander Gazette, June 18, 1874.

The most effective weapons of the White League in controlling Negro voting were intimidation and economic proscription. The most widely publicized and sensational activity was intimidation. Those Negroes who could not be frightened into voting for Democratic candidates, and those who insisted upon voting for Republicans were killed. A Federal investigating committee arrived in Louisiana in December, 1874, following the November election, and recorded voluminous testimony to substantiate the fact that intimidation did exist and was directed to the advantage of the Democratic Party.³⁷ Acts of violence, political assassinations, and riots were general throughout the state. The most sensational instances were in the Red River Valley, the Bayou Teche and Bayou Lafourche regions, and in the delta parishes in which the Negro population was concentrated.

Perhaps the most important single factor in the White League program was the application of economic pressure against any Negroes voting for Republicans. This technique held no physical terror for the Negroes, but it proved a powerful weapon in the marshalling of Negro votes for the Democratic Party from the election of 1874 to the close of Reconstruction. Sixty merchants and bankers of the city of

³⁷ "Report of the Select Committee on Conditions of the South," House Reports, 43 Cong., 2 Sess., No. 261,753, hereafter cited as Reports of Committees.

Shreveport pledged themselves to advance neither supplies nor money to any planter who employed, or rented land to, laborers or tenants who voted the Republican ticket. "We are," they declared, "constrained to this course from a principle of self defense, knowing that the Negroes are banded together for the purpose of foisting upon the country incompetent men for office, and if they persist in their determination to support a ticket which plunders the white people . . . , they must look to others than the whites for their subsistence."³⁸ A large number of Shreveport business firms signed a pledge "to use every endeavor to get our employees to vote the People's ticket . . . and in the event of their refusing to do so, or in case they vote the radical ticket, to refuse to employ them at the expiration of their present contract."³⁹ The planters of Summer Grove resolved that, "In making contracts for the ensuing year, first preference shall be given to those who vote with us; next preference shall be given to those who do not vote at all; lastly, we shall utterly repudiate the employment of any radical, black or white . . ."⁴⁰ "All Negroes who voted the radical ticket are to be refused work or leases,"⁴¹ reported Major Lewis Merrill, a Federal Officer stationed at

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid., 752-753.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 756.

⁴¹ Shreveport Times, January 19, 1875.

Shreveport. A plea published in the New Orleans Bulletin⁴² urged whites to get rid of their "black pets" who supported radicalism, and to employ only white laborers who would support the whites politically. The following threat of unemployment was addressed to the Negroes: "The colored laborer owns no land and may take his vote and his labor elsewhere. However, we will gladly avail ourselves of his labor if he will unite with us in the redemption of the State and be content to occupy the station assigned to him by providence and for which he is fitted by his limited capacity and attainments."⁴³ "Employ white labor first," stated the Franklin Enterprise, "then the blacks who are willing to vote for the best interests of the country, and will live up to the standards of our civilization, lastly . . . those who will submit to superiority and attend to their own business. But opposition, animosity, and no support for Negro radicals . . ."⁴⁴

The White League canvassed the state in December of 1874, following the November election, and prepared a list of Negroes who had voted the Democratic ticket, as well as those who had refrained from voting. A black list of those

⁴²June 18, 1874.

⁴³New Orleans Bulletin, July 26, 1874.

⁴⁴Franklin Enterprise, September 20, 1874.

who had voted Republican was also prepared to serve as a guide for whites in the employment of Negroes.⁴⁵ "The threats made before the election to drive from the community all who voted the radical ticket are being carried out," reported Major Lewis Merrill from Shreveport.⁴⁶ Over five hundred Negro farm hands were discharged in Caddo and DeSoto parishes, with the statement by planters to the effect that their discharge was due to their having voted the radical ticket.⁴⁷ James Todd, prominent sugar planter of the Bayou Teche region, discharged all his Negroes who refused to vote the Democratic ticket. He expressed a preference that his plantation should "grow up in weeds . . . than be the source by which the vultures of society are fed and fattened."⁴⁸

The wishful thinking and ignorance of the Negroes is revealed in their appeal to the Republicans in the face of this economic pressure. The Radicals ranted against economic proscription of Negroes and urged open rebellion: "By the time the Negroes become thoroughly frightened, there will arise a melancholy wail all over the State that there are no laborers to gather the crops. The laborers ought

⁴⁵Natchitoches Vindicator, December 9, 1874.

⁴⁶Shreveport Times, January 19, 1875.

⁴⁷Reports of Committees, No. 261, 183.

⁴⁸New Orleans Bulletin, June 20, 1874.

instantly to leave the plantations. . . . Every day's work they put in only adds to the ability of their oppressors to keep up the war."⁴⁹ Despite such statements of Radical propaganda, threats of loss of employment served either to deter Negroes from voting at all or to compel them to vote the Democratic ticket.

By virtue of his Election Board, Governor Kellogg returned a Republican majority in 1874, and continued his rule of Louisiana supported by federal bayonets. "If Louisiana were a country by itself, McEnery and his associates would at once be installed in power," reported a Congressional investigating committee following the election of 1874, "but the Conservatives of Louisiana do not propose to fight the Federal Government. They submit not because they want to, but because they must, . . . not because of any hostility to the colored people because they are colored, but because they regard themselves as defrauded out of the election of 1872, and yet more out of the last election [1874], and because they think their state government has been to the last degree destructive and corrupt."⁵⁰

Louisiana politics had reached a critical state with the approach of the state and national elections of 1876.

⁴⁹New Orleans Republican, August 2, 1874.

⁵⁰Leslie Murry Norton, Readings in Social Science: Louisiana, 1699-1876 (Baton Rouge, 1935), p. 197.

The Democrats of the state nominated Francis T. Nicholls for governor and supported Samuel J. Tilden for the presidency. The Republicans nominated S. B. Packard for their gubernatorial candidate and supported Rutherford B. Hayes for president. The Radicals realized that their regime in Louisiana was about to end. They resolved however to go down fighting, even though they had lost the support of many Negroes and knew that the use of federal bayonets, their last source of strength, was becoming increasingly unpopular throughout the nation. In a desperate effort to maintain political power, the Radicals devised widespread and atrocious registration and election frauds for the purpose of depriving Democrats of voting rights by arbitrary means.⁵¹

Faced with these gigantic frauds, and believing they had a chance to control Negro votes, the whites began a program to break the color line and to win the Negro vote for the Democratic Party. To achieve this objective they resorted to mass meetings, political rallies, barbecues, and colorful parades. On these occasions, whites mixed freely with Negroes and won great numbers of them by persuasive appeal. William W. Leake, lawyer of St. Francisville for forty years, possessed a remarkable understanding of Negroes. Believing the campaign of 1876 to be one of life or death for the

⁵¹ House Miscellaneous Documents, 45 Congress, 3 Session, No. 31, 1054, hereafter cited as House Misc. Doc.

white people, Leake canvassed his parish with a view to winning by peaceful means the Negroes' political support.⁵² He devoted his entire arguments to subjects considered vitally important by all Negroes--their poverty, the ignorance of their children, the unfaithfulness of their wives, and the prostitution of their daughters. The only remedy for these adversities, Leake exhorted, was to get rid of the Republicans and to get the state into the hands of the Democrats. In appealing to the Negroes' dependence upon the whites, Leake told them that in sickness, litigation, and marital strife, they invariably came to their old masters, the Democrats. It was only in voting, he reminded them, that they ignored their masters. He pointed out this inconsistency and reasoned with them that, if they could trust their lives and fortunes to the whites, they could safely take political instruction from the same source. Leake's persuasion resulted in the affiliation of large numbers of Negroes with Democratic clubs. The clubs met regularly every Saturday afternoon throughout West Feliciana Parish, and the Negroes thoroughly enjoyed making speeches, eating barbecue, and discussing politics.

Political rallies and barbecues were the techniques used by Samuel D. McEnery in recruiting Negro voters for the

⁵² Ibid., 555.

Democratic Party in the delta parishes and the hill regions west of the Ouachita River. Negroes responded enthusiastically to the entertainment provided. After assembling at barbecues and rallies, Negro voters were enrolled into white Democratic clubs. Negro orators spoke from the same platforms as their former masters. Spontaneous processions were formed and Negroes marched, sang campaign songs, and carried Democratic banners. A grand reconciliation of the races was effected. The following excerpt from an article published in the New Orleans Picayune⁵³ well illustrates the Negroes' tendency toward alliance with the Democrats:

Indeed everyone at all acquainted with the drift of events in the country parishes must see that the Negroes are at last waking up to the utter hopelessness of their situation under radical leadership They see that ten years of allegiance to the Republican Party has profited them nothing. The colored people are finding this out and now in great numbers are enrolling themselves in that party which alone can give them peace and prosperity.

In 1876, for the first time since the Civil War, the Democrats were able to win and to hold the confidence of the Negroes. The days were filled with feasting, drinking, and speaking. The nights were illuminated with torchlight processions. The enthusiasm of Negro Democrats reached a peak as election day approached. Approximately 17,000 Negroes voted the Democratic ticket.⁵⁴ E. M. Burnet, resident of

53 July 19, 1876.

54 Reports of Committees of the House of Representatives, 44 Congress, 2 Session, No. 156, 147.

East Baton Rouge Parish, commented relative to election activities "There was no intimidation of colored voters; they voted the democratic ticket of their own free will I never saw more mirth distributed at any meeting as at the election It seemed to be a perfect holiday, especially so among the colored people."⁵⁵

⁵⁵ House Miscellaneous Documents, 44 Congress, 2 Session, No. 34, Part VII, 183.

CHAPTER II

LOUISIANA REDEEMED: THE REVOLUTION OF THE WHITES

The election of 1876 marked a climax in the Negro suffrage issue in Louisiana and paved the way for the redemption of the state from Negro rule. "Yes, we are going to have things our way now. We have the governor and we are going to have everything else. It is no use for you Republicans to make any nominations for you can't elect anybody." This remark of T. W. Sachse, Secretary of the Tensas Parish Democratic Executive Committee, was in reply to a frightened Negro politician's statement, "I know if I run on the Republican ticket I will be killed and I don't propose to put myself up as a target to be shot at."¹

The vote of Louisiana was instrumental in resolving the disputed presidential election in the Compromise of 1877. The North desired "to find a path of safety out of our great troubles,"² and was willing to make concessions to Louisiana.

¹Alfred Fairfax to R. B. Hayes, January 3, 1879, Source Chronological and Year Files, General Records of the Department of Justice, National Archives, Record Group 60, hereafter cited as GRDJ, NA, RG 60.

²Henry Smith to R. B. Hayes, December 7, 1876, in Hayes Papers, Hayes Memorial Library, Fremont, Ohio, cited in C. Vann Woodward, Reunion and Reaction, The Compromise of 1877 and the End of Reconstruction (Boston, 1951), 28.

The Cincinnati Enquirer of February 14, 1877 described the "bargain" or "compromise" of 1877 as the winning of "enough votes to complete the election of Hayes by rewarding the Democrats with two cabinet posts, local control of Southern states, appropriations for Southern internal improvements, and the passage of the Texas Pacific railroad bill."³ The desire for compromise was motivated also by an eagerness on the part of Republicans to gloss over evidence of corruption of the Louisiana Republican Returning Board. This board consisted of James Madison Wells, a political trickster and dishonest white man, Thomas C. Anderson, a corrupt white legislator, Lewis M. Kenner, a Negro saloon keeper, and Gadane Cassanave, an ignorant Negro undertaker.⁴ Joseph Maddox, an agent of the United States Treasury, testified before a House Committee during the disputed election that Wells had commissioned him to come to Washington and put the votes of Louisiana up for sale. "He said he wanted at least \$200,000 apiece for himself and Anderson and a smaller amount for the niggers," testified Maddox.⁵

The role of the Negro was large in working out the details of the compromise. "You must thoroughly understand

³C. Vann Woodward, "Reunion and Reaction, 208.

⁴Marguerite T. Leach, "The Aftermath of Reconstruction in Louisiana," Louisiana Historical Quarterly, XXXII (1949), 637.

⁵Washington National Republican, February 2, 1877, cited in C. Vann Woodward, Reunion and Reaction, 155.

that you must induce enough of the Negro members of the Packard Republican legislature to desert and join the Nicholls legislature in order to give the latter a quorum of members whose election is conceded by both sides," wrote Colonel Andrew J. Kellar to William Smith, general agent of the Western Associated Press.⁶

This delicate work was accomplished largely by money, the Louisiana Lottery Company being of great financial aid. The Louisiana Lottery had been Republican until 1877, but had identified itself with the Redeemers when the latter came into power. The Lottery Company admitted influence on politics in 1877 by helping to influence Packard's legislators to go over to Nicholls. According to one account a committee from Nicholls' headquarters waited on Charles T. Howard, head of the Lottery Company to ask for his money and influence in behalf of the good cause. Howard referred the committee to John A. Morris, his co-partner in the lottery, who gave the committee several thousand dollars. Later \$34,000 more was given the Redeemers as a contribution to the "good cause." The Republicans in Louisiana claimed that this money, was the instrument by which a quorum of both houses in the legislature was transferred to Nicholls.

⁶William Henry Smith Papers, William Henry Smith Memorial Library of the Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis, Indiana, April 12, 1877, cited in C. Vann Woodward, Reunion and Reaction, 220.

Another Republican account, purporting to be the "inside" history of the Lottery Company's financial assistance to the Redeemers at this time, claimed that Packard's Negro supporters were bought outright and "at very high prices," the total cost "amounting to nearly or quite \$250,000."⁷

By 1877 the Republican Party throughout the nation had become the party of wealth, property, and privilege. Representing the vested interests of the capitalistic businessman, it could no longer justify reliance upon the propertyless Negroes of the South for its support. The Negroes' impoverishment was unprecedented among American or any other known electorates. Their appearance at the polls in mass, wearing the rags of slave days, "conjured up every gloomy prognostication of the fate of democracies from Aristotle to the Federalists. Not Athens, nor Rome, nor Paris at greatest turbulence had confronted their like. Here was the Federalist beast who would turn every garden into a pigsty Here in the flesh was Hamilton's 'turbulent and changing' mass who made it necessary to give the 'rich and well born' that 'distinct, permanent share in the government' which alone would insure stability."⁸ "We have tried for

⁷ Berthold C. Alwes, "The History of the Louisiana Lottery Company," Louisiana Historical Quarterly, XXVII (1944), 997-998.

⁸ C. Van Woodward, The Burden of Southern History (Baton Rouge, 1960), 100.

eight years to uphold Negro rule in the South," observed Joseph Mendill to Richard Smith, "but without exception it has resulted in failure.⁹

The Republican Party in 1877 desired a political reconciliation with the planter class of the South as had existed in the ante-bellum Whig Party. Southern Democrats wanted reconciliation as well. The community of interests between the big planters of the South and the big businessmen of the North led to the compromise of 1877. The North gained acceptance of a Republican president; the South gained control of state governments, as well as the financial and industrial benefits and the political patronage agreed upon in the "bargain." "Everybody wins; nobody loses," thought the compromisers for the Southern planters envisioned resumption of their ante-bellum control of state and national politics, and the Northern capitalists, not giving up their desire to control Negro votes to party advantage, hoped that the planters might achieve the same end in a more resourceful manner.

The Negroes, however, felt fear, apprehension, and disillusionment over the withdrawal of Federal protection and their abandonment by the North. S. B. Packard accepted

⁹Richard Henry Smith to Rutherford B. Hayes, February 17, 1877, in Hayes Papers, Hayes Memorial Library, Fremont, Ohio, cited in C. Vann Woodward, Reunion and Reaction, 35.

a conveniently created consulate to Liverpool, the Federal troops were withdrawn from Louisiana, and the state was soon to be redeemed for the white race.

The changed political status of Southern Negroes was quickly reflected in the press and in statements of interested observers. "The Negro will disappear from the field of politics. Henceforth the nation, as a nation, will have nothing more to do with him."¹⁰ The New York Tribune on April 7, 1877 stated that the Negroes, after having been given ample opportunity to develop their own latent capacities, had only proved that as a race they were idle, ignorant, and vicious. Wrote James A. Garfield to his friend Hinsdale,¹¹ "The future of the Negro is a gloomy one His labor is indispensable to the prosperity of the South. His power to vote is a mortal offense to his late masters. If they control it it will not only be a wrong to him, but a dangerous increase of their power. If he votes against them, as he almost universally inclines to do, he will perpetuate the antagonism which now bears such baneful fruits." Louisiana Negroes lamented the fate that had befallen them. They bitterly resented Hayes' abandonment of Caesar C. Antoine, Negro

¹⁰ Nation, April 5, 1877, cited in C. Vann Woodward, Reunion and Reaction, 202.

¹¹ Garfield-Hinsdale Letters, December 4, 1876, cited in Vincent P. DeSantis, Republicans Face the Southern Question, (Baltimore, 1959), 139.

Reconstruction politician, to such an extent that his wife was forced to beg the president to give Antoine some kind of a job, they being destitute without "a nickel in the house."¹² The same theme of disillusionment was expressed by J. R. G. Pitkin, Corresponding Secretary of the Executive Committee of the Republican Party in Louisiana. Pitkin was convinced that the Negro race could neither be coaxed nor driven out of the Republican Party; and he quoted the Negro, J. S. Bean, "But when Hayes announced his policy, the heads of Negroes sunk on their breasts and they begin to ask if their [sic] is no hope."¹³

White Louisianians in 1877 turned for political leadership to their beloved "Confederate Brigadier," Francis Tillou Nicholls. Nicholls' popularity, however, was great among all classes of people, both black and white, throughout the state. Negro votes had helped to elect him in 1876, and he endeared himself to Negroes by pledging to them continued enjoyment of suffrage and other legal rights. "After I was recognized as Governor," Nicholls recalled, "I set myself earnestly to work to bring about good feeling and confidence between the races and to allay political irritation

¹²Antoine's wife to R. B. Hayes, in Hayes Papers, cited in DeSantis, Republicans Face the Southern Question, 139.

¹³J. R. G. Pitkin to William E. Chandler, January 10, December 31, 1878, in William E. Chandler Papers, cited in DeSantis, Republicans Face the Southern Question, 117.

and hostility. I was particularly anxious by kindness and strict justice to the colored people to do away with the belief which the Republican leaders had imbued them with that Democratic rule was inconsistent with their rights."¹⁴

Nicholls was devoted to the Negro as a slave and a plantation fixture, but played the role of "Bourbon Democrat" and worked to restore the ante-bellum political and social order throughout the state. "I was determined," continued Nicholls, "that they [the Negroes] should feel that they were not proscribed, and to this end appointed a number of them to small offices sandwiching them on Boards between white men where they were powerless to do harm."¹⁵ The Negroes charged that Nicholls "polled enough votes to be elected in 1876 by promising the black man his constitutional rights . . . and very soon managed to forget his pledge."¹⁶

Campaign pledges of the election of 1876 were soon dismissed by whites as political expediency. The Redeemers of Louisiana had as their dominant passion an undying hatred of the Republican Party as the author of their woes and were

¹⁴ Barnes Lathrop, ed., "An Autobiography of Francis T. Nicholls," The Louisiana Historical Quarterly, XVIII (1930), 257.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Charles B. Rousseve, The Negro in Louisiana (New Orleans, 1937), 128.

determined to destroy all vestiges of Negro government throughout the state. The first act passed by the Louisiana legislature in 1877 abolished the Republican Returning Board, thus ridding the state of the Negro saloon keeper and the Negro undertaker, the purchase price of whose votes was "a smaller amount" than the \$200,000 asked by James Madison Wells for his own vote. A substantial majority of the people of the state favored the calling of a constitutional convention to destroy "this miserable abortion in the shape of a state constitution."¹⁷

However some few whites opposed a new constitution, favoring instead, amending the old one. Honorable M. S. Newsom, in an address to the people of Tangipahoa Parish, stated, "Is it not easily to be seen that if we make the immediate call for a convention, it holds out the risk of uniting all the blacks against us, by furnishing an opportunity for political demagogues to raise the cry that the call is made with the object of depriving them of their participation in the government, which is secured to them by the Constitution of 1868?" Newsom pointed out that a convention might not only alienate blacks but also cause discord among whites. He stated that more than half of the voting population of Louisiana was composed of illiterate Negroes

¹⁷ Opelousas Courier, September 29, 1877.

who were easily influenced by aspirants to office and political demagogues. With such a questionable voting population, Newsom feared the Democrats might easily be beaten in any election. He lamented the New Orleans Democrat's description of the Nicholls legislature as "ring-ridden" and "born of illegitimate compromises with lottery rings and radicals." Newsom regretted that stump orators appealed to the prejudices of the masses by telling them that the Constitution of 1868 was made by "Radicals, Negroes, and bayonet rule, and that if they do not have a convention, so that every vestige of it can be destroyed and burned up, that they, the people, will have to 'gnaw a file, and flee unto the mountains of Hepsidam, where the lion roareth, and the whang-doodle mourneth for its first born."¹⁸

A traveler passing through New Orleans in December, 1877, agreed with Senator Newsom and expressed his opinion that a convention should be postponed a year or two because it was of utmost importance that Negro voters who had been attracted to the Democratic Party should not be driven away by apprehension of the "ultimate purposes of those who clamored for a convention."¹⁹ Redeemers declared invalid

¹⁸Newsom Family Papers, Department of Archives, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

¹⁹"Traveller" in letter to editor of New Orleans Daily Picayune, December 8, 1877.

the objection that such a step would arouse suspicion that the status of the Negroes would be changed and would result in alienation of sympathy and support of Northern friends. As a stop-gap to a convention, the Louisiana legislature, meeting in January, 1878, adopted eighteen amendments designed to eliminate objectional features of the Negro suffrage Constitution of 1868. The adoption or rejection of the amendments was to be voted upon at the approaching election, November 5, 1878. White Louisianians, feeling that this election was their chance to eliminate the Negro from state politics, set to work to thwart the effects of Negro suffrage. For the whites to fail to vote was shameful, and to attempt to organize the Negroes for the Republican Party was treason to one's race.²⁰

One stumbling block confronted the Redeemers. The registered Negro voters of Louisiana in 1878 exceeded registered white voters by approximately eight hundred.²¹ Most of these Negroes still loyally supported the Republican Party. "Show me a colored man who claims to be a Democrat and I'll show you a knave or a fool," stated James D. McGill, cotton planter of Tensas Parish and former slaveholder and old line Whig. "Our ticket shall be elected.

²⁰Holland Thompson, The New South (New Haven, 1921), 13.

²¹Reports of the Secretary of State (Baton Rouge, 1902), 546-547.

If any black man opposes it, he must stand out of our way, or we will put him out of our way."²² Since white supremacy was endangered by the Negro vote, the Redeemers set out to gain the Negro's support or to keep him from voting. The campaign was not a struggle between Democratic and Republican Parties, but between white and black races, and the whites were determined to win.

"The time is short between now and the election and there is much to be done in that time," stated the New Orleans Daily Democrat in September of 1878. Despite the urgency of the situation a clash among the whites appeared to impede the work of political redemption. A group calling themselves "Independents" pledged reform of Louisiana politics and made overtures to Negroes to win their votes.²³ The Democratic Central Committee of Louisiana denounced these reformers and issued an appeal for all men, including Negroes, to register. Its chairman issued a circular addressing the voters in these terms:

Old enemies . . . appear under transparent subterfuges as so-called Independent candidates scheming to disturb the peace of society and to accomplish political results by violence if they fail in numbers . . . and have addressed themselves to obtaining the support of our colored citizens under specious promises. To all such who may have been so misled, we extend an earnest invitation to abandon those faithless leaders and join

²² Senate Report, No. 855, 45 Cong., 3 Sess., XXII.

²³ Ouachita Telegraph, October 25, 1878.

with us in supporting and preserving a government insuring all equal protection . . . and sincerely devoted to the promotion of kindly relations between the races on a basis of justice and mutual confidence. Regardless of empty professions of designing malcontents, . . . the ranks of the Conservative-Democracy, and freshly recruited by many colored citizens drawn to us by the wise and admirable action of the present administration, will promptly fulfill the duties of their citizenship.²⁴

Obviously, Governor Nicholls' statement to the legislature that peace and quiet prevailed throughout the state and that political excitement had ended was contrary to the facts. After all, as one newspaper saw it, the Democrats were engaged in a determined struggle "to destroy the last remaining vestige of the odious regime which had disolated the state."²⁵ They were determined to regain control of all branches of the state government and to complete the restoration of Democratic control which had only begun with the recognition of Governor Nicholls in April, 1877. And because white supremacy was the issue, the election activities were characterized by violence. Republican clubs were discouraged and Republican supporters were threatened with bodily injury. "Some of these politicians may find a CLUB meeting which may not be very agreeable to them," stated the editor of the Opelousas Courier on October 19, 1878. Intimidation and bulldozing (a word which came into the vocabulary along with

²⁴Copy of a circular in Mathews Papers in Department of Archives, Louisiana State University.

²⁵New Orleans Daily Democrat, April 24, 1877.

Negro suffrage and ceased when the need ended) became rampant as election day approached. These activities were carried on with greatest zeal in the plantation areas of the Mississippi, Red, Ouachita, and Cane Rivers, and along Bayou Teche, where Negro population was concentrated. Voluntary military companies were formed. "We were victorious in 1876 and we will be again in the coming election," stated one Rifle Club commander.²⁶ The Shreveport Evening Standard on November 2, 1878, editorialized about the military company in that locality:

Some of the Radicals profess to see in the organization of the rifle company a determination to carry the election at all hazards. Not only has this company been organized, but cavalry companies also, in all parts of the parish. Of course the Democrats intend to carry the election. They have not expended so much energy on this campaign for it all to be lost. They never showed so much determination in their lives . . .²⁷

A. J. Dumont, Chairman of the Republican Executive Committee in Louisiana, wrote a pathetic letter to United States Marshal Jack Wharton, lamenting that:

Information constantly reaches this committee of the most brutal outrages upon citizens on account of their connection with the Republican Party. Notwithstanding promises of protection in their political rights made by the present State administration upon its advent to power, Rifle Clubs and unlawful bands of men styled "Bulldozers" have been formed and are now engaged in

²⁶Ouachita Telegraph, October 4, 1878.

²⁷Cited by Otis Singletary in "Election of 1878 in Louisiana," The Louisiana Historical Quarterly, XL (1959), 50-51.

intimidating the colored voters in the largely Republican parishes. Some are threatened with death unless they join the clubs; others have been shot or hanged and most fiendish outrages perpetrated upon members of their families; others have sought refuge here [New Orleans] among us This dreadful condition exists principally in the Parishes of Ouachita, Feliciana, Natchitoches, Tensas, and Point Coupee. Violence prevails everywhere, but in portions of the parishes named, colored Republicans live in a constant state of terror to which their former condition of slavery was perhaps preferable. There being no inclination of State authorities to punish, suppress, or prevent these outrages, I recur to you believing it to be a part of your sworn duty to see to the constitutional rights of American citizens, . . . [and] adopt such measures as will bring the perpetrators of the heinous crimes to justice and ensure unoffensive citizens that security which the United States government guarantees us.²⁸

Official reports of pre-election bulldozing reached the Justice Department at Washington during the summer of 1878. Assistant United States Attorney J. W. Gurley, in reply to a letter from Attorney General Charles Devens, wrote:

Your letter in relation to reported outrages on Negroes in the country parishes of this State has been received. I have communicated contents to Mr. Leonard at Shreveport The Marshal [Jack Wharton] confesses the opinion that the real cause of the outrages was race and color, and he is convinced that they could be traced to that source.²⁹

The correspondence between Gurley and Wharton revealed the tenseness of the situation. An investigation was

²⁸October 18, 1878, Source Chronological and Year Files, GRDJ, NA, RG 60.

²⁹August 10, 1878, Source Chronological and Year Files, GRDJ, NA, RG 60.

deemed in order. Wharton wrote Gurley suggesting that the Justice Department be petitioned to hire one or two competent persons for several months at a fair salary with traveling and incidental expenses paid. He reiterated his conviction that the outrages were committed in consequence of "race, color or previous condition owing to the fact that in most every instance--Negroes, mostly such as were prominent in politics, were the victims who had to suffer."

"Then too," continued Wharton's letter, "the insinuating remarks made by the mob at the time, and the subsequent boasts and expressions made by parties engaged in the matter, will in great measure tend to establish the truth of my assertions, and if the cases are well worked up by an energetic man, failure to arrive at the true and only cause would be almost impossible."³⁰ Wharton's correspondence with United States Attorney General Charles Devens revealed the hazards such an investigation provoked. "The mission of the detective," wrote Wharton on October 23, 1878, "is one of great hazard, requiring courage as well as other specific qualities--men cannot be found here [New Orleans] who will undertake said service."³¹

One of the earliest pre-election racial disturbances

³⁰ August 17, 1878, Source Chronological and Year Files, GRNJ, NA, RG 60.

³¹ Ibid.

of the 1878 campaign occurred in Natchitoches Parish on September 21. Negro voters were concentrated in this Cane River plantation area. The parish electorate consisted of 1936 registered Negroes and 1830 registered whites. Because of the majority of Negro voters, Natchitoches Parish had uniformly been dominated by Republicans during Reconstruction. Outstanding Negro Republicans of the parish were Radford Blount, Henry Raby, and John C. Lewis. These Negroes were loyally supported in their political activities by Judge Ernest Breda, United States Supervisor of Elections for Natchitoches Parish, and by his two brothers, A. S. Breda and Emile Breda. Charges were made that two weeks prior to the September 21 disturbance a conspiracy had been organized by white Democrats to drive leading Negro Republicans and their white cohorts from the parish and to put an end to Negro-Republican influence there.³² On September 14, 1878, a few Negro Republicans assembled at Judge Breda's office to take steps to organize a Republican Club. At this time, a Republican convention was scheduled for September 21. District Judge David Pierson and other white Democrats were accused of conspiring to break up the proposed meeting and disperse the leaders.³³

³² Mrs. Ernest Breda to Jack Wharton, September 30, 1878, Source Chronological and Year Files, GRNJ, NA, RG 60.

³³ Ibid., Senate Report, No. 855, 45 Cong., 3 Sess., X.

The meeting on September 21 was attended by the Breda brothers, the Negro leaders Blount, Raby, and Lewis, and between 100 and 150 other Negro Republicans. Mrs. Ernest Breda, in a letter to Marshal Jack Wharton, reported concerning the Natchitoches disturbance:

The meeting closed, after electing its officers all in a quiet and orderly manner--no disturbance except occasional rumors coming that the White League were preparing to attack them, but so unnecessary was such an attack that my husband treated the rumors as false reports. When my husband and his brothers, A. S. Breda and Emile Breda started homeward on horseback, a band of armed ruffians headed by the notorious Samuel M. Hyams, assisted by the roughs W. W. Breazeale, Jules E. Gillespie, B. W. Burton, P. E. Prudhomme, and about 20 more followers stopped these gentlemen and drew pistols on them and were ordered by Hyams and W. W. Breazeale, that if one attempted to pass, 'drop him on the spot.' Hyams further said, 'While we have them let us kill them.' As my husband turned to escape, about 50 additional men armed with shotguns and winchester rifles appeared on the scene and proceeded to arrest all the colored people amid the wildest shouts. Mr. David Pierson, the so-called District Judge . . . organized this felonious and murderous attack for two weeks previous. My husband is the U. S. Supervisor for this parish and the most influential white Republican here, and Pierson and his assassins knew that he was preparing to show up the illegal acts of the Supervisor of Registration, J. P. Johnson and an end, they decided, must be put to Breda, so my husband and his brother, Dr. A. P. Breda, were given until 10 a.m. to leave the parish, or if they did not, they and the family must die and the house be burned. They left on foot in the woods with their rifles without money or clothing and to this writing we have had no tidings of them . . . I fear the worst of fates. We are in distress with no one to support us in our necessity and we do beg in the name of God and humanity that something be done for our relief and protection. Threats of the most violent character are made against us, saying that if my husband and brother return, they will murder from the cradle up and burn us out . . . I will send another letter similar to this by a different way, for fear this is lost--one will reach you. No Republican can receive anything by this P. Office--the

postmistress being the sister-in-law and willing tool of Cosgrove and others like him.³⁴

United States Attorney General Charles Devens was informed of the "gross outrages" committed at Natchitoches, and ordered an investigation. The whites were charged with organizing large armed forces and with driving Republican leaders from the parish and then threatening all other Republicans to such an extent that they feared to vote for candidates of their choice.³⁵ White Democrats denied charges of political conspiracy against Republicans and explained the events of the day as defense measures for the peace and property of the parish against Negroes.³⁶

The especial target of the Redeemers of Natchitoches Parish was the Negro politician and Reconstruction congressman, Radford Blount. This Negro had long been the accomplice and tool of James Madison Wells, the purchasable head of the Republican Returning Board of Louisiana during Reconstruction and proposed Republican candidate for United States Representative from the Fourth Congressional District of Louisiana in 1878. Blount's influence was great. The whites knew that he acted as the spokesmen for Negro voters and that

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ A. H. Leonard to Charles Devens, December 25, 1878 and newspaper clipping, n.d., found in Source Chronological and Year Files, GRDJ, NA, RG 60.

³⁶ New Orleans Times, March 8, 1879.

his close friendship with Wells insure Well's nomination. Not only were the whites determined that Wells should not run for Congress, but also that Republicans should not put a ticket in the field. The whites elected Jack Cunningham as Captain of a body of Redeemers charged with dispersing the Republican meeting. Negro Republican rule in Natchitoches Parish was to come to an abrupt end, as of the date of the nominating convention, September 21. White Democrats and Negro Republicans made charges and countercharges following the disturbance. The whites stated that the Republicans held their convention on the same day as the Democrats, and that Blount and the Breda brothers had declared that "they would carry the parish or have blood."³⁷ They stated that a report was circulated at the Democratic meeting that Negroes assembled at the Republican meeting were planning to break up the Democratic convention and burn the town. The Democratic meeting adjourned to ascertain whether or not the report was true. If the Negroes should appear dangerous and incendiary, the whites stated their intention of dispersing them.³⁸

When the Democrats arrived at the Republican meeting the Breda brothers and other white Republicans (contrary to

³⁷ Senate Report, No. 855, 45 Cong., 3 Sess., XII; Newspaper clipping, n.d., in Source Chronological and Year Files, GRDJ, NA, RG 60.

³⁸ Ibid.

Mrs. Breda's letter) had departed and the Negroes were standing huddled together in groups, sullen, defiant, and excited. The whites ordered them to disperse. Two or three Negroes threateningly replied that they would "come back at night and burn the town."³⁹ Blount and six or eight other Negroes quickly mounted their horses and rode rapidly up the street leading to Blount's house, followed by a scattered crowd of Negroes. Belief that the Negroes intended to stage a riot and to burn the town caused whites to organize parties and send them out during the afternoon and evening to learn the attitudes and movements of the Negroes. The whites found large crowds of Negroes, 150 to 200 strong and many of them armed, congregated a mile from the outskirts of town. After dark, a crowd of Negroes approached three white pickets stationed at the lower end of town and, when ordered to halt, "fired 15 or 20 shots . . . retreating only when pickets returned shots."⁴⁰ The whites dispersed the assembled Negroes and ordered their leaders, Blount, Raby, and Lewis (together with their white cohorts, the Breda brothers), to get out of town and forever more to abstain from politics. The whites explained that they arrested Blount to prevent an attack by colored men and to protect peace and property. They later

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

testified that their intention was to hold Blount as a hostage for the good conduct of the Negroes. Their actions, they said, had no political significance or purpose whatever.⁴¹ However on October 26, 1878, the Natchitoches Vindicator, whose editor and publisher was a white Redeemer, stated that the "results of the proceedings of September 21 was a political victory."

The Federal Justice Department went to great pains to try to apprehend and convict the Natchitoches Redeemers. It indicted forty-eight citizens of the parish. The list of those indicted may be likened to a roster of the elite of Natchitoches society: John C. Tritchell and James King (both of whom had been leaders of the Coushatta riot during Reconstruction), David Pierson, Landry and Joseph Charleville, Milton Cunningham, Louis DeBleieux, Emile Cloutier, James Cosgrove, Evariste Russell, William Jack, the Prudhommes, the Breazeales, and many other prominent white leaders.⁴² The prosecution submitted four charges, all based upon election and suffrage statutes. It charged the Redeemers with conspiring to prevent by force and intimidation Blount and other Negroes from supporting Wells for Congress. Other charges against the Redeemers concerned a

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Newspaper clipping, n.d., entitled "Natchitoches Trials: United States vs. Milton J. Cunningham et al.," found in Source Chronological and Year Files, GRDJ, NA, RG 60.

conspiracy to prevent the holding of a nominating convention to support Wells, threats of personal injury against Blount and others, and a conspiracy to influence the Grand Jurors against Blount and others.⁴³

A sensational trial of the Natchitoches Redeemers was held at New Orleans in March, 1879. The prosecution bolstered up its charges by stating that Republican leaders were banished and that, instead of holding the Negro Blount as a hostage, they released him the same night of his capture on condition that he leave the country forever. The prosecution further charged that seven months prior to the election a conspiracy was formed to suppress Negro votes in the Republican parishes throughout the state by force, intimidation, and threats. Testimony revealed that on the eventful day of the Natchitoches disturbance, while Republicans were attempting to hold their nominating convention, word was received that the Democrats were coming to disperse the Negroes and to kill their leaders. The Breda brothers, being ordered to leave the country, reached their home "by circling the city six or eight miles out of their way," and hastily put their affairs in order pending their departure early the following morning.

The prosecution submitted evidence to prove that Negro leaders of Natchitoches were intimidated. Radford Blount,

⁴³ Ibid.

being threatened with death, rushed away from the meeting, bolted his doors, and hid in his garret. An armed body of Democrats broke the lock on his door, searched his house, and discovering his hiding place, brought him out, releasing him only after his promise that he would leave the state, desist from politics, and tell other Negroes also to desist. Blount was then escorted to the edge of town and reminded never to return. John C. Lewis, another Negro Republican, also fled the scene of the disturbance and, reaching his home, locked his front door and went out the back door as the Democrats broke down the front in search of him. Eluding the whites, he hid in the weeds until he had an opportunity to escape from town. Henry Raby, another Negro leader, was captured and ordered to leave the state and never to return under threat of death. Testimony revealed that these Negroes and the white advocates of their suffrage rights were hunted, threatened, and driven from their homes for the purpose of breaking down the Republican Party in Natchitoches Parish.⁴⁴ The prosecution charged that a system of intimidation was carried on against colored Republicans of the parish down to the day of the election. Negroes were constantly threatened that unless they voted the Democratic ticket they would be made to leave the parish. On

44 Ibid.

election day, it was charged, Negroes were "herded together in line in Indian file, and handed each a Democratic ticket, and forced to mark it." After voting, Negroes were furnished with a badge consisting of a strip of red ribbon on which was printed the words "voted the Democratic ticket, 1878." This badge, the Negroes were told, would protect them from harm for years to come.⁴⁵

Despite the efforts of the Federal government to prosecute white Redeemers of Natchitoches, the forty-eight defendants were acquitted. They returned to Natchitoches amid general rejoicing:

The backbone of political prosecutions has been broken. The verdict in the Natchitoches cases may be accepted as the result which will be reached in most, if not all, of the political cases now pending In all those cases where it is charged that there was a conspiracy or settled purpose to prevent Republicans from voting or supporting any particular candidate, there is no possible chance of a conviction. The government failed in making out a case, and failed so conspicuously that there is no longer any ground for Northern Radical press and the stalwarts in Congress to charge that Republicans in Louisiana, both white and black, are not allowed a free expression of their will at the ballot box When these political trials are over the last struggle of Radicalism for supremacy will end.⁴⁶

Indeed Radicalism in Natchitoches Parish did end with the election of 1878. With a total population of 5907 whites and 15,404 Negroes and a voting population of 1936 registered

⁴⁵ Senate Report, No. 693, 46 Cong., 2 Sess., Part II, 431.

⁴⁶ New Orleans Times, March 8, 1879.

Negroes and 1830 registered whites, the parish returned 2816 Democratic votes and not a single Republican vote.⁴⁷ The Natchitoches Vindicator on November 23, 1878 published this account of the election:

Election day here was spent joyously by black and white. First they went arm-in-arm and voted the Democratic ticket, and then went to their old antebellum plays. We had jumping, wrestling, foot racing, jig dances, and pony races. Had a stranger to our customs come here he would have been astonished. Even the whites had no idea of such a tremendous ground swell, and scores of colored men declared to us that Tuesday, November 5, was the happiest day they have seen since the war . . . For ten long years have we, born together and linked in one common tie of interest, been estranged, but today we are united forever. Colored men, we salute you as citizens, friends and brothers.

Sensational pre-election irregularities also occurred in West Feliciana Parish. Bulldozing of Negroes was reported in that parish as early as January, 1877. Governor S. B. Packard's correspondence included a letter written by J. A. Glasper and signed by two other Negroes, George Swayze and Lucieus Early, relating their political persecutions. The semi-illiterate Glasper wrote:

I ReSide in the Parish of West Feliciana in a Strange hole [strangle hold?] of the Bulldozer and have don all that I could for the Republican Party and I fears to go home and they have burnt up my store on account of my Political opinion about three thousand and five hundred Dollars worth as your Repersentabe well know[s] and please to give me some occupation that I may obtain Bread ontell the country is Setle and

⁴⁷ Senate Report, No. 855, 45 Cong., 3 Sess., X, 567-572.

oblige your obedience Servent.⁴⁸

An even more disastrous fate befell a Negro Justice of the Peace, P. B. Melson, elected in 1876 and commissioned by Kellogg. While he was holding court, a crowd of about one hundred armed men reportedly came to Melson's house, took his commission away from him, tore it up, destroyed his books, and told him that if he attempted to hold court any more they would hang him.⁴⁹ Melson was described as a colored man who could read and write well and who owned some property. Melson was but one target of the Redeemers. Several other Negroes were also intimidated.

Bulldozing activities of the Redeemers in West Feliciana were accelerated as the November election drew near. The political situation was complicated by a split in the Democratic Party. The Conservatives, led by Captain J. J. Barrow and J. B. McGehn, courted the favor of Negro voters. The Redeemers organized themselves for action. The following men took the lead in whipping of Negro voters for their political opinions: James Smith, Louis Smith, T. E. Ogden, Ben Ogden, F. L. La, James Austin, T. Newton, Monroe Morris, H. Stocket, W. Cooper, and Nat Fisher.⁵⁰ All these

⁴⁸Governors' Correspondence, Department of Archives, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, La.

⁴⁹J. B. Davis to Governor S. B. Packard, March 12, 1877, Source Chronological and Year Files, GRDJ, NA, RG 60.

⁵⁰G. Bancroft to Jack Wharton, November 14, 1878, Source Chronological and Year Files, GRDJ, NA, RG 60.

men lived in the fifth ward of the parish and directed their actions toward eliminating the Negro leaders. Two Negroes, Henry Brookheart and John Coats, were whipped to make them drop politics. Brookheart was stopped on the road by white Redeemers, F. Ogden and W. Stocket, and told that if he "did not stop his damned electioneering that somebody would attend to him." Brookheart was then temporarily hung to a tree by the side of the road, but later cut down and told to "go home, keep his damned old mouth shut and not to meddle in politics any more." As an added precaution, Brookheart was advised by Stocket to publish in the papers a statement to the effect that he would not have anything more to do with politics. Coats was approached by the Redeemers, Lewis Smith and Charles Davis, and told in the presence of witnesses that if he were supporting the Barrow ticket he must look out for himself. A couple of weeks after this incident, several white men came to Coats' home and told Coats' wife that they wanted to see him. When she told them he was not at home, Charles Davis and other white Redeemers "seized Mrs. Coats and beat her with their pistols over the head and whipped her." Upon locating Coats, Davis and another Redeemer named James Smith informed him that if he would drop politics, he would not be interfered with. This Coats agreed to do, "being too afraid to refuse." Davis then told Coats that he would notify all parties concerned to that effect.⁵¹

⁵¹ Ibid.

An anonymous letter from Bayou Sara, dated October 5, 1878, describing the parish political situation, reached United States Marshal Jack Wharton. This letter stated in part:

We are having a dreadful life in this parish. We are divided in our opinion and nearly all the colored people are in favor of our party, "The Conservative Party." They have been hung, whipped and ill treated in every way. A great many of the colored people have to sleep in the woods at night. Others are afraid to go to their homes even in the daytime. Women in the last stages of pregnancy have been struck on the head with shotguns at night by masked men because they would not tell where their husbands were concealed at. I can send you statements of half dozen brutal acts upon colored people. . . . See the governor and let him know about all these outrages. . . . I do not wish you to let my name be used at all, for if you did, my life or property would not be safe.⁵²

The anonymous informer wrote Marshal Wharton again on October 17 that:

. . . since I wrote you last we have had two whipping outrages in our neighborhood. Henry Morris was taken out of his house on 29th September at 11 o'clock at night by ten armed masked men and whipped terribly. . . Two young girls 16 and 17 years old were taken out of their house on the night of 5 Oct. at about 12 o'clock by 9 armed and masked men, their clothes taken entirely off their persons, and then tied to trees and whipped til they could hardly walk for a week. We are guarding the principal colored people at night that belong to our party. This has put the colored people in better spirits. When they are living off to themselves, they have been furnished balls, powder and caps, and told to shoot any persons that interfere with them at night. A document has been drawn up and signed by the white men of our party, pledging ourselves to protect the persons that

⁵²Anonymous to Jack Wharton, October 5, 1878, Source Chronological and Year Files, GRDJ, NA, RG 60.

shoot the outlaws. The feeling in this parish is very bitter. . . . We have put on a bold front, turned out at night with Winchester rifles, and the other side have drawn in their lines considerably. They have found out that Bulldozen [sic] don't pay so well when they run the risk of getting shot themselves."⁵³

The "bold front" described by the anonymous informer was hardly a true account of facts. Wharton, upon transferring his letter to United States Attorney General, Charles Devens, added this admonition: "I ask that the name of the writer not be made public, for I feel he would suffer if it was known he had written it. He is one of the oldest citizens in the parish and reliable in every way."⁵⁴ Although the Negroes who were whipped knew every white man taking part in the action, not one of the Negroes would testify against the perpetrators. All Negroes taking an active part in politics were advised by the planters who employed them not to testify against anyone. They were told that, if they did testify against the whites, they would be killed or would have to leave the parish.⁵⁵

On election day in West Feliciana Parish a group of armed whites at the ninth ward poll intimidated Negro voters, compelling them to vote for Democrats or not at all. M. L. Stewart, Supervisor of Registration, and C. M. Barrow, Clerk

53 Ibid.

54 Jack Wharton to Charles Devens, November 15, 1878, Source Chronological and Year Files, GRDJ, NA, RG 60.

55 G. Bancroft to Jack Wharton, November 14, 1878, Source Chronological and Year Files, GRDJ, NA, RG 60.

of Court, witnessed the intimidation of Negro voters at this poll. A white man who was protecting Negro voters was whipped severely in the presence of several Negroes, all of whom were afraid to testify to the fact for fear of being killed by the whites. A Negro named James Jordan, who lived on the Stockton plantation, was forbidden to vote. He explained his absence from the polls on election day as fear of the bulldozers who had told him that they would "attend to his case if he voted." Espy Gael, a Negro sawmill operator residing in the fifth ward, was so frightened by pre-election threats that he also refrained from voting. Post-election investigation by Federal agents revealed that numerous other Negroes were threatened with death if they voted contrary to the wishes of the white Redeemers, and consequently went to the polls and voted as they were told. G. Bancroft, a special Deputy Marshal sent by the Justice Department to investigate alleged intimidation of Negro voters in West Feliciana Parish, summed up the situation in these terms:

The Negroes are afraid to be seen talking to a white man if he is a stranger. They are in dread of the white people generally and are afraid to vote and afraid not to vote. If they vote for the Democrats, the Conservatives whip them. If they vote for the Conservatives, the Democrats whip them. The black man has no voice. He is controlled entirely by the man who employs him.⁵⁶

The most widely publicized of the pre-election riots during the 1878 campaign occurred at Waterproof in Tensas

⁵⁶ Ibid.

Parish on October 12. This delta parish had been a Republican stronghold during Reconstruction because of the concentration of Negroes there. Altogether thirty-six Negroes were killed as a result of this riot.⁵⁷ The Democratic Party of Tensas Parish held its nominating convention in September, 1878, and chose a completely white ticket. Colonel Vincent Reeves, Chairman of the committee, stated that the ticket was a good one and, "we must and shall elect it, cost what it will. We don't mean to hurt anybody unless there is opposition made to the election of this ticket, and if there is, we will quietly wipe it out or move it aside."⁵⁸

The especial target of the Redeemers of Tensas Parish was Alfred Fairfax, a Negro Baptist preacher who was an aspirant for Congress from the Fifth Congressional District of Louisiana. Fairfax stated that Colonel Reeves singled him out, "fastening his eye on me and pointing at me with his forefinger [saying] There stands the great Ajax of the colored race. I know that he will not oppose it."⁵⁹ This preacher-politician, a leader of the Negro Republicans in the parish, had incurred the wrath of the whites because of his political ambitions and his determination to organize a

⁵⁷ Appleton's Annual Cyclopedie, 1878 (New York, 1883), 501-502.

⁵⁸ Alfred Fairfax to R. B. Hayes, January 3, 1879, Source Chronological and Year Files, GRDJ, NA, RG 60.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

Republican nominating convention. A prominent doctor at Waterproof had warned Fairfax that he was making himself very objectionable to the whites by his zealous efforts to organize a nominating convention and to get himself elected to congress. He was told that on some dark night a party of men would take him out and no one would know what had become of him.⁶⁰

About two weeks after the Democratic nominating convention, a fake Yellow Fever quarantine was imposed throughout Tensas Parish to prevent Negroes from assembling at St. Joseph to hold a convention or from coming to the polls to vote.⁶¹ Redeemers warned Negroes that any attempt to hold a convention would be a violation of the quarantine regulations. Fairfax stirred up the Negroes, drew the color line, and threatened to come to St. Joseph with 500 armed Negroes and override the quarantine by riding down the quarantine guards.⁶² October 5 was the date set by the Negroes for the Republican nominating convention and Fairfax was the guiding spirit of the movement. The bulldozing of all Republicans by Redeemers was conducted so relentlessly that white Republicans (ardent politicians during Reconstruction) either abstained from politics altogether or, aspiring

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Otis Singletary, "The Election of 1878 in Louisiana," The Louisiana Historical Quarterly, XL (1957), 51.

⁶² Natchez Daily Democrat and Courier, October 15, 1878.

to candidacy on the Democratic ticket, deserted the Republican party. Despite the large Republican majority in the parish no white man would accept nomination on the Republican ticket for fear of incurring the wrath of the Redeemers. Judge C. C. Cordill and John W. Register, although staunch Republicans for the previous eight years and formerly judge and sheriff respectively of the parish, deserted the Negroes and courted the favor of the Redeemers in hope of political rewards. Judge Hull and James G. Matthews, both white Republicans, decided against any political activity in the approaching election. Most Negro leaders backed down and gave up efforts to hold or to attend a convention. A. O. Bryant, vice-president of the Republican Executive Committee, was too frightened to issue a call for the Republican convention. "If you go in opposition to the Democrats here," Colonel Reeves warned Bryant, "you will be the first man killed; in fact, your body will be made a target." Bryant went into hiding. He was described as thoroughly intimidated when found soon afterwards by the preacher-politician, Fairfax.⁶³ Reeves appointed a committee of three to warn all Negro leaders that efforts to hold a convention would be regarded as a declaration of war and they must expect to be

⁶³ Alfred Fairfax to R. B. Hayes, January 3, 1879,
Source Chronological and Year Files, GRDJ, NA, RG 60.

visited by Redeemers.⁶⁴

But the Negro preacher, Fairfax, as if placing his trust in God and fearless of earthly Redeemers around him, moved quickly on that October day to get the nominations under way. Not a white face was present at the St. Joseph courthouse where the convention was scheduled to be held. The Negroes were so frightened by threats of the whites that they assembled in their club rooms, armed themselves heavily, rode to the courthouse as a group, and proceeded to nominate their Republican candidates.⁶⁵ All candidates nominated were Negroes. Fairfax alleged that the whites by pressure upon white Republicans, forced upon them the necessity of nominating Negroes. He stated that their motive was to afford a pretext for bulldozing, charging that Negroes had drawn the color line. T. W. Sachse, Democratic Executive Secretary, was accused of having telegraphed the Natchez Democrat prior to the Negro convention that the color line had been drawn. The defiance of the Negroes in holding the convention and the fact that they were all armed produced genuine alarm among the whites for the safety of themselves and their property, since the Negroes in the delta parishes of Tensas, Concordia, and Ouachita outnumbered the whites

⁶⁴Ibid.

⁶⁵R. F. McConnell to Jack Wharton, October 25, 1878,
Source Chronological and Year Files, GRDJ, NA, RG 60.

ten to one. A list of Negro voters who must be killed was purported to have been drafted by Colonel Reeves and Judge Cordill.⁶⁶ The whites called upon militia from neighboring parishes for assistance in disarming the Negroes. White Democrats from Natchez, Mississippi, also joined the Tensas Redeemers and their allies from other parishes.

The first activity of the whites following the Negro convention was directed at Fairfax. Conflicting stories of this activity and subsequent events reached the Justice Department in a matter of days. R. F. McConnell, special federal deputy assigned to investigate charges of intimidation of Negro voters, reported that Captain John Peck of Sicily Island, Catahoula Parish and commander of the nearest company of State militia, visited Fairfax's house at Water-proof, accompanied by three or four of his men, allegedly for the purpose of advising Fairfax to counsel the Negroes to disband peaceably.⁶⁷ Republican sources stated that Captain Peck and a party of fifty to seventy-five armed men came to Fairfax's house "rushing into the yard and shouting 'We want Fairfax, the damned son of a bitch'" and that there was continuous firing for about five minutes.⁶⁸ The Negroes

⁶⁶ Ibid., Senate Report, No. 855, 45 Cong., 3 Sess., XVII, 241, 288.

⁶⁷ R. F. McConnell to Jack Wharton, October 25, 1878, Source Chronological and Year Files, GRDJ, NA, RG 60; Senate Report No. 855, 45 Cong., 3 Sess., XVII, 288; Natchez Daily Democrat and Courier, October 15, 1878.

⁶⁸ Alfred Fairfax to R. B. Hayes, January 3, 1879, Source Chronological and Year Files, GRDJ, NA, RG 60.

closeted in the preacher's house began firing upon Captain Peck who fell dead at the first shot.⁶⁹ The men accompanying Peck opened fire upon the preacher's house and three Negroes were wounded. Fleming Branch was dragged from under a bed and shot six times, a Negro named Kennedy was wounded, and Willie Singleton was shot and died shortly thereafter. Kennedy was described by Sheriff Register as "a Negro with courage who had to be killed." Fairfax escaped unhurt from his house. He hid in the woods until the confusion subsided, then, disguised in women's clothes, fled the parish not to return for several months.⁷⁰

The killing of Peck produced increasingly large bodies of armed whites concentrated throughout Tensas Parish. Redeemers from the parishes of Ouachita, Morehouse, Catahoula, and Franklin Parishes joined the Tensas group. Their presence frightened the Negroes. They ceased efforts to pick cotton and, leaving their cotton sacks in the field, congregated in groups to plot a course of action. Such a group of Negroes was spotted by a white posse on October 12 at the head of Bass Lane a mile from the town of Waterproof. Fairfax stated that there were "four or five Negroes" in the

⁶⁹R. F. McConnell to Jack Wharton, October 25, 1878,
Source Chronological and Year Files, GRDJ, NA, RG 60;
Natchez Daily Democrat and Courier, October 15, 1878.

⁷⁰Ibid., Senate Report 855, 45 Cong., 3 Sess., XIV.

group. Federal investigators stated that the assembly of Negroes numbered about 400.⁷¹ Local white Redeemers stated the number of Negroes to be about one thousand.⁷² The whites allegedly fired on the Negroes. However, James R. Curell stated that the Redeemers, under the leadership of Captain Trezevant, were fired upon eight times by the Negroes and finally returned fire and gave chase.⁷³

The Redeemers stated the cause of the riot was the assembling of armed Negroes throughout the city streets of Waterproof and along the country roads and lanes of the delta parishes. On Monday, two days after the killing of Peck, seventy-five to a hundred Negroes from the delta parishes, each armed with a shotgun, assembled on the front street of Waterproof to discuss the state of affairs. These Negroes reassembled the following day and it was announced that the Negro clubs from Alfred Fairfax's church were coming to join them for a final settlement of their rights. By mid-morning the Negroes had spilled from the front street of Waterproof to Bass Lane, a mile from the outskirts of town.

⁷¹ Appleton's Annual Cyclopedie, 1878, 501-502.

⁷² Robert D. Calhoun, "A History of Concordia Parish," The Louisiana Historical Quarterly, XVI (1933), 326.

⁷³ Natchez Daily Democrat and Courier, October 20, 1878.

When the shooting began, the Negroes fled down the lane in a dense cloud of dust, the whites after them discharging guns and yelling loudly. Most Negroes rolled off their mules and ponies and crawled through the hedges on each side of the lane to seek a hiding place in the cotton fields or nearby swamps. During the excitement a gin house on the Burns place was set on fire, and 60 to 70 bales of cotton destroyed. This fire was reported to be a prearranged signal for a general rally of the Negroes.⁷⁴ A Negro named Dick Miller, who was accused of having burned the gin, was taken a short distance off the main road and hanged by the white posse. So frightened of a like fate were the other Negroes that Miller's body remained hanging by the roadside for a day and a night before being cut down and buried. The whites rode through plantations of Tensas and Concordia Parishes, killing Negro men and outraging Negro women, besides stealing horses and robbing Negroes of personal property according to the allegations made by Fairfax:

There were four or five hundred men riding day and night and they visited nearly every plantation and they shot, hung or whipped someone. These acts were committed by men represented as state troops and commanded, though not in person, by Floyd King, the Democratic congressional candidate of the Fifth

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Governor Francis T. Nicholls' Message to the State Legislature, January 7, 1879, Louisiana Senate Journal, 1879.

District of Louisiana.⁷⁵

Fairfax accused the Tensas whites of seeking assistance of Redeemers from the neighboring parishes on the pretext that the Negroes were in arms and threatening the safety of white men, women, and children. Certain white parties at Waterproof, the preacher accused, attempted to get the Negroes to come to that town in arms by telling them that the whites feared an attack from the Franklin Parish desperados and wanted the Negroes to help them to protect the town. This was done, Fairfax said, to afford the bulldozers a pretext for their fiendish work. On realizing that some Negroes were about to comply with the request of the whites, the Negro preacher left his place of concealment and warned the Negroes of the plot laid for their destruction.⁷⁶

To point up the political persecutions in his locality, Fairfax appended to his letter to President Hayes a list of Negroes killed during the campaign of 1878, the manner of killing, the places where killed, and the date of each killing. On October 16, William Henry was shot in Tensas Parish. On the same day Richard Miller was hanged at Lake St. Peter, about six miles from Waterproof in the same parish. Louis Postewaithe, described as a quiet and

⁷⁵ Alfred Fairfax to R. B. Hayes, January 3, 1879,
Source Chronological and Year Files, GRDJ, NA, RG 60.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

hard working man, was shot at Wren's store in Tensas Parish on October 17, leaving a wife and six children entirely unprovided for. He had been regarded by the whites as impudent, but the blacks attributed his murder to the fact that he was an outspoken Republican. James Starier was also killed at Wren's store on the same day for his Republicanism. The Redeemers had earlier taken Starier from his bed one night, carried him to the side of a road and shot him, leaving him for dead. When the whites learned that Starier would probably recover from the gun wound, they again shot him, and afterwards, cut his throat as an added precaution. Bob Williams and Monday Hill were hanged and Hiram Wilson was shot in Tensas Parish on October 18. These Negroes were described as solid Republicans. Peter Young was hanged at the Pinney Place in Tensas Parish on the same day as Wilson, Williams, and Hill. Charles Bethel, an active Negro Republican, was shot and had his throat cut on the Bass Place just above Waterproof on the following day.⁷⁷

Fairfax's list also included Negro voters of Concordia Parish who were killed for political activities. On October 17, at the Yzuaga plantation in Concordia Parish, Charles Carroll and Wast Ellis were killed. Commodore Smallwood, a preacher of influence who lived on the same

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Ibid.

plantation, was severely whipped on the same day, after which the unconscious Negro was weighted with a large iron cogwheel tied to his neck, thrown into the lake, and drowned. Dickey Smith, a Negro described as a quiet and unoffensive Republican of Potawamut Plantation, was hanged on October 18, because he did not answer certain questions satisfactorily.

In addition to political murders, about two hundred Negroes of the Tensas-Concordia area were whipped previous to election day and others driven from home. After the riot a Negro named John Redmon returned to the Yzuaga plantation. He was promptly hanged for "knowing too much" about pre-election activities of the Redeemers of that plantation. The Negro preacher concluded that his object in writing the letter to the president was to aid him "in arriving at correct conclusions as to the manner in which the Democracy of Tensas conduct election campaigns.⁷⁸

The letter of Fairfax was transferred by the president to the Justice Department for action. In a matter of days following the riot R. T. McConnell, special deputy sent to Louisiana to investigate the Tensas political situation, reported to United States Marshal Jack Wharton:

The result of the Tensas Parish trouble has been the complete demoralization of the colored voters in that section and I've heard that large numbers of

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Ibid.

them are joining the Democratic clubs as a measure of safety.⁷⁹

Attorney General Charles Devens contacted Louisiana justice officials Albert H. Leonard, Jack Wharton, and J. W. Gurley for verification of persecutions of Negro voters in Tensas Parish. Almost daily communications passed between these officials and the Attorney General until the end of the trial of the election cases in April, 1879. Details were worked out for the hiring of detectives, the salary to be paid and procedure to be followed.⁸⁰ Devens urged that a speedy investigation be made at the scene of the crime where he surmised that information could be easily gained from the numerous witnesses to the events:

The outrages against the elective franchise in Louisiana have been of most open and infamous character. I expect vigorous efforts to bring to justice the people who committed them. There can be no difficulty in procuring evidence. Deal with those who have been leaders, rather than those who have been followers. I expect of you resolution in vindicating the laws of the United States. Large sums of money have been furnished you to obtain a fair election in Louisiana. If it has not been obtained, there should at least be sufficient evidence in your possession to bring to justice those who have violated the elective franchise.⁸¹

⁷⁹R. T. McConnell to Jack Wharton, October 25, 1878, Source Chronological and Year Files, GRDJ, NA, RG 60.

⁸⁰Jack Wharton to Charles Devens, October 18, 23, November 20, 1878; A. H. Leonard to Charles Devens, November 2, 1878, Source Chronological and Year Files, GRDJ, NA, RG 60.

⁸¹Charles Devens to Jack Wharton, October 23, November 12, 1878, Instruction Book, volume H., 1878-1879, GRDJ, NA, RG 60.

Devens also wrote A. H. Leonard urging him to pursue the murderers under the revised Federal statutes dealing with intimidating witnesses and interfering with voting processes. On November 27 Devens again wrote Leonard requesting him to summon Judge Ludeling, of Monroe, to New Orleans since he had been informed that Ludeling could give valuable testimony as to the election outrages.⁸² Shortly thereafter Devens dispatched to New Orleans, as a special deputy, G. H. Chase, a man in whom he placed full confidence to secure indictment and conviction of Redeemers.⁸³ The Grand Jury, which had been called into session at New Orleans, had collected evidence and subpoenaed witnesses. One hundred twenty men from Orleans, Natchitoches, Caddo, and Tensas Parishes were indicted for election offenses.⁸⁴

Special deputy Chase arrived at New Orleans on the eve of the verdict in the Natchitoches cases. On March 7, 1879, he telegraphed Devens the verdict of "Not Guilty" in those cases. On the following day in a letter to Devens he elaborated at length upon this verdict and the Louisiana political situation, lamenting the fact that the expense of

⁸²Charles Devene to A. H. Leonard, November 13, December 21, 1878, Instruction Book, volume H, 1878-1879, GRDJ, NA, RG 60.

⁸³Ibid., February 24, 1879.

⁸⁴Philip D. Uzee, "Republican Politics in Louisiana, 1877-1900," Ph.D. dissertation, Louisiana State University, 1950, 49.

prosecution might reach \$60,000.

The verdict was entirely against the evidence and wholly unexpected . . . the proof being conclusive as the guilt of nearly all the defendants. I am convinced that it will be impossible to obtain conviction in a single case and consider it useless to attempt it. . . . Mr. Leonard desires counsel to assist him in the Tensas cases, set for March 25. There are over forty defendants. . . . There is really no one here who would go into the cases who could do the government any good. In fact, I fear the government will be badly beaten, but as a large sum of money has been spent [for prosecution of election offenses in Louisiana, and] there are one hundred indictments in which there are over three hundred defendants, some substantial effort should be made to sustain these indictments. Nothing can so effectively strengthen these prosecutions as sending some prominent lawyer from the North. Mr. Pierrepont would be a good man, in fact the very best. Employ Mr. Pierrepont at a \$2,500 fee. . . . Judge Woods thinks the right man cannot be found in this state. This he tells me confidentially.⁸⁵

The defendants in the Tensas case (United States versus L. Vincent Reeves et al.) were Vincent Reeves, Thomas P. Farrar, Wade R. Young, C. C. Cordill, Theodore C. Sachre, Alexander Chon, Quitman Munce, George G. Goldman, Henry Shaefer, John W. Register, John C. Henderson, and Eli Tullis. The verdict was that the indictments ought to be quashed.⁸⁶ On April 3, 1879, Deputy Chase wrote the Attorney General that he was convinced that he could do no good

⁸⁵G. H. Chase to Charles Devens, March 8, 1879, Source Chronological and Year Files, GRDJ, NA, RG 60.

⁸⁶Newspaper clipping, n.d., Source Chronological and Year Files, GRNJ, NA, RG 60.

by remaining at the Tensas trial.⁸⁷

The Redeemers conducted a campaign against Negro voters in nearby Ouachita Parish in the fall of 1878. On October 23 Marshal Wharton wrote the Attorney General requesting a detective to investigate alleged bulldozing of Negro voters in the vicinity of Monroe.⁸⁸ E. Shearman was sent by the Justice Department to Monroe as a special deputy investigator. He arrived armed with a letter from Republican Judge Ludeling. He was told by Julian Ennemoser, proprietor of the Ouachita Hotel, that if he were in any way connected with politics he would prefer that he seek lodging elsewhere. He was permitted to engage a room only after showing the proprietor his letter from Judge Ludeling. He was advised by Ludeling to leave Monroe and Ouachita Parish instantly as he could accomplish nothing against the white Redeemers and his presence would only add to the embarrassment of the Republicans.⁸⁹

Shortly after his arrival Shearman was informed of the recent murder of Saul Hill and Herman Bell, two Negro mechanics of Monroe. Herman Bell was killed with one shot.

⁸⁷G. H. Chase to Charles Devens, April 3, 1879, Source Chronological and Year Files, GRDJ, NA, RG 60.

⁸⁸Source Chronological and Year Files, GRDJ, NA, RG 60.

⁸⁹E. Shearman to Jack Wharton, November 16, 1878, Source Chronological and Year Files, GRDJ, NA, RG 60.

Saul Hill, shot at the same time but not fatally, called a physician who removed sixteen buckshot from his body. The Redeemers then went to his house one night and killed him as he lay wounded on his bed. Shearman wrote Wharton that the murderers of Hill and Bell were Captain Willis, Captain McCloud, Judge Mack, Jesse Womack, a man named Phillips, and John McEnery, all described as leading opponents of constitutional law. He stated that these Redeemers took four Negroes from the Ouachita Parish jail and hanged them. They threatened two other Negroes, who witnessed the hangings, with death if they disclosed details of the affair. Shearman related the story of an old Negro man living near Logtown, who, after being severely beaten by the bulldozers, had hidden himself to avoid subsequent visits. The investigator wrote that wherever he went two armed men followed him. He related an anonymous warning by Republicans to be on guard since he had been seen going in and out of Judge Ludeling's residence, and, furthermore, not to send any telegram or letter since a Monroe postal clerk named Morris Hayes exercised general inspection over the contents of suspicious items of mail. Shearman concluded his letter to Wharton:

The condition of the country is such that law abiding people are afraid to give any testimony, as they would have to leave their homes as soon as found out, and those who commit the greatest crimes are never brought to trial, especially if the victims

happen to be opposed to the bulldozers.⁹⁰

Despite discouraging results the Grand Jury remained in session and the Justice Department continued for months its efforts to indict Redeemers for violation of election laws. A. H. Leonard, United States District Attorney for Louisiana, wrote Devens as follows:

The last election in this state was carried by the Democratic Party in some localities by fraud, in some by violence and intimidation and in others by fraud and violence combined. Many grave crimes have been committed and I expect to convict in many cases. It is possible arrests will be resisted and some of the witnesses summoned on the part of the government will be killed.⁹¹

Judge W. E. Horne wrote President Hayes:

Arrests have been made of the more prominent actors. Mr. Leonard will push with vigor and zeal to the end that the law might be enforced. The defenders of the outlaws propose to use the machinery of the State Courts and indict Republicans generally. The evidence will clearly show in certain localities great and violent wrong was done the voters in the last congressional and state election.⁹²

The plantation area of the Red River valley was a fertile field for the white Redeemers during the campaign of 1878. Stated the Bossier Banner on October 31, 1878, "The Democratic vote in New Orleans and the lower parishes

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ A. H. Leonard to Charles Devens, December 25, 1878, Source Chronological and Year Files, GRDJ, NA, RG 60.

⁹² January 3, 1879, Source Chronological and Year Files, GRDJ, NA, RG 60.

will be small due to the epidemic. The North Louisiana parishes are expected to make up that deficiency. The entire state must be redeemed. Let every Democrat labor zealously" The Negro voters of Caddo, Bossier, DeSoto, Red River, and Webster Parishes were generally intimidated. Election day was characterized by violence. In Bossier Parish Negro voters were driven from the polls and three Negroes killed by the whites near the Benton polling place. At Bossier Point poll, Negroes were stopped from voting on the pretext that their names could not be found on the voting lists. When this poll closed, the Redeemers would not let the ballot box be opened by registration officials, but took charge of the box themselves and drove the Deputy Sheriff back to the town of Bellvue. Negro voters of Webster Parish were told that their names were not registered and they were dispersed from the polls. In DeSoto Parish, Negroes were so intimidated that they did not attempt either to register or to vote.⁹³

The most violent activity of the Redeemers in the Red River area occurred in Caddo Parish. This parish contained 3732 registered Negro voters and 1496 registered white voters.⁹⁴ Negro voters in Caddo were not disposed to desert

⁹³Henry Adams to Charles Devens, November 19, 1878, Source Chronological and Year Files, GRDJ, NA, RG 60.

⁹⁴Senate Report, No. 855, 45 Cong., 3 Sess., VI, 567-572.

the Republican Party. To thwart the efforts of Negroes to vote, Caddo Parish Redeemers located polling places in such a way as to discriminate against Negroes. In Ward One the polling place was located in the extreme Northwestern corner of the parish near the Arkansas line and necessitated for most Negroes a sixty mile trip through swamps and across Red River in order to cast their votes. Two hundred and seventy Negroes voted the Republican ticket at this poll, beginning their journey to the polling place the previous night in order to arrive in time. After the election, armed whites broke the ballot box and destroyed the ballots so that none were counted.⁹⁵

The three box system was another device of the Caddo Redeemers to confuse Negro voters. The law of Louisiana required that the names of all candidates to be voted for at any given poll should be put on one ballot and deposited in one box. However separate boxes were set up for votes for Congressional, State and Parish, and Ward candidates at the Caddo polls. Negro votes placed into any one of the three boxes were counted only for the type of candidate designated on that particular box.⁹⁶ Henry Adams, a Negro politician of Shreveport, complained in a letter to Attorney

⁹⁵ Ibid., VII.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

General Charles Devens:

We had our tickets whole and part of the col. people tore their tickets into and put them in all three of the boxes, and the democrats found out that we were beating them and so they hunted and swore that they could not find our names on the list of registration and about ten or eleven o'clock we all found out that they aimed for the col. mans vote to count nothing and so there was an order given for them all to stop voting and so we did so and where they did not stop they were driven from the polls with sticks and guns. In the Campobella ward the white league killed, wounded, or ran off 200 col. people out of that ward and even killed three col. women and children about their husbands.⁹⁷

Election day in Caddo Parish was highlighted by violence at the little town of Caledonia, located on Red River thirty miles south of Shreveport. The Redeemers heard a rumor that the Negroes had accumulated a supply of arms and ammunition and had hidden them in the home of a Negro Republican named Madison Reams, who was ticket distributor at Calidonia poll and a candidate for Justice of the Peace. Without delay the whites rushed to his house to investigate the rumor. Inevitably the shooting began. Two whites were wounded, and an undetermined number of Negroes were either killed or wounded. The Negroes testified that Reams had nine or ten guns at his house because he and other Negroes had been given permission to have guns by Republican Justice of the Peace Jere Bright to protect his cotton house.

⁹⁷ Henry Adams to Charles Devens, November 19, 1878,
Source Chronological and Year Files, GRDJ, NA, RG 60.

Justice Bright had allegedly been threatened with the burning of his cotton house. The Negroes stated that the riot was caused by Negroes voting the Republican ticket; that they already had a majority in the box when the fighting first broke out for they were "voting the Republican ticket pretty fast." The Caledonia poll was closed and a Negro hunt ensued. The Negroes took to the swamps and remained hidden for several days. Reams and six other Negroes eluded the Redeemers and made good their escape. The close of election day found Negro voters of Caddo Parish frightened and in hiding.⁹⁸

Henry Adams got up enough courage to write to Attorney General Charles Devens, relative to Caddo politics, that:

Some of the Democrats tell me Just so long as we colored people fool with politics and try to vote here in the South So long as the white man of the South are going to kill us and from what I can see it seems So--and they had threatened about a hundred of our lives now and many are scared to stay in their houses at night and have made some of them leave the State and my life is threatened and am not expected to live three days and I trust God that the United States will give us some territory to ours selves and let us leave these slave holders to work their own land, for they are killing our race by the hundreds every day and night. I speak for the race and the white Southern Republicans are not allowed any more showing about political matters than the poor colored people and

⁹⁸ Senate Report, No. 855, 45 Cong., 3 Sess., IX.

We pray God that the Northern people will take this in consideration and do something for our poor race.⁹⁹

The Justice Department sent C. D. Ewing as a special deputy investigator to Caddo Parish to look into the matter of Negro voting rights. Ewing took testimony and summoned twenty-four Negroes, two of whom were witnesses to events at the Caledonia poll, to testify before the Federal Grand Jury at New Orleans. In mid-December the Negroes boarded the steamer "Danube" for the trip to New Orleans. Two of these Negroes, however, were destined never to testify, for death awaited them before they traveled beyond the parish limits. When the "Danube" arrived at Yeards' plantation on Red River, near the town of Caledonia, seven or eight men, including the Caledonia constable, held guns on the pilot and forced him to land the steamer. With guns drawn these men went on board the boat and arrested Lot Clark and Bill White (the two Negroes who had been present at the Caledonia poll on election day) on a warrant purported to have been issued at Shreveport four or five weeks previously. Deputy Ewing telegraphed A. H. Leonard at New Orleans that while the constable was taking these two Negroes to Shreveport for trial they were taken from him by a mob

⁹⁹Henry Adams to Charles Devens, November 19, 1878,
Source Chronological and Year Files, GRDJ, NA, RG 60.

and killed.¹⁰⁰ The alleged reason for their deaths was to prevent their testifying relative to events at the Caldonia poll.¹⁰¹

Unhappiness and apprehension was the lot of the surviving Caddo Negroes, together with thirty-odd Negroes from other parishes summoned to appear before the Grand Jury at New Orleans. The Grand Jury remained in session until the following April and then failed to agree on the Caddo case and the indictments were nolle prossed.¹⁰² Negroes from the parishes of Caddo, Bossier, Tensas, Natchitoches, and Point Coupee arrived at New Orleans in late December, 1878. During this interval these plantation Negroes in the city of New Orleans began to fear that it would be unsafe ever to return to the plantations and to resume the cotton picking they had so willingly and hastily left behind them. They sought out white Republicans of the city and begged for employment and protection. They grew weary of vague promises and decided to appeal directly to the president of the United States. The Negroes appointed from among their number Henry Adams and Andrew Doty (who had some little education) to draft a petition to President Hayes in their

¹⁰⁰A. H. Leonard to Charles Devens, December 21, 25, 1878, Source Chronological and Year Files, GRDJ, NA RG 60.

¹⁰¹Senate Report, No. 855, 45 Cong., 3 Sess., IX.

¹⁰²A. H. Leonard to Charles Devens, February 8, 17, 1879, Source Chronological and Year Files, GRDJ, NA, RG 60.

behalf. Adams drafted the following letter to accompany their petition:

Mr. President--We had an interview with Senator Kellogg in reference to our condition and he knowing the state of things in our parishes--Caddo, Tensas, Natchitoches, and other parishes, advises us not to return until some steps was made whereby we would be protected and he further stated that he would consult you on this matter, and that he would try and get us employed by the U. S. Government until some proper steps could be made in our behalf. Mr. President we are in hopes you will call Senator Kellogg's attention to this matter.¹⁰³

The petition was signed by fifty-four Negroes, and bore a note to the effect that the names of those Negroes who could not write had been signed at their request. The petition to the president read as follows:¹⁰⁴

Excellent Sir: We citizens of Louisiana . . . residents of that part of this state where a colored man dares not assert the Rights of a free American citizen, appeal to you the Chief Executive of the nation. The constitution has guaranteed to us equal civil and political rights and protection in the exercise of those God given rights. . . . Yet we who have been summoned from the bulldozing sections of the state to testify against the murderers of colored men called from their homes, and some sought there even at the hour of midnight and there in cold blood murdered, and often with their wives and children as witnesses to the murder of colored men whose blood now, and even today, cries from the ground in the language of Zacheriah, Oh! Lord how Long! We poor men summoned from our homes as witnesses dare not return to our families for to do so would be but to be murdered there and by the verry men against whom we were summoned to testify. We are threatened with death should we dare

¹⁰³ Henry Adams to Rutherford B. Hayes, March 13, 1879, Source Chronological and Year Files, GRDJ, NA, RG 60.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

return home and only because we have told the truth before the U. S. Court. These threats have been made within the walls of the Custom House where the Court is sitting and trying men who have murdered colored men in North Louisiana on account of their politics.

We believe you will lend a listening ear to the cries of citizens whose wrongs, if presented as the really are, allmost Shake mans belief in the Existance of a just God and cause angels to weep. In the name of God help us. [We] deare not return home, for to do so is to suffer at the hands of the same murderous gang of Bulldozers for dearing to be free and presuming to exercise the rights of free men. Freedom was given us by the God of Heaven, but in North Louisiana a collord man cannot enjoy it. Your petitioners pray in the name of the God of Liberty and Justice that you will hear this cry of the undersigned colord citizens of Louisiana:

<u>Roll of Names</u>	<u>Caddo Parish</u>	<u>Roll of Names</u>	<u>Point Coupee Parish</u>
Henry Adams	"	Frank Mardrek	"
Andrew Doty	"	Milton James	"
Henry Williams	"	Richard Marty	Natchitoches
Hudson Jamia	"	Sharicki Brown	Parish
Curry Hamilton	"	John Hudson	"
J. H. Shames	"	Wash McCray	"
John Simms	"	Ambro Martain	"
Willis Green	"	Charley Crooked	"
Rem. George Clark	"	Joe Reeds	"
Monrose Brown	"	Gusiea Chrustan	"
Will Moore	"	Dick Waisba	"
Charsley Blackman	"	Battus Winn	"
Fleming Land	"	Benj James	"
Peter Smith	"	Michell Gris	"
Henry Gloster	"	Frank Watson	Tensas Parish
R. P. Pickid	"	T. Clark	"
Jessie Williams	"	D. C. Smith	"
Marshall Strom	"	S. Ray	"
Albert Dallas	"	H. Darice	"
Samuel Ross	"	Ike Johnson	"
Lafayette Thorp	"	Chas Harris	"
James Gisby	"	John Young	"
Thomas Thompson	Bossier Parish	Cap. Henry	"
Randall McGowan	Point Coupee	Flemin Branch	"
Clabone Carman	Parish	Robert Haney	"
Andrew Parries	"	David Camdry	"

Complaints of violence and fraud against Negro voters in Orleans Parish reached the Justice Department following the November election. The self-styled "respectable" or "conservative" element of the city of New Orleans ridiculed the Redeemers' control of Negro voters in these terms:

No colored man should fail to register. He may die before the election, and a dead man's registration certificate, that can be used by his little brother, is worth two dollars. A candidate gets swindled when he asks a man who has not been registered to take a drink. . . . Bitter cold weather on election day makes the number of votes polled smaller. Men without over-coats will not stay out long enough to vote at more than one poll. . . .¹⁰⁵

These white people called themselves the "Citizens' Conservative Association" and tried to defend Negro voters. Working with this organization were the so-called "Nationals" who pledged reform of Ring politics in the city.¹⁰⁶ The leaders of groups combining to oppose Redeemers included Robert Ker, Glendy Burke, George Hite, and Messrs. Howard, Askew, Guillotte, and Hatch.¹⁰⁷ In a lengthy petition to President Hayes, George Hite and others voiced complaints against election officials in the November elections. They stated that they were refused special deputies to assist in registering voters, in verifying lists of voters, and in holding

¹⁰⁵ New Orleans Picayune, October 30, November 3, 1878.

¹⁰⁶ Robert Ker to H. B. Hayes, November 22, 1878, Source Chronological and Year Files, GRDJ, NA, RG 60.

¹⁰⁷ New Orleans Daily City Item, November 21, 1878.

elections. They complained that later when deputies were appointed, three-fourths of those appointed were Ring adherents, the other fourth being so abused by Ring politicians as to be unable to perform their duties. Hite's petition enumerated frauds committed by the Ring in connection with issuance of false registration certificates, the listing of deceased persons whose identifications were to be used by Ring "repeaters," failure to keep tally sheets, refusal to count votes immediately, refusal to count votes in an open-handed manner, erasure of the names of eight to ten thousand colored voters and substitution of names of Ring supporters, and lack of help from Marshal Wharton or his chief deputy in execution of affidavits before election time (on the pretext of sickness in Wharton's case and anticipated disturbance in the chief deputy's case). The petition reiterated that these alleged frauds disfranchised thousands of colored persons.¹⁰⁸

Many of the same frauds and some new ones were charged in a petition to Judge N. H. Rightor of the Sixth District Court of Louisiana. The petition was signed by three prominent leaders of the Citizens' Conservative Association, F. C. Zacharie, T. A. Flanagan, and C. L. Wilder. It maintained that the victims of the frauds were in almost

¹⁰⁸George D. Hite to R. B. Hayes, December 2, 1878,
Source Chronological and Year Files, GRDJ, NA, RG 60.

every instance colored registrants whose votes would have been cast in opposition to the Democratic Party.¹⁰⁹ Following the election, 4000 affidavits were made in Orleans Parish averring to Democratic Party frauds concerning voting, refusals to receive legal voters, counting of ballots cast, and returns of ballots cast.¹¹⁰

Negroes living on the plantations of the bayou and swamp regions of South Louisiana came in for their share of political pressure during the campaign of 1878. Negro voters exceeded white voters in the sugar country and the Redeemers mapped out a campaign against them. Five Negroes were lynched in Point Coupee Parish during the late summer on the charge of having shot at a white man. Federal investigators stated the lynching was deliberately designed to terrorize the Negroes and keep them politically inactive. During the spring months of 1878 Negroes of Point Coupee Parish were warned against Republican politicking. They were told that Republicanism was a thing of the past and that they must vote with the Democrats. No Negro was to vote the Republican ticket and no Negro would be allowed to stay in the neighborhood unless he voted the Democratic ticket. Negroes attempting to put up a Republican slate in the parish would be "strung up," warned

¹⁰⁹Conservative Citizens' Association to Judge N. H. Rightor, December, 1878, Source Chronological and Year Files, GRDJ, NA, RG 60.

¹¹⁰New Orleans Daily City Item, November 21, 1878.

William B. Archer, son of a Democratic candidate for the state legislature.¹¹¹

Early in June Thomas Wilson and four other Negroes allegedly shot at Archer. Wilson and the other Negroes implicated were forcibly taken from Legendre's plantation where they were hiding and handed over to a crowd of Redeemers. These men carried them to nearby Fisher's Landing and hanged them. On the following morning, Mr. Legendre came to the scene with the fathers of two of the dead Negroes and supervised the taking down of the corpses. The Negroes were denied the privilege of burying the dead in the churchyard. "No sir, we'll bury them right here. There's enough excitement now. If you take them away there will be a heap more excitement," stated Redeemer Legendre. A hole was dug at the scene and the bodies buried. "The next day it was like as if it had never been done; the colored people dare not speak of it. We were afraid they'd do the same thing to us," testified a Negro leader named Randall McGowan to Federal investigators the following spring.¹¹² McGowan further testified that the whites told him that the dead Negroes had intended to organize a Republican club and were lynched to scare the other Negroes so that the Democrats could carry the

¹¹¹ Senate Report, No. 855, 45 Cong., 3 Sess., XIX, 411.

¹¹² Ibid., 415.

election.¹¹³

In August and September the Redeemers continued intimidation. McGowan, accused of assisting in the organization of a Republican Club, became a target. On the night of August 14, William B. Archer, Frank Butler, William Hess, Ben Moore, Richard Mabias, Arthur Lacour, Jim McGuinn, and some fifteen to twenty other heavily armed whites entered McGowan's house. The Negro escaped in the darkness and hid in the weeds in his yard. The redeemers noticed the weeds moving and pulled the Negro from his hiding place. Ben Moore hit him on the head, knocking him to the ground. "You and Levi [Wells] went down to the courthouse the other day to get permission to organize your Goddamn Clubs here. . . . Wasn't you going to organize a club tonight at the church?" asked Moore. "No, Sir, I haven't meddled with politics at all," replied McGowan. "Well, we heard of it and we are going to put you through tonight," stated Moore. The whites took McGowan to a Negro church where they expected to find other Negro voters assembled, but found that the Negroes had already gone. The Redeemers then went to the house of Frank Murdock, a leading Negro Republican in the parish. According to McGowan's account, the Redeemers, not finding Murdock at home, tied his wife up by her thumbs to make her tell his whereabouts. Her screams and yells finally caused them to

¹¹³Ibid.

release her. The next day seven or eight men took Levi Wells from his house to the other side of the levee where they administered a beating while warning him in these terms:

"You've been to the courthouse getting information from Judge Ubre on how to organize clubs. . . . We want you to understand that this is a white man's country and there is not a Republican vote going into the ballot box this year. If there is, we will break your God damned necks.¹¹⁴

McGowan's testimony told of other outrages. Poley Powers, Negro Republican, was sought but not found by the Redeemers. The whites hitched pot-hooks to the clothing of Powers' wife and dragged her around the cabin in an effort to make her reveal her husband's hiding place, but she refused to tell them. Levi Sherman, a Negro preacher, looked from his pulpit one Sunday night and saw the crowd of whites bearing down upon his church. He broke and ran, abruptly leaving his startled congregation. The whites ordered the preacher to halt and fired two shots, wounding Sherman in the hip and foot. He dropped to the ground. A few members of the congregation went to assist the wounded Negro, but the bulk of the congregation fled in panic. The whites, thinking the preacher was dead, pursued the fleeing Negroes. They raided several cabins, whipping and frightening men and

¹¹⁴ Ibid., XX, 413.

women. About two o'clock in the morning the wounded Negro preacher dragged himself to the hut of an old Negro named Abram. The Redeemers shortly thereafter arrived at Abram's cabin and asked for preacher Levi. Old Abram denied his being there. The Redeemers soon ferreted Sherman from his hiding place. "You Goddamn son-of-a-bitch, you told us a lie and we intend to give you a whipping," shouted the Redeemers to Abram. McGowan's testimony maintained that old Abram was then jabbed with ramrods and soundly whipped about 200 lashes.

When one of the white party suggested going home, others objected, saying that they should rouse up Mr. Loohequi and have something to drink. After their drinks the whites, indicating their ropes, said, "Now Randall, you must come with us." McGowan testified that they intended to hang him together with Levi Oliver, a Negro who had made an affidavit against Albert Wisham, one of the whites. Oliver had managed earlier in the night to elude the Redeemers. The lateness of the hour and the relaxing effects of the liquor upon the whites saved the necks of the two Negroes. The whites then gave up the search for Oliver and finally released McGowan with these stern words: "Now on Saturday, you bring every colored man--you can control these men--to Judge Eugene Umbre and we will enroll their names on the Democratic ticket." McGowan gave his promise to the

whites and rushed home. The Negroes flocked to him to hear the news. McGowan, however, decided to escape and try to save himself. He fled through the swamps and sought safety at the home of Republican Judge Thomas H. Hughes on False River. Frank Murdock, Poley Powers, Richard Smith, and other Negro leaders followed him to the Republican judge's home. The Judge assured them that he appreciated their political patronage, but told them that they must get along the best way they could.¹¹⁵

On election day McGowan started for the polls to cast his Republican vote. He was within 200 yards of the box when Charles Villiar forced him away, stating that if a Republican ticket were cast there McGowan would be a dead man. Albert Wisham, white Redeemer, joined Villiar in his "dead man" threat. McGowan later testified that as fast as the Negroes arrived at the polls, white men gave them Democratic tickets and made them vote those tickets. Mr. Loohequi stood on the levee before the polling place watching. On seeing him there Negroes turned and fled, for he had told several of them that if they did not vote the Democratic ticket that day they could not live in the parish any longer. Rufus Miles, an outspoken Negro Republican, said that he would die before he would vote the Democratic ticket. Mr.

¹¹⁵
Ibid.

Loohequi told him that he would die if he did not vote it. Therefore he stayed away from the polls. The following week he was killed. In the midst of the voting, Pier Johnson, a Negro, warned McGowan that the whites were looking for him. McGowan mounted his horse and had ridden only a short distance when he saw a white posse coming toward him. A wild chase followed. The Negro finally outdistanced the whites and begged protection of J. B. Marchand, white Republican candidate for sheriff, and later escaped to New Orleans.¹¹⁶

The Bayou Teche sugar plantations in St. Mary Parish became the scene of violence during the harvest season in 1878. The sugar planters feared ruin to their crops if Negro voters should exhibit arrogance and refuse to complete the harvesting of the cane. To preclude any difficulty at election time, a fake yellow fever quarantine was imposed throughout St. Mary Parish.¹¹⁷ R. G. M. Newman, colored Republican Clerk of Court in St. Mary Parish, testified that the white Democrats quarantined the parish so that the Negroes could not come to the town of Franklin to register and so that registered Negro voters could not get to the polls on election day. The quarantine was lifted the day

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 416.

¹¹⁷ Otis A. Singletary, "The election of 1878 in Louisiana," The Louisiana Historical Quarterly, XL (1957), 51.

after the election.¹¹⁸ On election day only a few Negroes cast ballots for Republican candidates, the Negro voters from Irish Bend and outlying plantations being stopped by the quarantine. That night the Redeemers reportedly entered Newman's office through a rear window and destroyed the poll books. These men were accused of entering the Recorder's office on the same night and destroying election returns and tally sheets. The following day William Wilson, white District Attorney, sought out Newman and warned him of trouble if the Democrats did not win the election. Newman remained away from his home for two weeks, returning home on the night of November 17. On the night of the 19, five or six white men, with disguises over their faces, entered Newman's house and fired upon him in his bed. Awakened by the shots, Newman managed to crawl under the bed while reaching for his shotgun which had been placed conveniently nearby. The Negro fired on the whites. One of the whites (later identified as young Tom Wilson, brother of District Attorney William Wilson who had earlier warned the Negro of impending trouble) fell mortally wounded to die the following day. After firing the fatal shot, Newman crawled from under the bed in the midst of the confusion and managed to escape under the cover of darkness. He found his way to New Orleans where

¹¹⁸ Senate Report, No. 855, 45 Cong., 3 Sess., XXI.

he joined the group of other Negro Republicans who were assembled there to testify before the Federal Investigation Committee. The Federal investigators concluded their report of the matter with these words:

No severer comment could be made on the character of Governor Nicholls and home rule in Louisiana than these facts, that a faithful officer was murderously assaulted in his own bed and does not dare to return home; that one of the burglars is today an appointed officer of the law under Governor Nicholls while no legal investigation into the murder of another burglar, his brother, was made out of deference to the feeling of his family.¹¹⁹

It is interesting to note that, despite the work of the Redeemers, the Republican Party, through Negro votes, won by a narrow margin in both Point Coupee and St. Mary Parishes.¹²⁰

Despite the Federal investigators' report in January, 1879, that a literal reign of terror existed over a considerable portion of Louisiana as result of the policy of the Democrats, the whole Federal investigation proved to be a gigantic fiasco. All the indictments were eventually nolle prossed, but the die-hard investigators stated the following twenty-three Negroes were murdered for political purposes; John Williams, Robert Williams, Luke Wiggins, Lot Clark, Billy White, Greene Abrams, Josiah Thomas, Charles

¹¹⁹ Ibid., XXIII.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 567-572.

Bethel, William Singleton, Monday Hill, Louis Postelwaite, Richard Miller, James Starier, Commodore Smallwood, Charlie Carroll, John Hiffins, Doc. Smith, William Hunter, Hayns Wilson, Wasp Ellis, Asbury Epps, John Robinson, and Rufus Mills. The Federal investigation committee further reported that many more Negroes, whose names the committee was unable to ascertain, had been shot, hanged, whipped, mutilated, tortured or wounded, while others had fled the state for safety, leaving their families destitute.¹²¹

The revolution of the whites in 1878 resulted in a striking victory for the Democratic Party in Louisiana. All six Democratic congressmen were elected. Democratic candidates won most of the offices on the parish level and gained a comfortable majority in the state legislature. An excerpt from a letter of Newton Crain Blanchard, resident of Caddo Parish, described the political situation in these terms:

The election of 1878 marked the final overthrow of the Republican Party in Louisiana. In 1876 we had elected Nicholls governor, but it took 1878 to finish the work. So complete was the overthrow of the Radical Party at that election, that from that time to this [1903], it has never been able to elect a constable, even, in this parish.¹²²

The work of the Redeemers removed Negro domination of Louisiana politics for the time being. A wide scale exodus

¹²¹ Ibid., XXVI.

¹²² Newton Crain Blanchard to J. R. Ficklen, February 9, 1903, Ficklen Papers, Louisiana State University Archives, Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

of Negroes from Louisiana followed the election. The white people of Louisiana matter-of-factly agreed with the statement: "It was a revolution and history does not examine with too much nicety the methods by which a people shake off tyranny."¹²³

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H. P. Dart, "The Revolution of 1876 in Louisiana," The Louisiana Historical Quarterly, XIV (1931), 244.

CHAPTER III

POLITICS AND THE NEGRO EXODUS FROM LOUISIANA, 1879-1880

"In the spring of 1879 thousands of colored people, unable to endure the intolerable hardships, injustice, and suffering inflicted upon them by a class of Democrats in the South, had, in utter despair, fled panic-stricken from their homes and sought protection among strangers in a strange land," reported the two Republican members of a Federal investigation committee appointed to determine the causes of the Negro exodus from the Southern states.¹ This Federal investigating committee consisted of three Democratic senators (Daniel Voorhies, Zebulon Vance, and George Pentleton), in addition to the Republican members, William Windom and Henry Blair, who gave the touching report on the cause of the Negro exodus from the South. The committee met throughout most of the year 1880 and took testimony from 153 witnesses.² Despite this moving report of the committee, it is difficult to assign any one cause for the Negro exodus from Louisiana and other Southern states during the years 1879-1880. Numerous reasons have been stated, all of which

¹Senate Report, No. 693, Introduction, X.

²Ibid., I, III.

contain some element of truth. Religious enthusiasm, the activities of emigrant agents, the Yellow Fever epidemic of 1878-1879, and the poverty of the Negroes contributed to the exodus. One cause led to another until the impact of a series of events or intrigues motivated the Negro masses to action.

It was very easy for the Louisiana Negro of the post-Reconstruction years to become a "Black Ulysses." He loved to move from place to place. The vision of a "Promised Land" and of a veritable "Moses" in the flesh to lead him was too much for the Louisiana Negro to resist. He had to join the "exodusters." The religious motive was obvious. Discounting earthly agents who prompted the movement for profits, one exoduster named O. S. B. Wall stated, "If anybody had an agency in it it was out Heavenly Father, the great creator of us all."³ Pap (Benjamin) Singleton, the originator and self-styled "Moses" of the exodus, stated:

It was as clar as day to me. I dunno how it come to me; but I spec it was God's doins. Anyhow I knowed my people couldn't live thar. . . . The whites had the lands an' the sense an' the blacks had nothing but their freedom, an' it was just like a dream to them.⁴

³Ibid., I, 45.

⁴W. L. Fleming, "'Pap Singleton,' The Moses of the Colored Exodus," The American Journal of Sociology, XV (1909), 64. Hereafter cited as "'Pap Singleton."

"Every black man is his own Moses in this exodus," stated one Negro as he made ready to depart.⁵ Religious zeal furnished the main motive for the migration of Negroes from the delta regions of the Mississippi River.⁶ The exodus afforded a satisfying outlet for the intense imaginations and emotions of the masses of ignorant Negroes.

Emigrant agents who distributed circulars and attractive pictures of the "Promised Land" afforded effective propaganda for the exodus. Many of them, for a prescribed fee, worked in person among Louisiana Negroes to influence their departure. These agents represented railroads, land companies, or other groups interested in personal gain. Few were sincerely desirous of helping the Negroes. Because of ulterior motives, these agents worked secretly distributing their propaganda literature through railroad porters and steamboat roustabouts.⁷ The Negro leader of the exodus, "Moses" Singleton, organized a colonization society, set up headquarters at Topeka, Kansas, and took a hand in this work. He spent approximately \$600. of his own

⁵J. B. Runnion, "Negro Exodus, 1879," Atlantic Monthly, XL (1879), 228.

⁶Appleton's Annual Cyclopedia, 1879, 634.

⁷M. D. Peoples, "Negro Migration from the Lower Mississippi Valley to Kansas, 1879-1880," M.A. Thesis, Louisiana State University (1950), 13. Hereafter cited as "Negro Migration."

money sending circulars to all sections of the South. Circulars sent by Singleton painted glowing pictures of his settlement. One such circular read in part:

HO! FOR SUNNY KANSAS. Friends and Fellow citizens: I am prepared to answer any and all questions that may be asked. The Singleton settlement is near Dunlap, Morris County, a new town just started on the Missouri, Kansas and Texas Railway. The surrounding country is fine rolling prairie. Plenty of stone and water and wood on the streams. Plenty of coal within twenty-five miles. I have this to say to all: NOW IS THE TIME TO GO TO KANSAS. Land is cheap. There is plenty for all.

This circular was signed "Benjamin Singleton, President." An addendum urged Negroes to address Columbus M. Johnson, General Agent, Real Estate Association, Topeka, Kansas, "for full information" on the subject.⁸

Delightfully designed colored chromos (which emigrant agents were careful to keep from Louisiana planters) inspired many Negroes to leave their poverty and persecution and to seek their "Promised Land." One such picture revealed "a nice little cottage house, a one story house with a porch and awning in front, situated on one of our green mounds in Kansas; in front of the house stood a mule harnessed to a cart; and an old gentleman and lady (colored) were standing on the porch, and little children were playing about in the shadow of four or five green trees."⁹ Such

⁸Senate Report, No. 693, III, 361-362.

⁹Ibid., 97.

persuasive mementoes, complete with dream children, were the deciding factor in many Negroes' shouldering their bundles and hustling their brood of ragged urchins to the nearest railroad depot or steamboat landing.

Coupled with the work of the emigrant agents and contributing to the Negro hegira was a bill introduced in Congress by Senator Ingalls of Kansas. Ingalls' bill, which was never passed, would have set apart lands in Kansas for Negro colonization purposes. Rumors spread that the government would give Negroes land and money with which to buy livestock and provisions for farming.¹⁰ These rumors created vain dreams and fond hopes for many illiterate Negroes. One such vicious rumor was disclosed in a letter to a commercial firm in New Orleans which read in part:

The Negroes have Kansas Fever. They have quit work and are preparing to go to Kansas. . . . The report is that the United States Government has set Kansas apart as a Negro state, and will give every family free land and \$500. in money, build houses, etc., and all that are here after the 15th of March will be killed by order of President Hayes, who has turned Democrat.¹¹

A. D. Harmonson of Simmesport, Louisiana, wrote of the situation to Dr. J. R. Hawkins of Bayou Chicot in Evangeline Parish:

There is some little Kansas Fever in this section and we have plenty of fever cases here for you;

¹⁰ New York Tribune, March 18, 1879.

¹¹ New Orleans Democrat, March 8, 1879.

that is, if you are good at all kinds of Fever. This fever is a peculiar disease and one that has never been heard of; it is almost entirely confined to the Negroes. I do not know the name that the Medical Department would give it, but we call it Kansas Fever.¹²

The myth of the Promised Land, the "Moses" in person, and the Utopian propaganda were overshadowed by more vital and fundamental motives for migration among the Negroes. A deadly Yellow Fever epidemic hit New Orleans in the summer of 1878 and spread in all directions. The epidemic became so widespread that all the Mississippi River towns were quarantined against ships from New Orleans.¹³ Approximately 4000 persons died of the disease in the city of New Orleans, while the death toll for the whole of Louisiana reached 13,369.¹⁴ Even small villages suffered a tremendous death rate. Scores of Negroes died with the disease and those not stricken were frightened and in a mood to flee from the "Yellow Terror."

The Negroes are utterly demoralized; the cotton is wasting in the fields, the happy shouts and merry songs of the hundreds of darkeys which at this season of the year echoed across the fields into surrounding woods and relieved the labor of the day . . . all is stopped. Even the "hungry yellow dog" has fled to parts unknown.¹⁵

¹² April 27, May 25, 1879, Hawkins Papers, Department of Archives, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, La.

¹³ Henry Marston Diary, Marston Family Papers, Department of Archives, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

¹⁴ New Orleans Weekly Democrat, November 23, 1878.

¹⁵ Ibid.

Harper's Weekly, August 16, 1879, contained a touching picture entitled "En Route For Kansas - Fleeing from the Yellow Fever." This picture portrayed a group of Negro men, women, and children, some riding in mule carts, some on foot, and all weighted down with their worldly goods, wandering wearily toward the "Canaan" of Kansas. The yearly recurrence of "Yellow Jack" in Louisiana compared with the fever-free land of Kansas without doubt prompted many Negroes to join the exodus in 1879.¹⁶

"There is a political tinge in almost everything in the extreme Southern states," said J. B. Runnion in his discussion of the Negro exodus.¹⁷ It is true that a fundamental reason for the exodus of the Negroes from Louisiana, 1879-1880, was the treatment meted out to Negro voters during the campaign of 1878. This treatment, inseparably coupled with the poverty of the Negroes, produced an incentive to migrate as strong and vital as any other single factor.¹⁸ The Democratic senators investigating the cause of the exodus sought to minimize persecution of Negro voters. These men charged that the Republicans of Kansas promoted

¹⁶ M. D. Peoples, "Negro Migration," 26.

¹⁷ J. B. Runnion, "Negro Exodus, 1879," Atlantic Monthly, XL (1879), 223.

¹⁸ P. D. Uzee, "Midwestern Attitudes on the Kansas Fever," The Kansas Historical Quarterly, XX (1953) 495; M. D. Peoples, "Negro Migration," 2, 10, 15, 19, 32.

the exodus to strengthen their party in that state. The Democratic investigators asserted that there were few proven instances of violence against Negro voters. Almost all the atrocity stories they dismissed as heresay rather than fact. The victims, they said, were usually Negroes other than those who gave the testimony.¹⁹

The thousands of pages of testimony, given by 153 witnesses both black and white during the year-long investigation, substantiated the charge that Negro voters in Louisiana were intimidated by the Redeemers, and were leaving the state in large numbers to find a place where they hoped to live in peace and to exercise suffrage rights.

Never had the state of Louisiana witnessed such a revolution as had occurred in the campaign of 1878. The object of the revolution was the reassertion of white supremacy. It was a foregone conclusion that the political revolution of the whites should result in the political defeat of the blacks. It was understandable that Negro voters should fear the whites who had controlled or suppressed their votes and should desire to establish themselves in localities in which they could vote freely. Negroes had learned that voting was one of the highest privileges to be obtained in this life and they wanted to go where they

¹⁹ Senate Report, No. 693, Introduction, X.

might still have that privilege.²⁰ Together with the free exercise of their voting rights, the Negroes hoped to improve their economic status. The illiterate masses of Negro voters in Louisiana could be compelled to refrain from voting the Republican ticket or they could be subjected to starvation through the planters' control of land and credit.²¹ Economic pressure and political persecution went hand in hand to spur on the movement.

The originator of this mass exodus was that same Benjamin "Moses" Singleton, the seventy year old ex-slave and undertaker who had distributed the glowing literature. He insisted that his literature, coupled with his religious fervor, was "the whole cause of the Kansas immigration," and had earned for him the title of the "Moses of the Exodus." In 1876, he had recruited 300 migrants from his native state of Tennessee with which he set up an all-Negro colony in Cherokee County, Kansas, called "Singleton's Colony." Later in the same year "Moses" established the settlement of "Dunlap" in the Neosho Valley section of Morris and Lyon Counties. Early the following year (1877) "Moses" planted his third colony in Kansas, "Nicodemus," in Graham County.²²

²⁰ Carter G. Woodson, A Century of Negro Migration (Washington, 1918), 126.

²¹ Ibid., 129.

²² Senate Report, No. 693, III, 12; W. L. Fleming, "'Pap Singleton,'" 65, 68.

These colonies provided havens of refuge for exodusters from Louisiana and other Southern states who began arriving in the early summer of 1879.²³

Second in importance to Singleton in the Negro exodus was Henry Adams, ex-slave and faith doctor. Born in Georgia, he came to DeSoto Parish, Louisiana, in 1850, and later moved to Shreveport. He served in the Federal army at Fort Jackson, Louisiana, from 1867-1869. While in the army he was taught to read and write by a Mrs. Bentine, a white school teacher who lived near the fort.²⁴

Following Reconstruction, Adams organized a group of Negroes into what he called his "Committee." The function of this group was "to look into affairs and see the true condition of our race, to see whether it was possible we could stay under a people who had held us in bondage or not." Adams' "Committee," allegedly consisting of 500 Negroes, solicited and obtained data which was forwarded to him at his Shreveport headquarters. This data revealed that in some sections of the state Negroes would be shot if they voted at all, while in other sections they could vote provided they voted the Democratic ticket. In all parts of Louisiana Negroes desired to vote, but were fearful of the

²³M. D. Peoples, "Negro Migration," 4.

²⁴Senate Report, No. 693, II, 101, 103, 114, 137, 154.

consequences.²⁵

This data convinced Adams that he should act in behalf of his oppressed people. On November 19, 1878, he addressed a letter to United States Attorney General Charles Devens stating his trust in God and his plea that the United States government would give the former slaves some territory so that they could work out their own destiny.²⁶

This plea to the Attorney General was followed by a letter to President Hayes stating his belief that the president would right the grievous wrongs which the colored suffered.²⁷

The appeal to the president went unanswered.²⁸ This blow coupled with repressive actions by state officials crushed Adams to the extent that he and his "Committee" (now called "Colonization Council") "gave up all hopes in the world" for the betterment of the Negro in Louisiana and the South. "The very men that held us slaves was holding the reigns of government over our heads . . . even the constable up to the governor," he testified to the Senatorial investigation committee.²⁹ He told this committee that

²⁵M. D. Peoples, "Negro Migration," 27.

²⁶Henry Adams to Charles Devens, November 19, 1878, Source Chronological and Year Files, GRDJ, NA, RG 60.

²⁷Henry Adams to R. B. Hayes, March 13, 1879, Source Chronological and Year Files, GRDJ, NA, RG 60.

²⁸M. D. Peoples, "Negro Migration," 6.

²⁹Senate Report, No. 693, II, 115.

very few Negroes would willingly vote the Democratic ticket and that it was dangerous for a Negro to admit that he was a Republican. He quoted the Democrats as saying, "You all is trying to follow those Carpetbaggers, scalawags, and Negro leaders, and just so long as you try to follow them we are going to kill you." He stated that he had lost employment on a plantation in Caddo Parish for being a Republican voter and that W. C. Hambleton had refused them a job as a wood chopper in his woodyard because of his Republicanism. He added that he "expected to be killed for what I'm telling you here."³⁰

But Adams was not to be killed in the violent manner which he expected. He and his Colonization Council allegedly recruited 98,000 exodusters, the majority of them in Louisiana. The recruitment program got under way with a "Convention of Colored Men to Consider Emigration," called by Adams. It met on April 17, 1879, at the Free Mission Baptist Church on Common Street in New Orleans. Several hundred Negroes representing twenty-five parishes assembled there to lay the groundwork for the exodus on a state wide level.³¹ Many fiery talks were made. Radford Blount of Natchitoches Parish berated "false leaders" who had persuaded the Negroes of

³⁰Ibid., 114, 136.

³¹Ibid., 40.

his parish to betray Republicanism. He stated that the Negro must "get away from both politician and bulldozer." He rant-ed that the Negroes were threatened with "a second slavery worse than the first." He added that his people meant to get away and false political leaders could not keep them.³² Blount stated that the Negroes of Natchitoches Parish valued voting "as a means of protection" and would have been willing to stand any sort of labor contract system as long as the whites would let them vote.³³ But since they could not vote for their Republican candidates, they must leave.

The Reverend Dr. Thompson, colored, delivered a pointed speech stating that "forbearance ceased to be a virtue, and until ruffianism ceased, every man, woman, and child of my race should leave the country. . . . There is a limit to everything and the Negro has reached the limit."³⁴ (It is interesting to note that the booming voices of Blount, Thompson, and other "preachers, politicians, and social workers" were unwelcome to leader Adams and the ses-sion became so heated that it led to the "drawing of white-handled razors").³⁵

³²New Orleans Times-Democrat, April 18, 1879.

³³Senate Report, No. 693, II, 441.

³⁴Ibid.

³⁵New Orleans Picayune, April 19, 1879.

In spite of the turmoil the convention succeeded in passing resolutions favoring the exodus to Kansas. The main resolution urged all Negroes to migrate and called on the government for \$500,000 for expenses. A stampede followed from the delta parishes of Louisiana and from the counties just opposite them in Mississippi. Approximately 8000 to 10,000 Negroes left the river area of these two states before the movement could be checked.³⁶

William Windom wrote in reference to the causes of the exodus:

The crimes which in the name of Democracy have been committed against the citizenship, lives, and personal rights of these people, and which have finally driven them in utter despair from their homes, will forever stand without parallel in the annals of Christian civilization.³⁷

The Concordia Eagle, a Negro newspaper published at Vidalia, Louisiana, printed the following report on the progress of the exodus:

It is said that the enthusiastic welcome tendered the citizens of Natchitoches on their return after the trial has caused a consternation in the minds of the colored people and that they are moving out of Morehouse, Madison, Ouachita, and Natchitoches Parishes in vast crowds . . . selling everything they have at low rates. A great change of base of the Negro population from the cotton districts of Louisiana is going on--a change so decided and so sudden that there is danger of a failure in the

³⁶ Senate Report, No. 693, III, 292; Carter G. Woodson, A Century of Negro Migration (Washington, 1918), 134.

³⁷ Senate Report, No. 693, XIV.

next crop. The Negroes have caught the emigration fever and only those will stay behind who cannot possibly get away. The Negroes fear that should Grant be defeated in 1880, the white people will reduce them to slavery should they remain in this state.³⁸

William Murrell, a Negro newspaperman from Madison Parish and former state Representative, testified that preceding the 1879 gubernatorial election, 125 armed white Democrats came to Madison Parish, took charge of the polls, and told the Negroes that the Democratic Party was going to carry the election. They rented horses from the stable at Delta, divided into squads of 15 or 20 men, and rode over the parish intimidating Negro voters. A Negro named Summers was whipped with hickory switches. Murrell testified that as for Charles King (Negro preacher and president of a Republican club) "they just took his breeches down and hit him 50 or 60 times with a rawhide." Murrell further testified that the Negro, Dave Armstrong, (who was president of the Third Ward Republican club of Madison Parish) was killed "for talking too much." His body was wrapped in a sheet, taken to Milligan's Bend, and tossed in the river. The Negroes found a bloody sheet on the river bank and fished Armstrong's body from the river. After Armstrong's murder, according to Murrell, forty or fifty Negroes left the parish while a great portion of the remaining Negro population

³⁸March 27, 1879.

hid in the woods to avoid the bulldozers as they went around whipping any Negroes they could find who had taken prominent part in politics. Murrell told investigators that the first Negro voter to leave Madison Parish bound for Kansas was one George Washington. Washington wrote a glowing letter to his friend, Adolphus Prince, advising Prince to "come to Kansas where they do not kill Negroes for voting." "I tried to keep them from rushing off to Kansas, but I might as well have been singing psalms to a dead mule," said Murrell.³⁹

James Butler, an ex-slave of Shreveport, told Federal investigators that District Attorney A. H. Leonard informed Negro voters in Caddo Parish that there was "no use voting" since the "three ballot box" system divided the votes in such a way that Negroes could not elect any of the Republican candidates they sponsored.⁴⁰ John Hicks was a white attorney at Shreveport and had for a time been affiliated with a Republican club of which Henry Adams was president. Hicks testified that the Negroes of Caddo Parish claimed inability to vote as the sole cause of their exodus. He stated that Negroes told him that they were registered, but that commissioners excluded them on grounds that their names were not on the poll list.⁴¹

³⁹ Senate Report, No. 693, II, 514-515, 526-528.

⁴⁰ Ibid., III, 347.

⁴¹ Ibid., 262.

The newspapers of Louisiana took up the exodus issue. The New Orleans Weekly Louisianian, a Negro publication, stated: "Our condition each year was becoming worse. . . . More and more each year we were deprived of our political rights, by fraud, if not by violence."⁴² The same paper editorialized on the future prospects of the exodus:

A great many will leave for Kansas in the spring. The colored people are oppressed and have come North and West in hope of bettering their condition. . . . They have now taken matters into their own hands and will solve the problem. The oppressed peoples' deserting the cotton fields will prove more than a match for Winchester rifles.⁴³

The New Orleans Southwestern Christian Advocate, describing the exodus from the Florida parishes and the Red River parishes, stated: "A great many Negroes have left for fear of persecution, and many more are preparing to go."⁴⁴

Another event occurred to speed the hegira to Kansas. The Bourbon Democrats clamored for a new state constitution. Amendments to the existing constitution had been defeated at the election of 1878. A Bourbon legislature enacted a law calling for election of delegates to a constitutional convention. In Republican parishes the leaders were forced to agree to give the Democrats half the delegates to prevent

⁴²January 8, 1881.

⁴³March 5, 1881.

⁴⁴February 19, 1880.

bulldozing of Negroes.⁴⁵ The assembling of delegates at the constitutional convention in New Orleans, April, 1879, added fuel to the exodus flame. During Reconstruction, Louisiana Negroes knew that they "got their franchise" (some reportedly clutching buckets to carry it in) from the Constitution of 1868. With the reassertion of white supremacy during the campaign of 1878, Louisiana Democrats lost no time in ending "that miserable abortion" under which the state had functioned during Reconstruction. The unbridled excesses of the Negro legislature during Reconstruction prompted the convention to place such restrictions upon the legislature that the new constitution almost amounted to a compilation of statutes.⁴⁶ As the power of the legislature was curbed, the appointive power of the governor was correspondingly increased. These measures were a part of the over-all plan of the Bourbon Democrats to rid state, parish, and municipal offices of Negroes elected during Reconstruction.

The most frightening aspect of the new constitution to Negroes was fear that their suffrage rights would be taken from them. The lesson of the revolution was fresh in their minds. They understood little of the technicalities of constitution-making, but they sensed that their political

⁴⁵ New Orleans Weekly Louisianian, March 1, 1879.

⁴⁶ Huey P. Long, Compilation of the Constitutions of the State of Louisiana, (Baton Rouge, 1930), 724.

privileges were in danger. Many of them had heard of the resolution introduced by Judge Land of Caddo Parish declaring the authority of the convention to impose any property, educational, or poll tax qualification for suffrage, in order "to transfer the government of the state from the Negro race to the white race from which it was taken by the Constitution of 1868."⁴⁷ Negro leaders told the Senate investigation committee that Negroes feared the convention would pass such oppressive laws that the Negroes would wish themselves back in slavery in preference to living in Louisiana.⁴⁸

Heated debate at the convention centered around Negro disfranchisement. The Honorable M. G. Bobe, colored, protested a proposal to abridge the rights of Negroes to vote, saying:

You will depopulate the state. Is it wise to drive labor away by enacting a clause in your Constitution abridging their right to vote? Do not deceive yourselves--in every portion of the state the laborers are disturbed, anxiously awaiting the result of this Convention. . . . Suffrage in the hands of the Negro has not proven a failure. The fact that the Negro has failed to vote at the direction of the Democratic Party is not sufficient and plausible grounds for such a conclusion. . . . On behalf of my people I ask that we not be interfered with. Let no restriction be placed on our right to vote.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ New Orleans Weekly Louisianian, May 3, 1879.

⁴⁸ Senate Report, No. 693, II, 529.

⁴⁹ New Orleans Weekly Louisianian, June 27, July 5, 1879.

The New Orleans Times-Democrat on June 23, 1879 reported the current publicity given to departure of Negro field laborers for Kansas because of their fear that the new constitution would deprive them of voting. This publication stated that further restrictions on Negro suffrage would increase the exodus of field hands and therefore work a distinct hardship on the planters.

The suffrage article of the new constitution was not designed to restrict Negro franchise directly, although it contributed indirectly to the lessening of Negro voting and, for a time, accelerated the exodus. Citizenship was prescribed as a qualification for franchise; however, to palliate the evil of Negro voting, suffrage was extended to such persons as had legally declared their intention of becoming citizens.⁵⁰ The age qualification was fixed at twenty-one years. Voters must have been residents of the state for one year, of the parish for six months, and of the precinct for thirty days. This residence requirement immediately disqualified numerous Negroes, for the traditional "Black Ulysses" was at that time fervidly engaged in preparation for the hegira to Kansas. A few months later hundreds of these "Ulysses" returned to Louisiana, but were barred

⁵⁰ Robert A. Marr, "A Historical Review of the Constitutions of Louisiana," Report of the Louisiana Bar Association, 1912, XIV (1913), 244.

from voting in the presidential election of 1880 due to failure to meet residence requirements. Crimes prescribed by the new constitution disqualifying persons from voting worked a hardship upon those Negroes with criminal records. Persons convicted of treason, embezzlement of public funds, malfeasance in office, larceny, bribery, illegal voting or other crimes punishable by hard labor or imprisonment in penitentiary were forbidden to vote. Idiots and insane persons were also restricted from exercise of suffrage. The constitution provided for the levying of an annual poll tax upon every male inhabitant in the state over twenty-one years of age and provided that the assembly should pass laws to enforce the payment of this tax. An additional article stipulated: "No qualification of any kind for suffrage or office, nor any restriction upon same, on account of race, color, or previous condition shall be made law."⁵¹

Negro delegates expressed gratification that the new constitution placed no specific restriction upon their suffrage. A report from Madison Parish indicated that the Kansas Fever there was slackening off and the Negroes appeared content to remain after hearing favorable reports from the convention relative to their voting rights.⁵²

⁵¹ Constitution of the State of Louisiana Adopted in Convention at the City of New Orleans, the Twenty-Third Day of July, A. D., 1879 (New Orleans, 1879), Articles 185, 187, 188, 208.

⁵² New Orleans Weekly Louisianian, May 3, July 26, 1879.

Bourbon Democrats of Louisiana lamented the labor implications of the Negro exodus. However, Democratic newspapers made little effort to gloss over the political aspects of the movement. The New Orleans Times-Democrat on April 22, 1880 stated: "Let us be perfectly frank. The Negroes are leaving the state because of apprehension that their political rights are in danger. The truth compels us to admit that these apprehensions are not altogether unreasonable. The threatened emigration of Negroes is to be traced to the bulldozers." The Opelousas Courier on May 31, 1879 had this to say about the exodus:

There was an immense meeting of the colored people in Lafayette Square to consider a hegira to Kansas. Ex-Governor Foote [H. B. Foote, ex-Governor of Mississippi, employed in the United States Mint at New Orleans], the old fossil politician, was the speaker and he repeated the usual twaddle about bulldozing, intimidation, and general wrongs to the colored people in Louisiana. It was exactly the reverse of a speech he made at a convention of planters in Vicksburg who had invited him to quiet the apprehensions of the colored people and check the emigration to Kansas. Such is the consistency of the Republican leaders. St. Louis papers have repeatedly expressed the suffering of those Negroes who have left their homes. Yet designing men would still persuade them to go, and for what? Only to make political capital for the next campaign.

The New Orleans Weekly Louisianian on May 31, 1879 published an article entitled "The Reasons Why," which read in part:

The Kansas Fever is conceded to be based on two causes: abuses in the labor system and political proscription. We propose to probe the latter phase and see if it constitutes reason sufficient to drive our people to migration. The possibilities of the

Negro's future success lie in the methods of peace. The use of physical power to enforce his political supremacy being out of the question, he is compelled to rely upon the acquisition of civil virtues and trust to the growth of a sense of fair play among the people.

In contrast with this moderate plea for peaceful co-existence with the whites, this same newspaper a few months later published an article threatening exodus as Republican propaganda during the gubernatorial campaign:

The Republican Party alone possesses the confidence of the colored people. The property and business interests of Louisiana should be given distinctly to understand that unless a perfectly fair election shall be held, unless political privileges of the colored people shall be protected, no intervention could possibly avert the demoralization and depopulation of labor which must follow.⁵³

The Republican Party in Louisiana hoped to use the flight of the Negroes from the Bourbon dominated South as rabble-rousing propaganda for the presidential campaign of 1880. Republicans publicized testimony received by Federal investigators to the effect that "if a Democratic president were elected in 1880, not a Negro would be left in the state of Louisiana to tell the tale."⁵⁴ They published delightful stories of the warm welcome and the care and comfort afforded Negroes by the government and the people of Kansas.

⁵³New Orleans Weekly Louisianian, September 20, 1879.

⁵⁴Senate Report, No. 693, II, 531.

On the other hand the Bourbons stressed the folly of the movement and the terrible sufferings of the exodusters in Kansas. Stories from all over Kansas reached the Bourbon planters with which they tried to dissuade the exodus-ters. They pointed out that the Negro was unaccustomed to the cold climate of Kansas. Great numbers of Negroes had arrived in Kansas in March, 1879, in the midst of a heavy snow storm, wretchedly clad and looking starved and desperate. Their distress increased as the weather became colder. Governor John P. St. John, who finally organized a Kansas Freedmen's Relief association, said that the exodusters from Louisiana were "almost entirely destitute of money, out of food, very scantily clothed, and in a most pitiable condition."⁵⁵ The Kansas governor gave some of the Negroes temporary refuge in the Topeka jail, and others were housed "in a leaky building where they suffered greatly from the cold."⁵⁶ Many Negroes crowded into the river boats died during the voyage to Kansas. Their survivors carried the dead bodies with them to their destination so that they could bury them on Kansas soil. About half of the exodusters to Kansas City were quarantined in temporary barracks located outside the city limits for fear that their

⁵⁵ New York Tribune, June 7, 1879.

⁵⁶ New Orleans Picayune, May 11, 1879.

belongings had Yellow Fever germs on them.⁵⁷ Negroes entering Emporia were accused of bringing a new disease resembling measles which was highly contagious among children. Many cases proved fatal.⁵⁸ Authorities at Leavenworth refused to allow boats loaded with Negroes to land. Jesting citizens of Kansas City bribed boat captains to take Negroes to Wyandotte. Wyandotte inhabitants failed to appreciate the joke.⁵⁹ Planters and other white citizens of Louisiana revealed these conditions to Negroes in an effort to discourage them. A few planters made the trip to Kansas themselves for the purpose of bringing their tenants home. Others sent their tenants railroad tickets back to Louisiana. For several months the efforts of the whites were fruitless. The Negroes were bound for Kansas, where they expected to find 160 acres of land and a mule, all free.⁶⁰

Even the Northern and mid-Western press became disturbed by the exodus. In an article entitled "An Exodus of Mad Men" the New York World stated:

It is far more serious than many people, especially in the North, have any idea [of], and the real motive

⁵⁷ New York Tribune, June 1, 1880.

⁵⁸ Senate Report, No. 693, I, 241.

⁵⁹ New Orleans Times-Democrat, April 11, 1879.

⁶⁰ Pelousas Courier, May 27, 1879.

of this infatuation which has come over the colored people is political, for with the dying of the bloody shirt cry, the report is again set afloat that the Negroes are ill-treated.⁶¹

The St. Paul Pioneer Press published a violent editorial entitled "Starving Niggers":

Let the idiots who planned this most ridiculous exodus supply the wants of the fleeing darkies, or let the niggers starve! If there was one ounce of sand to a ton of Nigger, he would remain right in Louisiana and maintain those rights with which the Republican Party invested him, or he would die in his tracks! Will not knives cut as deep, bullets go as swiftly and unerringly, fire burn as fiercely when set in motion by a nigger as when directed by the white barbarians of that region? He is free--let him maintain his freedom by force. Let him burn, stab, shoot, and VOTE. A nigger's vote is as big as anybody else's if he sees to it. We have no earthly use for the nigger in the North. We do not need his vote, nor his labor, nor his society, nor his presence in any conceivable shape. Unless he can assert and maintain his right to vote in the South his destiny is sealed.

The trouble with the nigger is that his franchise was conferred on him. He has no more conception of its value than a South Sea islander. The nigger was liberated and enfranchised in the interest of the Republican Party and his proper work is to fight and vote for it in those states where he was at the close of the war.⁶²

The Negro editor of the Weekly Louisianian, when publishing the above article, added the bitter comment:

Negroes are not welcomed by the Republican Party. We are liked only as we remain in the South and interpose our lives in upholding the Republican Party. When we dare to leave this section and go where party necessity does not call for our votes, we are then

⁶¹ New Orleans Times-Democrat, April 18, 1879, quoting New York World.

⁶² Quoted in New Orleans Weekly Louisianian, August 2, 1879.

only "niggers" with the Republicans and nothing more.⁶³

The Lemar, Iowa, Sentinel published an editorial entitled "What the Nigger Needs," reproaching Southern Negro voters in these terms:

What you need to learn is to "curse," practice "violence," and all other things will be added to you. If you have not enough sand to stand up and curse the lantern-jawed Brigadiers and their white livered retainers, then the Republican Party has made a great mistake in giving you your freedom. If these unhung traitors dare to molest you when you go to vote, shoot them as you would so many dogs. A six-shooter is what you need, Mr. Nig!⁶⁴

The longer the exodus continued the more destitute the Negroes became. The Kansans tried to aid them until the unwelcome and ever increasing horde caused them to give up in disgust. By late summer, 1879, most of the relief supplies were exhausted.⁶⁵ Organized resistance to the exodusters became widespread in many localities. The Mayor and forty prominent citizens of the city of Wyandotte issued a "Protest to the People of the United States." It declared that the blacks had to be cared for from the time they arrived until the time they departed. It closed with a plea to "humane and reflecting people everywhere to use their best

⁶³Ibid.

⁶⁴Quoted in New Orleans Weekly Louisianian, August 9, 1879.

⁶⁵New Orleans Picayune, August 1, 1879.

efforts to check this most disastrous movement on the part of the Negro population of the Southwest, and to correct the utterly baseless and visionary ideas concerning what is before the Negro immigrants in Kansas."⁶⁶

By late 1879 and early 1880 the exodus of the Negroes slowed down appreciably and politics ceased to be dominant in the minds of both Bourbons and blacks. The Bourbons had become apprehensive as to plantation labor and the exodusters had become disillusioned as to the supplies of "milk and honey" in the Promised Land. Corn pone, molasses, fat-back, and sweet potatoes resumed their former palatability. Letters from exodusters living in Kansas helped to persuade Negro relatives and friends to become reconciled to their lot in Louisiana. One such letter from a prominent exoduster living at Atchinson, Kansas was published in the New Orleans Weekly Louisianian on May 18, 1879 and read in part:

Kansas farmers generally do their own work, so labor is never in great demand. The government lands are out on the frontier counties generally, and from fifty to a hundred miles from timber. Parties settling upon them must have a good two horse team or an ox team to break up the land preparatory for using. It is nonsense to believe that the government is going to give a mule or anything of the kind. Any person circulating such a report among the colored people ought to be hung to the nearest tree. I

⁶⁶ M. D. Peoples, "Negro Migration," 56.

presume there are several who have been convinced ere this that Kansas is not the promised land they are looking for. . . .

While the Louisiana constitutional convention of 1879 was in session, Negro delegate Alexandre Noguez of Avoyelles Parish received numerous letters from his Negro constituents asking his advice about the hegira. Desiring to advise them wisely as to their future welfare, Noguez wrote to E. D. McLaughlin, a former resident of Avoyelles Parish who was engaged in law practice at Omaha, Nebraska. Noguez requested McLaughlin to send him information which he could pass on to his friends who were considering the trek to Kansas. McLaughlin's reply was discouraging and put a damper on the movement:

There are certain things no colored man need expect who flees from a southern state, and I will enumerate a few of them. There will not be given him 160 acres of land and the teams and implements for culture. Nor will he be given food and clothing. Neither will the people rush with open arms to receive and embrace him--and they must not expect so much personal social intimacy with the white people as they have been used to in their southern homes.⁶⁷

By the end of the year 1880 the weary exoduster gave up the ghost. His "Promised Land," he concluded, was not this side of glory. But he was allowed to return to his cabin on a Louisiana plantation where he was able to eke out an existence under the direction and protection of his

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P. D. Uzee, "Midwestern Attitudes on the Kansas Fever," The Kansas Historical Quarterly, XX (1953), 499.

former master. Most of these former masters in 1880 agreed with W. T. Fleming, a Bourbon Democrat of Shreveport, who told Federal investigators that Louisiana Negroes suffered from "moral intimidation" in the matter of voting. Fleming conceded that the Bourbons always threatened the Negroes with violence if they went to the polls, but that threats alone being sufficient, they were never put into practice. "The entire cause of the exodus," stated Fleming, "was the unsettled condition of their minds over the change in State government from Republican to Democratic."⁶⁸

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Senate Report, No. 693, III, 175.

CHAPTER IV

THE DECADE OF DEMOCRATIC DICTATORSHIP, 1880-1890

The state of Louisiana had been redeemed by the whites during the campaign of 1878, but Negroes continued to vote in Louisiana for two decades after Reconstruction. Because of their numbers Negro voters could not be ignored. The Bourbon Democrats had a clear picture of the Negro's "place" in post-Reconstruction politics. Whereas during Reconstruction Negro suffrage perpetuated the power of the Republican Party, Negro votes were now used to secure majorities for the magic cause of white supremacy. The Bourbon philosophy, for reasons of political and economic self-interest, endorsed and defended Negro suffrage. This philosophy attracted wide support and was tried out during the decade of the 1880's while white class conflict grew increasingly bitter. The Bourbons boldly challenged the statement of George Washington Cable that honest government was a preliminary for free government.¹ Negro voters were courted or intimidated, cajoled or coerced, bought or sold, or merely counted for the Democratic Party, however they

¹George Washington Cable, "The Silent South," Century Magazine, XXX (1885), 683.

voted or whether or not they voted at all. The complexion of the white man's party during the decade of the 1880's was not "lily white," but "cafe-au-lait."²

The overthrow of Radical government in 1877 had broken up the entire Republican organization in Louisiana. Although Negroes had continued to serve in the state legislature, Negro delegates had helped to draft the constitution of 1879, and Negroes had taken some part in the campaign of that year, the Republican Party as an organization had taken no important part in elections since Reconstruction.³

In November, 1879, Negro politician S. B. P. Pinchback campaigned for Republicans in Northeastern Louisiana and reported his frustrations as a vote-getter:

Owing to difficulties experienced in obtaining a conveyance, I failed to keep an appointment in the 7th Ward [Madison Parish], but started out early Monday morning for Tallulah in a spring wagon drawn by a mule and piloted by Hon. Wm. Murrell. We arrived and found that two places had been designated for the meeting and owing to the confusion arising therefrom concluded to postpone the meeting until evening, to the Shields plantation, about six miles from Tallulah. When the evening set in the weather was intensely cold, and the prospects for a meeting slim indeed, but in a comparatively short time the

²P. D. Uzee, "Republican Politics in Louisiana, 1877-1900," Ph.D. dissertation, Louisiana State University (1950), 135.

³M. T. Leach, "The Aftermath of Reconstruction in Louisiana," The Louisiana Historical Quarterly, XXXII (1949), 679.

crowd began to assemble and the meeting proved a success. Tuesday morning, having been delayed by an accident to our wagon, we resumed our journey, intending to go to St. Joseph so as to attend a meeting there on the 6th. We travelled about 25 to 30 miles and gave up the trip as it became apparent that our mule would not hold out. Wednesday morning dawned upon us dark and gloomy with a drizzling rain, but nothing daunted thereby we set out on our return to Delta, which we reached about 9 o'clock at night wet, cold, and hungry. As we plodded our way along the muddy and cheerless road, surrounded after nightfall with a darkness so thick that we could not see our hands before us, and compelled to trust to our faithful mule to keep us in the road, I wondered if our friends in the city had any idea of the hardships imposed in a canvass in North Louisiana.⁴

James D. Kennedy, Negro candidate for Secretary of State in 1879, went to Waterproof in Tensas Parish to make a speech at the invitation of Negro Republicans. At the designated speaking place, Kennedy was greeted by armed whites who broke up the rally and dispersed the Negroes. Kennedy's appeal for speaking privileges to the mayor of Waterproof went unheeded.⁵ Some Negroes complained that others were not working actively enough in the 1879 campaign. They charged that gubernatorial candidate Taylor Beattie and a few party stalwarts were bearing the brunt of the entire campaign and they voiced gloomy predictions as to the outcome of the election.⁶

⁴New Orleans Weekly Louisianian, November 15, 1879.

⁵Ibid.

⁶P. D. Uzee, "Republican Politics in Louisiana, 1877-1900," Ph.D. dissertation, Louisiana State University (1950), 72.

Campaign exertions of the Republicans came to naught in the state election of 1879. Louis A. Wiltz and the entire Democratic ticket were elected by large majorities. Both branches of the legislature were Democratic. Only 13 parishes went Republican. All of the parishes north of Red River with the exception of East Carroll were lost to the Republicans and only four Negro Senators and twelve Negro Representatives were elected to the new legislature.⁷

The gubernatorial election of 1879 set a pattern for Negro politics in Louisiana during the decade of the 1880's. Negroes remained in politics, but they voted as they were instructed to vote or paid to vote. If voting did not bring rewards either pecuniary or personal, Negroes were usually apathetic at election time.⁸ The mass Negro vote in post-Reconstruction Louisiana was an unknown quantity.⁹ The Republicans claimed that the election of 1879 was a farce. Pinchback stated bitterly:

If robbed we have been . . . we are pleased to know that we have been completely stripped by the highwaymen, who under the guise of law and party have virtually told the Republicans of this state that, vote

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ New Orleans Weekly Louisianian, March 29, 1879, June 19, 1880; Daily Picayune, November 8, 1886.

⁹ P. D. Uzee, "Republican Politics in Louisiana, 1877-1900," Ph.D. dissertation, Louisiana State University (1950), 138.

as solidly and freely as they may, it's the same in the result as if they had by those votes intended to pass an opinion on the despotic government of the Czar of Russia.¹⁰

A few days later, Governor Louis A. Wiltz in his message to the legislature referred to the suffrage article of the new state constitution in these words:

The framers of the Constitution sought to ordain a government which might be equitable, impartial, liberal, and just to all sections, all races, and all conditions, without bias in favor of any party sect, class or faction. . . . The broad and magnanimous decree of the Constitution must be carried out in good faith and to the full extent intended. The exercise of the right of suffrage must be kept free from all improper influences. The right to vote is the foundation wall of our institutions. As long as that right is kept free, pure, and complete, political liberty will be secure, and no longer. To maintain the integrity of this right, and to secure the purity of the ballot box, are among the highest duties of wise and patriotic legislators.¹¹

Despite Governor Wiltz's message, his actions provoked the colored press in New Orleans to protest that:

Governor Wiltz came to the executive chair under more voluntary pledges to the colored people than Nicholls did, but his policy seems to be the entire elimination of colored men from political positions. . . . The colored men constitute more than half of the population of the state. They cannot rest quiet under unjust discrimination. The Louisianian calls upon Governor Wiltz and his colleagues to right their wrongs at once. Of the vote which elevated these gentlemen to authority, a large part was cast by colored men, and it may be in the cycles of time that these votes may be needed again. Look to it, Gentlemen, that your unfair

¹⁰ New Orleans Weekly Louisianian, December 6, 1879.

¹¹ Governor Wiltz's Message to the General Assembly, January 15, 1880, Louisiana House of Representatives Journal, 1880, 9-15.

treatment does not estrange them from you forever.¹²

The untimely death of Governor Wiltz on October 16, 1880 brought Lieutenant Governor Samuel Douglas McEnery to the gubernatorial chair. His stand on politics was not completely acceptable to any faction, yet his intention was to favor the Bourbons. Governor McEnery sponsored and the legislature passed a new election law, Act Number 101 of 1882, which provided for printed ballots. The Secretary of State was responsible for printing the names of candidates upon the ballots. The printing of tickets made it easy to manipulate Negro votes, since the great majority of Negro voters were unable to read the names of candidates. Opponents of the Bourbons stated that the election law "was intended to make it the duty of the Governor to treat the law as a formality and count in the Democrats."¹³ Bourbons pointed out the names of the candidates for whom they wished the Negro to vote and the Negro voter obligingly placed his mark beside the desired name and received his reward.

Shortly after the passage of the election law of 1882, Governor McEnery stated that it did not work and advocated the enactment of a law providing greater opportunity

¹²New Orleans Weekly Louisianian, May 14, 1881.

¹³W. A. Mabry, "The Disfranchisement of the Negro in the South," Ph.D. dissertation, Duke University (1933), 233; New Orleans Item, February 20, 1898.

for the expression of the wishes of the majority. He talked of racial peace and progress. He stated that no election law could work without an intelligent exercise of the right of suffrage. He pointed out that unrestricted suffrage was dangerous to the welfare of the state. He prophetically announced to the state legislature:

I am sure that in the future we will have to regret the reckless exercise of the right to vote. I believe public opinion imperatively demands that the right of suffrage be restricted to those who can intelligently exercise it.¹⁴

Most Negro politicians acquiesced in election laws and the general patterns of Democratic dictatorship. This acquiescence was revealed in an interview of the editor of the Weekly Louisianian with Theophile T. Allain, Negro Senator from Iberville Parish, on September 17, 1881, in which the Senator was quoted as saying:

Judging from the conversation of the colored people generally, the tune of the old leaders from '68 up, today is played out. Combinations between white and colored men of the state who would like to be in on the home issues, will win in my judgment. A bursting up among the Democrats is inevitable, and my political experience of the Southern white man is, give them offices in the country parishes and they will do more for Sambo than our former white leaders could do at this time; therefore, home arrangements must be made.

This Negro spoke the truth when he referred to political "combinations" between Negroes and white men. There

¹⁴Governor McEnergy's Message to the General Assembly, Louisiana House of Representatives Journal, 1884.

developed among white Louisianians in late 1881 as "Independent" movement to oppose the Bourbons. The Independent movement was instigated by United States Congressman E.

John Ellis who wrote his brother:

I want no political fellowship with the present regime in Louisiana. It must and will be overthrown. The great mistake was in 1879. An alliance with the Republicans would have been easy and would have destroyed those corrupt scoundrels with great ease . . . I should be sorry if villians have told S. D. McEnery lies that embittered his heart against me. . . . You are mistaken. He [Governor S. D. McEnery] sold himself body and breeches to Burke [E. A. Burke, Bourbon Democratic candidate for State Treasurer] and his efforts to take vengeance upon somebody else than himself make him strike blindly at the men whom he has betrayed.¹⁵

The breach in the Bourbon ranks was bitter. E. A. Burke had this to say relative to E. John Ellis' candidacy for re-election to Congress in 1882: "Mr. Ellis has always been a Bourbon of the Bourbons. . . . When the Republican Party gave him the cold shoulder, he, in the most brazen manner stated that he had never had any relations with Republicans. . . . If the Democrats of the 2nd district are willing to send him back to Washington to disgrace them, that is their own affair."¹⁶

The breach in the Democratic ranks delighted the

¹⁵E. John Ellis to Tom Ellis, February 6, 1882, Ellis Family Papers, Department of Archives, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

¹⁶New Orleans Times-Democrat, September 7, 1882.

Negroes, and the Republican Executive Committee issued a call to all parishes and wards to begin plans for allying with the Independents and campaigning for the congressional election of 1882.¹⁷ The Negro press confidently predicted that the Independent movement would cause the complete collapse of the Democratic Party in the state. "Bourbonism is to the South what the Old Man of the Sea was to Sinbad the Sailor, an encumbrance which it must get rid of, or perish," stated the Baton Rouge Capitolian Advocate on April 1, 1882. On January 14, 1882, the editor of the Weekly Louisianian wrote:

Bourbon misrule is foreshadowed. . . . The bitter contentions in the state legislature between city and rural members exposed the true inwardness of Bourbon misrule. The state government is in confusion and is merging into general anarchy. . . . The Bourbons "who learned nothing and forgot nothing" are blighting the fairest prospects for the state's future greatness.

However a political alliance of Negroes and Independents was not to be achieved at this time. Instead of supporting Independents with their votes, the Negroes hoped to win dissatisfied whites over to Republicanism. The split in the Democratic ranks presented an opportunity for Negro Republicans to dream of assuming leadership once more and

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New Orleans Weekly Louisianian, January 7, March 11, May 6, 1882.

to envision the Independents as their followers.¹⁸ The Weekly Louisianian stated:

The Republican Party has a grand mission to perform for the South--to free it from the thraldom of Bourbonism. Since the state passed under Democratic rule, the people have had a chance to criticize the ability of the Bourbons to run the government. The best elements of the liberal Democrats are organizing an Independent movement and will unfurl the banner of revolt against the Bourbons. The Bourbons are alarmed at the progressive political tenets advocated by their liberal leaders. Each faction of the Democrats will regard the colored vote as the "balance of power" and will endeavor to secure it by open canvass with no intimidation at the polls, no tissue ballots, but with a recognition of all men as being free and equal in the exercise of their rights as citizens. In Louisiana we need not balance with any faction or form any entangling alliances. What we demand is a fair vote and an honest count and the Republican Party will carry this state by an absolute majority of over 20,000 . . . [and] can bury Bourbonism in the ashes of the dead past. Let Republicans of this state reorganize on a Stalwart basis and we will restore Louisiana to her rightful Republican government.¹⁹

The Natchitoches Parish Republican Committee for two years dallied with the idea of alliance with the Independents, but refusing to make any commitments because of disagreement, neglected to put out a local Republican slate in 1884.²⁰

The stand taken by the Negroes disturbed the Bourbons.

¹⁸P. D. Uzee, "Republican Politics in Louisiana, 1877-1900," Ph.D. dissertation, Louisiana State University (1950), 74.

¹⁹January 7, 14, 1882.

²⁰Minute Book of Republican Parish Executive Committee, Minutes for October 11, December 21, 1883; April 8, 1884, Breda Family Papers, Department of Archives, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

They urged a solid vote in the First Congressional District for Carleton Hunt "to save him from the black parishes below." They advocated the candidacy of E. John Ellis in the Second District against the Negro candidate put out by the customhouse faction.²¹ Negro voters in the Third District outnumbered whites by 800. The Times-Democrat urged whites to rally to the cause and get out the vote for candidate J. H. Acklen. It stated that the Independent issue among the Republicans would insure a large Republican vote there.

"Not one Negro in a hundred will stay at home," it warned. However Acklen held mass rallies of the Negroes in the sugar country. He did much to convince them of the corruption of his opponent, William P. Kellogg, during his Reconstruction administration of Louisiana and won many Negro voters for his own candidacy.²²

The Louisiana Congressional election of 1882 was a victory for the Democrats. The election was reportedly one of the quietest ever witnessed. A great number of Negroes allegedly voted with the white Democrats.²³ The alleged action of Republicans in East Baton Rouge Parish in requiring Negroes to go oath-bound to the polls resulted

²¹ New Orleans Picavune, November 1, 1882.

²² New Orleans Times-Democrat, October 17, 1882.

²³ Baton Rouge Daily Advocate, April 3, 1882.

in large numbers of them supporting the Democratic Party.²⁴

Negroes questioned their defeat. The only response obtained was "a shrug of the shoulders and a peculiar facial expression."²⁵ I. W. Falls, defeated candidate for the state legislature in the Sixth District, charged that obstacles were thrown in the way of Negroes attempting to vote for him. They were asked irrelevant questions, told that they did not reside at the place designated on the registration book, and driven away from the polls in large numbers. This candidate said that he witnessed Democratic commissioners John Elwood and George Bland take from the ballot box tickets cast for him and "throw in a bunch of tickets" for his opponent. When the count was completed, there were 226 ballots in the box where only 164 persons voted. When Falls asked commissioners to account for this discrepancy, "they laughed, considering it a good joke."²⁶ Other protests were heard about this election. The Weekly Louisianian on May 27, 1882 stated:

It is full time for the people to clean the Augean stables if such a thing is a possibility. "Use" is 2nd nature, and the Democratic Party has resorted to that method of carrying elections so long that it has become to them as natural as lying. . . . Not even Hercules could cleanse the Democratic Party-- it's too big a job. Those disgusted with the stench

²⁴ Ibid., April 4, 1882.

²⁵ New Orleans Weekly Louisianian, May 6, 1882.

²⁶ Ibid.

should build a new party and keep it clean.

As had been the case following the political revolution of 1878, the Federal Justice Department received numerous communications relating to Louisiana election frauds in 1882. Federal Attorney for Louisiana, A. H. Leonard, wrote Attorney General Benjamin H. Brewster relative to investigation and prosecution of election frauds. Leonard complained of the difficulty in establishing proof of the frauds, despite "flagrant violation of the election laws," due to the lack of inclination of witnesses to testify.²⁷ M. C. Elstner, United States Attorney for the Western District of Louisiana, informed Brewster that election frauds in his district were obvious and could unquestionably be sustained by an impartial jury, but he added that it was "without the realm of possibility to get an impartial jury." Elstner stated that the scarcity of labor in the river bottoms might possibly favor the government's cause in the election cases, since the Bourbons of the black parishes opposed measures causing apprehension among Negroes. He expressed an opinion that there would be no convictions in his district, but added that the effect of a single verdict of guilty, even with a suspended judgment, would prove of

²⁷ A. H. Leonard to Benjamin H. Brewster, May 25, June 21, 1882, January 25, 1883, Source Chronological and Year Files, GRDJ, NA, RG 60.

incalculable good to the government in its prosecution of subsequent cases.²⁸

C. E. Woods, Assistant United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Louisiana, also complained of the difficulty of securing an impartial jury. He related to Attorney General Brewster that U. H. Hare, when asked if he would serve impartially on a jury, replied: "I am not prepared to find these men guilty here for frauds, and especially when they are prosecuted by a government that committed the worst infamous fraud upon the people during the last eight years, and none of them were even prosecuted, and now this court comes forward and prosecutes these."²⁹ Woods, like Elstner, had his ray of hope for the government in its prosecution of Louisiana election frauds. "It must not be lost sight of that it is costing these men [Bourbon Democrats] a great deal of money, not less than \$3000, for each case, buying up jurors and witnesses and we will, in trying two or three more, exhaust them," he wrote to Attorney General Brewster.³⁰

The Grand Jury indicted fifty-nine persons. Election

²⁸M. C. Elstner to Benjamin H. Brewster, March 18, 1883, Source Chronological and Year Files, GRDJ, NA, RG 60.

²⁹C. E. Woods to Benjamin H. Brewster, March 20, 1883, Source Chronological and Year Files, GRDJ, NA, RG 60.

³⁰Ibid.

supervisors and commissioners were charged with a preconceived plan to prevent the expression of the peoples' will at the polls. Specific guilty persons and specific ballot and election frauds were described in a letter of A. H. Leonard to the Attorney General.³¹ A trial of the "conspirators" was held in March, 1883. The foreman of the jury pronounced the verdict, "Not Guilty."³² The General Agent of the Justice Department in the Eastern District of Louisiana, a man named Cameron, telegraphed Attorney General Brewster recommending trial of New Orleans election cases, "notwithstanding acquittal corruptly proved in cases already tried."³³

Even the Bourbons lamented the methods to which they considered themselves forced to resort in the congressional election of 1882. The Bossier Banner on July 20, 1882, stated:

Within the last twenty years we have changed our mode of political contests. Money is openly used. . . . There has been a great ado made to preserve the freedom of elections, but the same parties find nothing objectionable in the outright purchase of voters. The large sums now expended in elections are required for no other purpose. A corruption fund is set apart

³¹A. H. Leonard to Benjamin H. Brewster, January 25, 1883, Source Chronological and Year Files, GRDJ, NA, RG 60.

³²New Orleans Daily Picayune, March 25, 1883.

³³April 2, 1883, Source Chronological and Year Files, GRDJ, NA, RG 60.

for close congressional and legislative districts. The use of money by one party is made the excuse for the other party's resorting to like practices. It is urged that success is impossible unless the influence of money is offset with money. There are two apparent results: First, the people will lose respect for elections that are determined in advance by the longest purse; second, only rich men, or poor pliant ones, will be eligible as candidates. . . . Great evils work their own cure. We presume this will in time. Money will control elections until a state of things is brought about to arouse the people to put forth their strength.

This editorial might well have served as a warning to Bourbons who were soon to be confronted by an irate People's Party in Louisiana.

It was most natural for the Bourbons in 1882 to give this warning in an article entitled "A Word to the Wise":

Nothing is more prudent than for Democrats to defeat Republican candidates for Congress. Such scoundrels as J. Ross Stewart, Robert C. Walker, A. B. Jackson [all Negroes] and others seem to have forgotten the wholesome lessons we taught them in 1878 with the respectable white people of Tensas as instructors. It is best that Republicans, white and black, should know and remember that we WILL NOT be dominated by Negroes.³⁴

A few days later the same publication stated that many Negro voters of the parish had ceased to be lured by "false Gods" and had openly expressed themselves for the Democratic candidate for congress in the Fifth District, General Floyd King, and declared their intention to vote for him in preference to the Republican candidate, W. L. McMillan. The Gazette added the comment that everything would be done to

³⁴ St. Joseph Tensas Gazette, September 2, 1882.

foster and encourage Negro voters in this course and no expense would be spared to secure a handsome majority for the Democratic candidate.³⁵

An optimistic post-election editorial was typical of Bourbon sentiments throughout the state. It read:

The colored element participated with considerable zeal . . . and cast their votes for the Democratic nominee. They were bold to express their preference for the ticket and voted solidly with their white neighbors. This shows that they no longer listen to those who formerly used them only as their tools. They have placed themselves on record as in favor of Democratic rule, and are as happy and contented as any people on the globe. . . .³⁶

The Bourbons continued control of Negro votes for the benefit of the Democratic Party. In 1882 a defeated congressional candidate from another Southern state made an accusation which equally well described Bourbon policies in Louisiana:

The Bourbon is a law unto himself. . . . They [the Bourbons] teach that opponents in politics have no rights that citizens and patriots are bound to respect; and that any agency, fair or foul, legal or illegal, that makes for the good of their party is just and right.³⁷

By 1884 Bourbon patterns of buying, stealing, and counting Negro votes were fairly well established. It was

³⁵ Ibid., September 30, 1882.

³⁶ Ibid., November 11, 1882.

³⁷ William L. Lowe, of Alabama, cited in William H. Skaggs, The Southern Oligarchy (New York, 1924), 102.

simpler to proceed in this manner than it was to try to prevent Negro voters from casting their ballots.³⁸ The Negro's vote was counted for the Bourbon Democratic Party whether he voted Republican or Democratic, and even if he did not vote at all. The Republican state convention met in New Orleans in March, 1884, to plan the gubernatorial and presidential elections of that year. William P. Kellogg, Chairman, stressed the necessity of nominating a full slate of candidates, even though the ticket was certain to be counted out at the polls. Kellogg urged that efforts be exerted to elect Republican legislators who would be able to work with the Democratic majority to protect the civil and political rights of Negroes.³⁹ David Young, Negro delegate from Concordia Parish, disapproved of these suggestions. He believed the Party should endorse the Democratic ticket and not waste time, money, and energy on a futile campaign. He said the reason candidates ran on the Republican ticket was to gain national recognition as Southern "martyrs" to the cause of Republicanism.⁴⁰

The weakness of the Republican Party in Louisiana

³⁸ W. A. Mabry, "Disfranchisement of the Negro in the South," Ph.D. dissertation, Duke University (1933), 68.

³⁹ P. D. Uzee, "Republican Politics in Louisiana, 1877-1900," Ph.D. dissertation, Louisiana State University (1950), 75.

⁴⁰ New Orleans Daily Picayune, March 7, 1884.

was revealed in an editorial in the Shreveport Standard which stated that white Republican leaders had thrust Negroes into the limelight and tried to dictate politics to them. It warned Negroes to abstain from being used by men who had no regard for them beyond their votes.⁴¹ In contrast, another newspaper published in north Louisiana stated that Republicans had given up hope of electing their slate because of the prejudice and passion stirred up among the Negroes by Bourbon agitators in an attempt to persuade them to forsake their "real friends." The Bourbons hoped, stated the article, that the agitation among Negroes would act as a force to unite Democrats in closing their ranks to defeat the Negroes.⁴²

However desirable Democratic Party unity might be, it was far from a reality in the gubernatorial election of 1884. The "Independents" and "Reformers" could not reconcile themselves to the policies of the Bourbons and various proposals were made in the hope of remedying Bourbon dictatorship. Opposing factions stated that it was a great mistake to limit primaries to registered Democrats. They charged that Bourbons wished to force their candidates upon the Democratic Party by binding those who participated

⁴¹ Quoted in Alexandria Louisiana Democrat, February 21, 1885.

⁴² Claiborne Guardian, quoted in New Orleans Daily Picayune, March 31, 1884.

in primary elections to vote for the nominees.⁴³ They cited the danger involved in leaving "the vast colored element of citizenship out of the pale of Democracy, subject to the wily machinations of political tricksters." They named prominent Negro Republicans who had manifested a desire to vote in the Democratic primaries. They stated that such voters were entitled to change their opinion about politics once every four years.⁴⁴ They described the local situation in East Carroll Parish in terms of this conversation:

"Brudder Ki, is you nuff Dem'crat to git in at de Primaries?"
 "Dunno 'bout dat, Brud'er Sam, I think we culled people is 'Publicans, but seems we ain't guine to have no chance to vote dis 'lection 'less we jine in wid de Dem'crats."⁴⁵

The Negro press throughout the nation took up the cause of the Independents and advocated that Southern Negro voters join hands with any and all comers in an effort to defeat Bourbonism. The Washington Bee on January 27, 1883, stated:

It is to the South we must look for crushing out the spirit born of slavery. . . . We trust that the colored people will see their way clear to assist to overthrow Bourbonism. Its overthrow accomplished, the course will be opened for us to push on in the pursuit of happiness.

⁴³ Webster Tribune, August 23, 1883, Newspaper clipping in Chaplin, Breazeale and Chaplin Papers, Department of Archives, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

⁴⁴ Lake Providence East Carroll Democrat, December 22, 1883.

⁴⁵ Ibid., January 19, 1884.

The Independents, or Reformers, of Orleans Parish incurred the wrath of the Bourbons by their alleged overtures to Negroes. Bourbons stated that Independents desired to put before the voters a candidate whose platform would be "a free vote and a fair count," a man who would appeal to the support of the Democrats of his faction and also secure the votes of the Negroes.⁴⁶ A letter written at the time summed up the situation:

Any movement in this state amongst the Democrats to effect a coalition with the Republicans . . . must be looked for amongst the self constituted leaders of an irregular organization whose platform is rule or ruin! It is deemed best to go to work quietly this summer while our opponents are resting. We shall make our fight inside the party. . . . If the Red River line was closed, I should feel no further solicitude.⁴⁷

"Close up our line all along. . . . Put up McEnery's name and give him a big boost," wrote J. H. Cosgrove to Phanor Breazeale.⁴⁸ A short time later Breazeale received this message in a letter from J. D. Houston, Bourbon campaign manager: "I deeply regret that you should have drawn on me without first ascertaining my financial condition. I am in hell's own hole to raise money. What money I let you

⁴⁶"Brother" to Phanor Breazeale, July 25, 1883, Chaplin, Breazeale, and Chaplin Papers, Department of Archives, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

⁴⁷Ibid.

⁴⁸Ibid., August 11, 1883.

have before was out of my own pocket. Your parish got more than its share of the money raised for campaign purposes.

I cashed draft for Cosgrove over \$500."⁴⁹

Ex-Governor Francis T. Nicholls, the beloved Confederate Brigadier, was the choice of the Independents as a gubernatorial candidate in the election of 1884 and they hoped to secure his nomination at the Baton Rouge convention in December, 1883. The Bourbons had the support of the New Orleans "Ring" politicians who were bitterly opposed by Nicholls. Details of the campaign against Nicholls was revealed in a letter from James D. Houston to Phanor Breazeale. Houston wrote:

We must now take it for granted that Nicholls is a candidate and fire at him. Would suggest that you open war on him and make your excuse his treatment of the Natchitoches prisoners [acquitted in 1879 of charges of intimidation of Negro voters]. Attack his political record [Nicholls was accused of having secured money from the Louisiana Lottery to buy Negro members of the Packard legislature], but don't question his personal character. Say you think he is as pure as McEnery. . . . We must keep up the fire on Nicholls until he quits or we have killed him off. Be careful not to become bitter because he is a cripple [Nicholls had lost an arm and a leg during his service in the Confederate Army] and we may create sympathy for him.⁵⁰

Another weapon the Bourbons anticipated using to "kill off" Nicholls was his report of the Tensas riot to President

⁴⁹ Ibid., December 31, 1883.

⁵⁰ Ibid., September 12, 1883.

Hayes. J. D. Houston wrote Phanor Breazeale enclosing a copy of Nicholls' report on the riot and stated: "Nicholls' Tensas report was the excuse for the prosecutions and he has no way out. I also show you something that shows that S. D. McEnery was in active sympathy [with the prisoners]. Don't use the McEnery stuff or the Nicholls letter unless the other side make an opening for you by asking where McEnery was during the fight, [then] use the Tensas report for all it is worth."⁵¹

In an editorial in the New Orleans Picayune on April 15, 1884 the Reformers replied to Bourbon accusations of their having been "dallying with the Republicans" in these words: "But how about the Republican support that the Ringsters have been trying to buy up for some time past? How many colored voters have been bought by the Regulars within the last two weeks?"

The Bourbons countered with a statement that the Reformers themselves had paid S. B. T. Pinchback \$7000. to buy votes for their ticket in New Orleans. The Negroes whom Pinchback was allegedly paid to deliver, ignored the Reformers' ticket "for the reason that they did not care to be sold by their leaders, and vote, and not get their share of the purchase money." The Bourbons stated that if money were

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Ibid., September 19, 1883.

paid for votes, the Negroes wanted their share of it.⁵²

The Independents, being few in number, were unable to secure the nomination of Nicholls as Democratic candidate. The weapons of the Bourbons proved effective in nominating, and later electing, Samuel D. McEnery.

Pre-election activities in East Baton Rouge Parish were characterized by the purchase of Negro votes by both Democratic and Republican Parties. Beverly Barance and John Chapman, Negro Republicans, were accused of "owning" Negro voters, "marshalling and drilling their sable warriors," and organizing among them a secret society called the "Young Sons of Lincoln." This secret political society (numbering 300 to 400 Negroes) was an off-shoot in East Baton Rouge Parish of the Colored Men's Protective Union of New Orleans. There was an elaborate initiation ceremony during which the Negro placed his hand on the Bible and swore not to vote for any person not recognized by the organization. The initiation fee was \$1.00 and monthly dues were ten cents.⁵³

On election eve, April 20, 1884, rumors were rife in the streets of New Orleans concerning the effectiveness of a long desired alliance of Reformers and Republicans.⁵⁴ However Bourbons discounted such rumors with these words: "There

⁵²New Orleans Picayune, April 25, 1884.

⁵³Baton Rouge Daily Advocate, April 7, 10, 14, 16, 1884.

⁵⁴New Orleans Times-Democrat, April 21, 1884.

was hanging about Gravier and Carondelet Streets [Headquarters of the Reformers] quite a crowd of Negroes looking out for a grindstone on which to sharpen their little axes. It was like a sale at Old Tottersall's, and each wanted to get in at the highest bid."⁵⁵

The rumors proved false. The outcome of the election was a Bourbon victory. The entire Democratic ticket was elected by about 50,000 majority.⁵⁶ The New Orleans Times-Democrat on April 23, 1884 reported the result of the election in these complacent phrases:

The Democratic Party has achieved another emphatic and conclusive victory in Louisiana. Governor McEnery was elected by a large majority. . . . The lightness of the vote only goes to show that the so-called reform movement had no hold upon public sympathy. There was, in fact, nothing to reform.

Shortly following this election the Federal Justice Department received a letter from James C. Weakes, United States Marshal of the Western District of Louisiana, stating that great wrongs had been done to Negro voters and that the redress offered by the state was a travesty on justice. Weakes received this reply: "It is not a part of my duty to advise marshals under such circumstances. The offenses appear to be exclusively within the jurisdiction of the state

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Report of the Secretary of the State of Louisiana, 1902 (Baton Rouge, 1902), 561-564.

courts."⁵⁷

During the 1884 presidential campaign the Washington Bee cautioned Negro voters against alliance with Reformers and Independents:

The principles of the Republican Party are liberal; Those of the Democratic Party are narrow and only confined to the individual members of that party. There is liberty on one side and slavery on the other. Liberty and equality are the mottoes of the party we support, and tyranny, bloodshed, and the meanest acts that can be perpetrated are the principles of the Democratic party.⁵⁸

As the 1884 presidential campaign progressed this same publication became increasingly violent in its admonitions to Negro voters:

The Negro has proved himself to be a strict adherent to the principles of the Republican Party. The Democratic Party will cut every Negro's throat to keep a white Republican from getting control of the state or national government. The time has come when we demand recognition according to merit. . . . We hold the balance of power. A friend to the Negro must be nominated for the Republican Party to succeed.⁵⁹

The editor of the Bee further informed Negroes of the South that they had nothing to gain and everything to lose by voting with the Democrats. He quoted to them a statement by the editor of the St. Louis Southern Free Lance calling on the "Boys of the South" to "kill every nigger" who should

⁵⁷ Benjamin H. Brewster to James C. Weakes, June 16, 1884, Instruction Book, Volume P, GRDJ, NA, RG 60.

.⁵⁸ August 18, 1884.

⁵⁹ Washington Bee, March 8, 1884.

attempt to vote for Blaine and Logan in the approaching election. He pointed out to Negro voters the fact that "for years we have regretfully gazed upon the cotton fields, reeking with the blood of our innocent brethren who remained loyal to the Republican Party," and added emphatically, "We can no longer submit to this system of Southern affairs. We must protect ourselves when we meet the Bourbon element face to face." The Bee concluded its campaign editorials with a statement warning Southern Negro voters that should they vote with the Democrats, the Republicans would lose, but expressed the confident hope of "hailing with joy the election of Blaine and Logan."⁶⁰

Negro votes played a prominent role in the Louisiana congressional election of November, 1884. Bourbons easily, but not cheaply, purchased Negroes for the Democrats. On the eve of the election the New Orleans Picayune stated: "Today business is being done on account of politics. Several influential politicians of color were trying to sell. How much of that will be done tomorrow there is no telling." Trafficking in Negro votes was so widespread in the First Congressional District that the Reformers bolted against the Democratic candidate, L. St. Martin, and campaigned for Carleton Hunt. The irate Reformers publicized the fact that a rich Bourbon merchant, Adolph Meyer, had attempted to

⁶⁰ Ibid., July 5, 26, September 6, 1884.

bargain with other Bourbons for his candidacy by paying \$12,000 for the nomination to Congress. They revealed that other Bourbons with equally ample purses fought Meyer and caused him to decline a nomination to Congress even before his name had ever been mentioned except in connection with the \$12,000 bargain. Reformers stated that the Bourbons "after hawking the nomination about the district and offering it to two or three gentlemen who did not want to go to congress, gave it to a gentlemen who was not a candidate, Mr. St. Martin." The Reformers accused the Bourbons of rejecting Carleton Hunt because "Mr. Hunt had dared to appeal to the people and not to the bosses and therefore must be punished."⁶¹

The Second Congressional District, consisting largely of the sugar and rice country, elected a Republican, Michael Hahn. This was due primarily to the tariff question. This district was able to vote with the Bourbons on the state level, but to support Republicans on national tickets who favored the protective tariff so vital to their economic interests.

A hot political campaign between Edward J. Gay, Democrat, and William P. Kellogg, Republican, occurred in the Third Congressional District. By the time of this contest

⁶¹ New Orleans Picayune, October 8, 1884.

the planters had gained such a measure of control over Negro votes that Kellogg had become unpopular with the Negroes and they openly voted and campaigned for Gay. The Negroes' gratitude to the Republican Party for having freed them and enfranchised them had worn thin. The Republican Party in post-Reconstruction years had not provided the Negroes with the economic security necessary to maintain their political rights. It had nothing substantial to offer them for their votes. On the other hand the Bourbons offered them jobs and money. Negro tenants and plantation field hands fell naturally into the practice of voting as they were instructed by the Bourbon planters or politicians. The method described by Edward N. Pugh of swinging the Negro vote of Ascension Parish for Gay was typical of that used by Bourbon planters, bankers, merchants, and politicians throughout the entire state: "A little moral suasion on the part of our planters and others engaged in the employment and control of laborers has the effect of providing a potent influence upon the minds of the latter in election matters. Let owners and managers tell the Negro voters to vote for Gay. They naturally receive with deference the expressions of opinion by their employers on all subjects, which expressions pave the way for subsequent conviction. Nearly all the leading colored men are with us and they need only the offer of substantial moral support from the employers to swell the number

of supporters of Mr. Gay from the ranks of colored employees."⁶²

The Negroes' enthusiastic support of Gay provoked the wrath of Kellogg and Negro Customhouse officials. These men warned Negro voters against Gay and threatened withdrawal of patronage if they failed to support Kellogg. The Negroes paid no heed to these threats, saying that Kellogg and the Customhouse Republicans made sweeping promises before elections, but after votes had been cast only three or four Negroes were pensioned in the Customhouse and "the others are turned out to grass til they are wanted to help elect Kellogg again, who only visits them when he wants votes."⁶³

Prominent Negro politicians campaigned for Gay. Early in October Henry Demas organized five Negro clubs for Gay in the vicinity of Franklin numbering 200 members. Organization of other "Edward J. Gay" Negro clubs was scheduled for later in the month.⁶⁴ In late October M. J. Young, a Negro, presided over a large assemblage of Assumption Parish Negro voters at Hermitage plantation, home of Bourbon

⁶² E. N. Pugh to W. P. Miles, October 30, 1884, William Porcher Miles Collection, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, cited in P. D. Uzee, "Republican Politics in Louisiana 1877-1900," 132 and T. Harry Williams, "An Analysis of Some Reconstruction Attitudes," Journal of Southern History, XII (1946), 469-486.

⁶³ New Orleans Picayune, October 9, 1884.

⁶⁴ Ibid., October 10, 1884.

sugar planter, Louis A. Bringier. Six hundred voters attended and enthusiastically pledged their support to "roll up a handsome majority for Gay."⁶⁵ Another Negro, Garrison Smith, was elected president of a Negro "Edward J. Gay" club in Assumption Parish. His club numbered 200 members, all of whom heartedly endorsed Gay for Congress.⁶⁶ Theophile T. Allain, Negro Senator from Iberville Parish, was an ardent Supporter of Gay. The Iberville South reported that Allain "has been making colored women drunk and then has urged them to prevent their husbands from voting for Mr. Gay. Bad T. T. that."⁶⁷ A Democratic rally was held at Labadieville in Assumption Parish a few days before the election. Five hundred voters attended, about a third of whom were Negroes.⁶⁸

Gay's popularity among the Negroes provoked the murder of a Negro Democratic supporter in Terrebonne Parish named Gray. Three Negroes, Wash Lyons, Bob Johnson, and Hugh Williams, were charged with the murder. "It is to be hoped that all parties to this disgraceful murder for political opinion's sake will be brought to speedy punishment,"

⁶⁵ Ibid., October 23, 1884.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Cited in Baton Rouge Daily Advocate, October 31, 1884.

⁶⁸ New Orleans Picayune, October 23, 1884.

stated the New Orleans Picayune.⁶⁹

A bloody riot occurred at Fausse Pointe, near Loreauville, in Iberia Parish during a torchlight parade by Gay Negro supporters. Bourbon sources stated the riot was "a preconcerted job put up by the Republican leaders to make campaign capital for immediate use in the Northern states" and gloatingly asked "Who suffered for it? Two white men and sixteen poor Negroes."⁷⁰ The Bourbons charged that Republican leaders at New Iberia had consistently abused Democratic candidates by stating that Republicans could not live in Iberia Parish if the Democrats got in power. When the Gay torchlight procession commenced, about 200 Negro Kelloggites led by the Fontelieu gang (Theo., Albert, Alph, and L. Fontelieu) descended upon them "cheering in the wildest manner and abusing the Democratic candidates in the vilest terms." White citizens of Loreauville including Joe Gilbaux, a staunch Democrat, met the crowd and remonstrated with them. An unidentified Negro shot and killed Joe Gilbaux. Captain Bell, a prominent sugar planter, was also killed. General shooting began. The Negroes stampeded and fled in all directions. Some ran into Bayou Teche and sank, wounded and exhausted. Others reached the opposite side of

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Baton Rouge Daily Advocate, November 4, 1884.

the bayou falling in the woods and fields. The Negroes had allegedly been told such wild tales about the Democrats that they panicked believing their day of doom had come. "The Radicals have been waving a shirt here for a long time and at last they have got it stained," stated the Bourbons.⁷¹

Judge Fred L. Gates of New Iberia wrote to E. J. Gay soon after the election:

The unfortunate occurrence at Fausse Pointe on Saturday, the 1st November, had its influence in keeping away from polls a number of voters. But in this you lost about as many if not more than Kellogg. . . . If the U. S. Marshals would tell the truth they will all say that there never was a more quiet or orderly election in any parish and that the Negroes voted freely without a single attempt to coerce or intimidate them.⁷²

The congressional elections in the Fourth, Fifth, and Sixth Districts passed without incident with Democratic N. C. Blanchard, J. F. King, and A. B. Irion, respectively being elected over Republican opponents.

William P. Kellogg contested the seating of Gay and charged fraud, false counting, false returns, refusal to open polling places, refusal to register Negroes, and conspiracy to provoke a riot to intimidate Negroes in order to keep them from voting for him. Gay countered these charges

⁷¹New Orleans Picayune, November 3, 1884; Bossier Banner, November 6, 1884.

⁷²November 24, 1884, Gay Family Papers, Department of Archives, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

by stating that Kellogg through "bribery, offers of official positions, offers of money, . . . did debauch and pollute" Negro electors. He further charged that Kellogg placed a corruption fund into the hands of Abe Davis, Postmaster at Franklin in St. Mary Parish, for the bribing and seducing of Negro Gay supporters. He stated that Kellogg referred L. A. Cross to his paymaster, Abe Davis, for money to be used by Cross to purchase Negro voters for his candidacy. He specifically accused Kellogg of placing a check for \$1000 in the hands of a man named Duribbet for the purpose of illegally influencing voters to his support. He charged Kellogg with placing money in the hands of J. T. Minnville at Jeanerette for the purpose of bribing a staunch Gay supporter, Boniface Joseph, said money being paid to Joseph, who thereafter voted for Gay. Gay stated that Kellogg sent his Negro emissaries, H. C. Atwood and Henry Demas, to offer to bribe Frank W. Liggins (editor of the St. Mary Herald) with the position of Deputy Surveyor of the Port of New Orleans in return for his support and influence. Gay further charged that Kellogg paid Jack Pierre of St. Mary Parish \$50 from his own pocket to get Pierre not to vote for Gay. Gay further charged that in order to procure a corruption fund for purchase of votes in St. Mary Parish, Kellogg assessed all governmental officials. He required not only the payment of the amounts assessed, but also made officials neglect their duties to engage in electioneering and canvassing

in his behalf. Gay added that "said assessed officials are still paying money out of their monthly salaries to satisfy notes upon which money was raised for your use in corrupting voters."⁷³

Eleven Negroes gave sworn testimony that they voted for Gay in preference to Kellogg in spite of offers of bribes, threats of eviction, and beatings by Kelloggites. These Negroes were Tony Hill, Bill Hudgeons, Henry Watson, B. H. Lemis, and Dantes Hawkins of Terrebonne Parish; Emile Navarre, Theodule Boudreaux, Olens Ordoyne, Enoch Thibodaux, and a Negro named McWilliams of Lafourche Parish; and Charles Alcibiades Judice of Iberia Parish.⁷⁴

Kellogg's contest came to naught. Edward J. Gay was seated and remained Louisiana's congressman from the Third District until his death in 1889.

The Louisiana congressional election of 1886 passed off with little commotion and no appreciable violence. The Democratic candidates, T. S. Wilkinson, M. D. Lagan, E. J. Gay, N. C. Blanchard, Cherubusco Newton and E. W. Robertson, representing respectively the First through the Sixth

⁷³Charges of Representative Edward J. Gay Against William P. Kellogg Relating to St. Mary Parish," undated manuscript, Gay Family Papers, Department of Archives, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

⁷⁴Newspaper clippings, no date, Gay Family Papers, Department of Archives, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

Congressional Districts, were all elected. Republican candidates William Burwell, Andrew Hero, Jr., C. B. Darrall, G. L. Walton, and J. O. Berhel, representing respectively the First, Second, Third, Fifth, and Sixth Districts, made poor showings. There was no Republican candidate from the Fourth District.

The usual campaign "dickers" were made and Negroes sold their votes to the highest bidder. Prominent Negro politicians in the Third District endorsed Democratic candidates since their choice, J. S. Davidson, a Negro, had been rejected in favor of C. B. Darrall, a white Republican.

The Weekly Pelican, Negro Republican newspaper published at New Orleans, opposed this action and put such pressure on the Republican Executive Committee in the Third District that it temporarily expelled four Negro politicians from the party for having "aided and abetted the Democracy" in the congressional election, E. J. Gay being the Democratic candidate thus aided. In an article entitled "Four of a Kind," the editor of the Weekly Pelican stated:

These four Negroes, these four would be leaders of the Republican Party, acting from no conscientious motives or scruples, threw gratitude to the Republican Party to the four winds, and went into the congressional campaign for boodle and pelf.

Allain, a hypocritical renegade, claiming to be a leader of the Republican Party and a representative colored man, after accepting from the Republican committee what money he claimed he was out by the nomination of Davidson, canvassed his parish for Gay.

Davidson, a bloated ass, . . . after declining the Republican nomination, accepted expense money from the Republican committee; but his ward, hitherto largely Republican, gave the biggest majority of any ward in Iberville Parish against the Republicans.

Posey, a tough saint from St. Mary Parish, after soliciting and receiving money from the Republican committee, accepted \$50 or more from the Democracy to work in his ward tickets with the name of Davidson thereon, thereby helping to defeat the Republican candidate.

Roxborough, a young sprig of the law, stands charged with having sold the Darrall tickets which were entrusted to him to Gay or his henchmen. Not only this; he received \$275 or more from the Republican committee. He obtained this money to cover the expense of distributing the tickets. He sold the tickets and kept the money.

But the fates are against them. The bells have tolled. Already in Iberville has the political death knell of Allain, Davidson, and Roxborough been heard and it is the same with Posey in St. Mary. Next year, amid paeans of joy for Republican victory, the names of that immortal quartette will be called and a sepulchral voice will be heard "dropped by the wayside; choked to death on Democratic crow."⁷⁵

A few days later the editors of the Weekly Pelican submitted to Republicans a plan of procedures which, if followed, would forever relieve them of "sell-out, boodle-hunting, self-seeking nondescripts." This plan embodied expulsion of all Republicans who aided the election of any Democrat, nomination of "true men" for office instead of "sell-outs," and nomination of another ticket if the boodle-hunters" captured a convention or committee.⁷⁶

On April 23, 1887, this newspaper revealed further

⁷⁵ New Orleans Weekly Pelican, April 9, May 28, 1887.

⁷⁶ Ibid., April 16, 1887.

details of Charles A. Roxborough's duplicity in the election. The Darrall tickets were turned over to Gay's supporters by Roxborough. Gay's supporters then delivered them to the "great would-be Negro King and political demagogue of Iberville Parish, Theophile T. Allain." Allain rented a room in which he burned the Republican tickets. Roxborough, being United States Supervisor of the election, had no right to count the votes. However he approached the commissioners and told them that he would show them a new method of counting votes. This he did "by grabbing from the box five, ten, and twenty tickets at a time, saying five for Darrall, ten for Gay; ten for Darrall, twenty for Gay" until the whole contents of the box were exhausted. The Weekly Pelican added that all good Republicans were so enraged by such barefaced fraud that a mob made for Roxborough and would have lynched him, had it not been for his skinny legs, which saved him when he ran into a beer saloon and got behind a lot of empty beer kegs while the proprietor closed the door to withhold the mob.⁷⁷ To show their contempt for Allain and Roxborough, Negroes of the city of Plaquemine prepared effigies of these Negroes, placed banners on them inscribed "Roxborough the Ballot Box Thief" and "Allain the Negro Trader," suspended the effigies from a pole, paraded through the streets by torchlight, and

⁷⁷ Ibid., April 23, 1887.

ceremoniously tossed the effigies into the Mississippi River. Concerning their expulsion from the Republican Party, the Weekly Pelican stated:

They have been expelled, driven out of the Republican Party, disgraced. No longer can they go to Democratic Headquarters and say "I have so many votes, what will you give me for them?" Their day of selling Republicans is over. No more will they be heard on the stump lustily shouting for a bid.⁷⁸

Although completely futile in their efforts, Republicans tried to outdo Bourbons in buying and selling votes. Andrew Hero, Jr., Republican candidate in the Second Congressional District, received a letter from Paul Grima, Republican campaign manager in St. James Parish, which is quoted in part:

I know that Lagan [Hero's Democratic opponent] is for making the election with money. His delegation two years ago asked five thousand dollars for the fourth district of the city only to beat Houston. [W. T. Houston, Democratic candidate for congress in 1884]. As to S. James, my exprience authorizes me to say that not one dollar of the campaign funds that may reach old Bolding, who always handles the funds, shall be appropriated wrongly. Bear in your mind that he is your strongest and surest card bearer.⁷⁹

Andrew Hero received a letter labeled "private" from a man at Gretna named Nesom, stating three propositions, the carrying out of which he considered essential to Hero's success in the election. He stated the propositions as follows:

⁷⁸ Ibid., April 27-28, 1887.

⁷⁹ October 4, 1886, Andrew Hero Papers, Department of Archives, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

First, I want you to see Aaron Fisher and satisfy him financially, so as to enlist him in your cause. He can bring out more voters on this side of the river than any other man. Second, I want you to see that the money which will be thrown away in bar-rooms for election purposes, so far as Gretna is concerned, is spent in the only Republican bar-room of which I am owner, instead of spending it as Martin did with Snyder and other Democrats. I hope when this election is over, those gentlemen will not have the pleasure of laughing at me and saying that Republican candidates do not seem to recognize Republican bar-rooms. Third, I want you to furnish C. J. Braud with twenty dollars, so he can attend your interests at Grand Island and Chennier on election day. He can be deputized as Sheriff. For in a close contest, Besancon and Styles will falsify the returns from these boxes. It is more to watch them than the number of votes he will be able to give that he should be sent.⁸⁰

The time spent by Republicans in "watching" was wasted, for the Democratic candidate, M. D. Lagan, was elected. The Bourbons were too strong and the Republicans too weak to elect a "Hero."⁸¹

The gubernatorial election of 1888 was a contest between two ex-governors, Louisiana's soldier-statesman, Francis T. Nicholls, and the notorious Carpetbagger, Henry Clay Warmoth. Because of the persons competing, the contest was a bitter one. The white Fusionists, Reformers, and Independents (politically and economically oppressed by the Bourbons) grew in numbers and added to the general confusion

⁸⁰October 4, 1886, Andrew Hero Papers, Department of Archives, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

⁸¹New Orleans Weekly Pelican, December 4, 1886.

by competing with Bourbons and white Republicans for Negro votes.

In the delta parishes the Independents made overtures to Negro voters. Negro Republicans were leery of "fusionist" overtures. J. D. Tompkins, Republican candidate for Clerk of Court in East Carroll Parish, addressed this warning to Negro voters:

I write this article to inform every colored man who is entitled to vote of a movement that is going on for the purpose of buying or defrauding you out of your right at the ballot box. Proof that it is to mislead you and handle you like a lot of sheep is that they begin the campaign a year before the election takes place, knowing that it will take a long time to impress upon your minds that your interest is considered one moment! My colored friends, I say to you that you have suffered enough at the hands of such white men as are forming a combination to buy and sell you; and it is high time you were taking some steps to prevent your rights being put on the auction block and sold to speculating white men. The only hope they have is to buy as many darkies as they can and stuff ballot boxes for the balance. Should any of you want to know my reason for saying it is a political trap to catch the colored vote--they call it "fusion"; on account of your ignorance they think it will take the place of the red rag such as men used to fool your forefathers into slavery with.⁸²

In spite of talk of "fusion" there was more "confusion." The election of delegates to the Democratic state convention was a contest for Negro votes. Bourbons charged that Acadia Parish was bought by the McEnery supporters and

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Lake Providence East Carroll Democrat, July 23,
1887.

that Negroes voted in the primaries.⁸³ Republican sources stated that the Bourbons from the black parishes secured a preponderance of delegates at the Democratic convention through control of Negro votes. The delegates to state conventions were apportioned on the basis of votes cast in previous elections. The swamp, bayou, and black parishes in making appointments counted the Negro vote, most of which was never actually cast. This made it possible for the Bourbons of the black parishes to control the "white" or "hill" parishes in the matter of delegates.⁸⁴

The candidates themselves stumped the state and made speeches. S. D. McEnery, speaking at New Orleans on December 22, 1887, stated relative to fraudulent voting:

I will see an honest and fair election, that every vote cast is counted, and that no substitution of ballots is practiced, but that the voice of all the voters in the state as deposited in the ballot box shall find expression and receive recognition, and that the officers elected shall be commissioned.⁸⁵

F. T. Nicholls, speaking at a large political rally in the eighth ward of New Orleans, stated:

⁸³ Tom Ellis to E. John Ellis, November 30, 1887, *Ellis Family Papers*, Department of Archives, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

⁸⁴ Lucia E. Daniel, "The Louisiana People's Party," The Louisiana Historical Quarterly, XXVI (1943), 1078.

⁸⁵ Henry C. Warmoth, War, Politics, and Reconstruction: Stormy Days in Louisiana (New York, 1930), 248-249.

If the supporters of Governor McEnery succeed, instead of one Tensas with 3800 alleged Democratic votes and only 400 white Democratic voters, giving that parish 19 delegates to the convention and overruling a dozen white parishes, then there will be five or ten Tensas Parishes made, and the city [New Orleans] and white parishes will be thus controlled, until nothing short of a revolution could create a change.⁸⁶

The Democratic state convention met at Baton Rouge on January 10, 1888. The delegates were divided into McEnery and Nicholls factions. The breach bid fair to become dangerous. The Nicholls faction finally managed to exclude enough of the McEnery delegates from the black parishes to give them a majority over McEnery. The breach between the factions was healed and Nicholls won the nomination.⁸⁷

The Republican convention met in New Orleans on January 3, 1888 and nominated Henry C. Warmoth for governor and Andrew Hero, Jr. as his running mate.

Many prominent Democrats supported Nicholls and stumped the state in his behalf. Such a person was Senator Randal Gibson, who in a speech at Monroe, stated:

When Nicholls' government was installed in 1877 there was an end to strife, and peace shed its divine light over black and white. . . . I regard these contentions about the danger of Africanization of this state as futile. . . . My God, is there a man in the limits of Louisiana who would accuse this maimed veteran in his old age of attempting to give a lie to every aspiration of his life . . . the substitution of Democratic for

⁸⁶
Ibid.

⁸⁷
Ibid., 250.

Republican government?⁸⁸

The factionalism in the Democratic Party was also revealed in a letter of United States Congressman E. John Ellis to his brother:

Nicholls' friends should distinctly let it be known that he is a candidate for governor and not a bridge for the convenience of Senatorial candidates. I am sorry that Gibson has tied himself on to Nicholls as a tin can is tied to a dog's tail. The dog must furnish all the muscle and running capacity, while the can makes all the rattling and noise, knowing that if the string don't break it will get there all the same. If he [Nicholls] is beaten, it will be by the dead weight of such fellows as Mr. Gibson.⁸⁹

The Reformers who were very active in this gubernatorial campaign, wished to remain Democrats, but wanted to reform the Bourbons and their New Orleans Ring supporters. They felt that their "idol," Nicholls, would be able to accomplish this, with all Democratic factions united to support him. The Reformers urged Negroes throughout the state to register properly in order to make certain that their votes would count. These urgings resulted in the registration of 11,193 Negroes in Orleans Parish, a figure which exceeded the previous total by 157. The Bourbons lightly dismissed the increased Negro registration and denounced the

⁸⁸ Randall L. Gibson Speech, 1888, Department of Archives, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

⁸⁹ E. John Ellis to Tom Ellis, August 9, 1887, Ellis Family Papers, Department of Archives, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

alarmists among their number for fearing defeat as a result of the increase even if many Negroes voted Republican. "The public will conclude that the addition of 157 Negroes to the registration is scarcely sufficient cause for consigning New Orleans to ruin and decay," stated the Bourbons.⁹⁰

The nomination of Warmoth did much to solidify the ranks of the Democrats, for Warmoth symbolized Negro government to most of the whites of the state. A Democratic mass meeting was held at Artillery Hall in New Orleans on March 8, 1888 to map out details of the campaign. The Times-Democrat, which had formerly sponsored McEnery against Nicholls, stated that this meeting showed a party united against the assaults of Warmoth and "his horde of Negroes." This paper predicted that the entire membership of the Democratic Party would "march to the polls on election day and cast their votes for Caucasian civilization and white supremacy."⁹⁰ The editor of the Baton Rouge Daily Advocate wrote on February 6, 1888:

Warmoth intends to Africanize our state. The Negroes regard him a demi-God. The time has come to give Mr. Warmoth and his friends to understand that Louisiana will never again be controlled by any other race than the whites. The time for action has come. It must be publically proclaimed that they will not be permitted to carry on their campaign. Such a declaration, sternly made, might bring them to their senses."

⁹⁰ New Orleans Times-Democrat, March 12, April 13, 1888.

⁹¹ Ibid., March 9, 1888.

Warmoth was exceedingly bitter in his criticism of Democratic campaign dealings. He maintained that after it became clear to Nicholls and his campaign manager, Judge Edward Douglas White, that he, Warmoth, would win if his Negro supporters were permitted to vote for him, the Nicholls faction resorted to bloodshed and violence. Nicholls, White, and other Democrats at their New Orleans headquarters, decided to plead with Governor McEnery for his support. Captain Richard Sinnot was sent to Baton Rouge to induce Governor McEnery to come to New Orleans to assist in mapping out the campaign. McEnery was agreeable. He met with Democratic big-wigs for dinner in a private dining room at Moreau's Restaurant. Good food, strong whisky, and cigars contributed to the making of a bargain. "McEnery was assured of an appointment to the Supreme Court of the State for 12 years. He in turn promised to see that every ballot box should be stuffed to the limit in favor of Governor Nicholls and his ticket," concluded Warmoth in his accusations against his opponents.⁹²

A few days after this "honeymoon feast" of the Democrats, Governor McEnery allegedly sent a form letter to all election officials in the state which instructed them:

Suspend the law until after the election and see to

⁹² Henry C. Warmoth, War, Politics, and Reconstruction: Stormy Days in Louisiana, (New York, 1930), 252.

it that your parish returns a large Democratic majority. Warmoth is developing a very dangerous strength in the Southern parishes which must be overcome with a large Democratic majority in the parishes north of Red River. You are expected to do your full duty in your parish.⁹³

McEnery stumped the state for Nicholls, his main theme being the danger of Negro government if Warmoth should be elected. Speaking at New Orleans McEnery said: "Is there danger of the Negro again getting possession of the government? Yes, and it is imminent Warmoth is the central figure of the period of Negro domination. He is their idol --the demigod of the uneducated Negro, who looks on Warmoth as the Moses to lead him to the Promised Land."⁹⁴ At Natchitoches Governor McEnery stated: "If Warmoth is elected, we shall have the Africanization of the State, and before I will consent to such a calamity, I will wrap the state in Revolution, and I now proclaim that I suspend the law until the danger is over from the Arkansas Line to the Gulf of Mexico."⁹⁵ Captain William Jack, present at the Natchitoches speech, remarked, "You have heard the Governor declare that he suspends the law from the Arkansas Line to the Gulf. All you have to do is to follow his advice and

⁹³ Ibid., 256; Henry C. Warmoth, A Brief History of Elections in the State of Louisiana, 1876-1896 (Washington, 1911), 10.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 255.

⁹⁵ Ibid..

victory will perch on our banners."⁹⁶ At Shreveport McEnery told the Bourbons: "North Louisiana will have to save this state from disgrace. If you permit the Negroes to organize, you will have to break it by power, and go right now and break it in its incipiency. It is time we should say that the law shall be silent, and uphold our liberties at all hazards."⁹⁷

It was during this election that the "Ouachita Plan" was devised by Governor S. D. McEnery, a native son of Ouachita Parish. Warmoth described the plan as one which prevented Negroes from registering or voting, but always counted them for the Democratic ticket. The Bourbons had used a modification of this plan since the beginning of the decade of the 1880's. Because it was feared that Negroes would support Warmoth in 1888, Bourbons deemed it advisable simply to count the Negroes of voting age throughout the state and return them for the Democratic ticket.

Violence occurred in Ouachita Parish. William Adams, an ardent Negro supporter of Warmoth, was shot on a quiet Sabbath morning by persons concealed in the courthouse at Monroe. The wounded Negro managed to get to his home. Two men came there and urged him to accompany them to the courthouse where he was told that he would be safe from his

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ H. C. Warmoth, A Brief History of Elections in the State of Louisiana, 1876-1896, (Washington, 1911), 11.

political enemies. Believing the men to be sincere, Adams went with them to the courthouse which he "had fairly entered when his throat was cut from ear to ear and his body was hauled out that night and thrown in a bayou. When the bayou went dry and his body was exposed, the murderers threw it in the Ouachita River."⁹⁸ There was no punishment for the murder, since Governor McEnery had suspended the law until after the election.⁹⁹

Warmoth presumed that Negroes in Tensas Parish would vote for him. When he went to Tensas to campaign, he called upon his politician friend of Reconstruction days, C. C. Cordill. He asked Cordill what vote he could count on from Tensas in the coming election. Cordill replied: "Tensas has no complaint against you, but we have grave cause to complain of the Negroes who dictated things, and we do not think we can afford to let another Republican be elected as governor of the state, and we do not believe that you will receive a single vote in this parish." Cordill added that it had been decided to count Tensas Parish for General Nicholls "no matter what the vote should be."¹⁰⁰

Even before the election the New Orleans Times-Democrat on April 14, 1888, stated:

⁹⁸ Ibid., 13.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Henry C. Warmoth, War, Politics, and Reconstruction: Stormy Days in Louisiana (New York, 1930), 255.

The state campaign is virtually over. Warmoth has found it impossible to revive the Republican Party in North Louisiana. He has found feuds and quarrels in its ranks and returns disheartened and discomforted to New Orleans. In this month the Republicans have drawn out of the canvass in the largest Negro parishes. That portion of the state north of Red River promises the Democratic Party 30,000 majority.

When the election was over and the votes counted, the entire Democratic ticket won by an 85,000 majority. The Republicans had made the most vigorous campaign since 1876, but in the midst of the campaign, the Negroes deserted by the hundreds and finally broke into a general rout.¹⁰¹ Governor McEnery in justification of his "Ouachita Plan" stated:

It is a fact that cannot be altered, that the Negro is a voter, and however much we may regard his enfranchisement, without qualifications, as one of the great mistakes of government, it cannot be changed. His legal status as a voter is fixed; his legal disfranchisement is impossible, but until he thoroughly understands all relations of citizenship and demonstrates his equal capacity with whites to govern, he ought to be guided by the superior intelligence and morality of the white race.¹⁰²

Humiliated in his defeat, Warmoth said, "Judge White and Governor McEnery would not allow the Negroes to vote for me, but they counted them by the thousands for Governor Nicholls. May good God Almighty have mercy on their souls!"¹⁰³

¹⁰¹ New Orleans Times-Democrat, April 19, 1888.

¹⁰² Henry C. Warmoth, War, Politics, and Reconstruction: Stormy Days in Louisiana (New York, 1930), 259.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

The Baton Rouge Daily Advocate said of the Nicholls-Warmoth gubernatorial contest: "In view of the heavy political campaigning this year there has been a perceptible advance in the price of whisky."¹⁰⁴

The decade of the 1880's has been referred to as a "period of experimentation in Negro disfranchisement." The Bourbons had made use of every conceivable devise, both legal and extra-legal.¹⁰⁵ Most Bourbons were in complete agreement with the comment, on February 1, 1890, of the editor of the Carroll Democrat in his response to a charge published in the Madison, Indiana, Courier of political dishonesty by Southern states in retaining representation in Congress based on the Negro vote "while steadfastly refusing to let that vote be counted." "Bless your unsophisticated Hoosier soul," commented the editor of the Democrat, "the 'Negro vote' as you call it is regularly counted at every election, and don't you forget it."

As the decade of "Democratic dictatorship" drew to a close, an unidentified Negro preacher gave this advice to his race:

The problem has but one solution. The Negro must come out of politics. There is nothing in politics but death. . . . Empowered with the ballot too soon,

¹⁰⁴ Baton Rouge Daily Advocate, January 27, 1888.

¹⁰⁵ V. O. Key, Politics, Parties, and Pressure Groups, (New York, 1953), 605.

he has almost worked his ruin. The constant clamors of the leaders of the race for political power fills the white man with apprehension of Negro rule. They [the whites] will not submit to Negro rule. The Negro must work. You who are dependent upon these white people for employment had better make friends with them. If not, they will . . . hurl us out, off, and under. [We] must give up politics or get killed off.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁶Opelousas Courier, March 29, 1890.

CHAPTER V

COLLAPSE OF THE DEMOCRATIC PATTERN OF POLITICS, 1890-1896

The Negro was not yet to be "killed off" politically. During the years 1890-1896 he was brought into the political limelight in a manner reminiscent of Reconstruction days. Two big issues accounted for the acceleration of Negro voting at this time--the Louisiana Lottery and the rebellion of the hill farmers. (A third issue--the Lily White movement--played an important part in destroying the Democratic pattern of politics, but at the same time eliminated the Negro from political power). The lottery fight within the Democratic Party and the rebellion of the hill farmers throughout the state enabled Negro voters to hold the balance of political power and to force the whites to stoop to unprecedented depths of corruption to control their votes. The concurrent nature of these two issues in their initial stages added to the general confusion for both races.

The lottery issue became predominant in 1890 when an amendment dealing with renewal of its charter was proposed. When the legislature met in 1890, the Lottery Company offered to pay the state of Louisiana \$1,250,000 for the privilege of running a lottery in New Orleans, the money to be used for schools, levees, charitable associations, and Confederate

veterans.¹ Almost immediately Pro-lottery and Anti-lottery factions emerged. Politicians made capital out of the issue. Governor Nicholls was the champion of the Anti-lottery faction. The "antis" claimed that the "pros" were ready to go to the polls on the issue because bribery could determine the results. They described the lottery as "a great octopus which had obtained a strangle hold on our fair State to such an extent that even the strong arm of the government was impeded by its powerful influence."² They claimed that the passage of the lottery amendment by the legislature would mean the virtual submission of that vital question to the decision of the Negro voters of the state.³ "Antis" further testified that "the Lottery proposed to go into every parish in the state and attempt to dominate even parish politics."⁴

When in 1890 Governor Nicholls signed the Separate Car Bill making the Jim Crow law a reality in Louisiana, Negro voters charged its passage was retaliation against the

¹ Washington Bee, January 2, 1892.

² Berthold C. Alwes, "The History of the Louisiana State Lottery Company," The Louisiana Historical Quarterly, IV, (1944), 1064.

³ Anti-lottery Circular, May, 1890, Bachelor Papers, Department of Archives, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

⁴ Berthold C. Alwes, "The History of the Louisiana State Lottery Company," The Louisiana Historical Quarterly, IV (1944), 1064.

Negro members of the legislature who had voted for the lottery bill. Henry Demas, Negro Senator, pleaded with white Senators not to pass the Separate Car Bill, but "met with the response from not a few that, as the colored man had sided with the lottery bill, passage of the Separate Car measure would be urgently pushed by way of retaliation."⁵

A New Orleans newspaper stated:

The Governor in signing the bill wants to stand in harmony with his party. The Democrats act on the assumption that the Negro has no rights. The logic of the situation makes us believe that the lottery Democrats placed themselves under obligations to the colored Representatives to prevent the passage of class legislation, but that after having obtained what they wanted, they deliberately and meanly betrayed those that had served them faithfully to the end. While the colored Representatives could have made an ultimatum of their vote, it does not relieve the Morris [lottery] minions of the bad name they earned by their black rank ingratitude, and want of good faith. [The Negroes] will return a tooth for a tooth and an eye for an eye. . . .⁶

The pro-lottery faction maintained that the lottery was in politics for defensive purposes only, and that the opponents were using the issue as "a gas bag to float its political organization."⁷ Each faction pretended to fear a return of Negro government unless the party rift was healed.

The New York Age on January 18, 1892 had this to say

⁵ New Orleans Crusader, July 19, 1890.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ New Orleans Daily Picayune, December 25, 1890.

about the Negro's political role in the Louisiana Lottery fight:

The Louisiana lottery is a scandal created and perpetuated by the "good white people" of the state. In the effort of the "bad white people" of the state to get rid of it, an issue has been created that is making politics of the state decidedly sulphuric. The "bad white people" who want to get rid of the lottery maintain that they would have no trouble in their pious work if it were not for the "Negro vote," the presumption being that this vote will be cast in favor of the lottery. The North states the situation as follows: Whether this confidence game shall be chartered depends upon the Negro vote. The best white element is opposed to the lottery and will fight to the death against it. Although the "Negro vote" should count, in the elections of the state, it does nothing of the sort; therefore the decision of the question at the polls cannot depend upon that vote. The white man insists that the issue should be settled by white votes, yet it is contended inside and outside of Louisiana that the issue depends on "Negro votes."

The campaigns and elections of 1892 were very exciting.

The result of the campaigns was of strategic importance as the Lottery Company involved millions of dollars annually. The Democratic Party was split wide open and the Negro vote became a purchasable commodity on the market, the price of which rose as the fight gained momentum. The lotteryites boasted of having \$6,000,000 to spend to carry the election of April, 1892.⁸

The Lake Providence Carroll Banner on October 21, 1891 expressed its sentiments upon the lotteryites deception of

⁸ New Orleans New Delta, May 27, 1891, quoting letter purported to have been written by T. A. Marshall to J. S. Kelly of Winnfield.

Negro voters in these words:

Since John A. Morris [head of Louisiana Lottery Company] has gone into the barbecue business, the price of cotton picking in North Louisiana has gone up a dollar a hundred. The model suffragan has no need to risk his health in the hot sun so long as the free grub is floating around. We wager a bet that, if his free beef and beer raised the price of cotton picking up a dollar a hundred in East Carroll Parish, some of our lottery planters would be red hot antis.

State Senator Murphy J. Foster made the first speech in the Senate against accepting the Lottery Company's offer. With this speech, Foster won attention as an anti-lottery leader. The editor of the Carroll Banner stated on January 23, 1892:

We do not know exactly what the Foster faction intends doing. It is said that the leaders of that side propose to turn the state over to the Republicans, to receive in turn, their support. There is danger of Republicans, especially as the ranks of the Democratic Party are divided. It is necessary that their actions be closely watched by Democrats; for should the administration take the campaign in charge and bring together the entire Negro votes of the state, we may look for stormy days ahead of us. The report of the Secretary of State is real cause for danger. There were according to this report, 126,884 white and 127,923 colored votes at the last election, a colored majority of 1039.

The lottery proponents, led by ex-Governor S. D. McEnery, claimed that they favored white primaries to decide the question. The "antis" opposed this mode of settlement, claiming that the holding of the primary on the day of the election of delegates to the State Nominating Convention

would open chances for frauds.⁹ The "pros" suggested white primaries several times to the "antis," but they refused. The "pros" stated that a white primary would prevent any chance of division or disunion in the ranks of the whites. Stated the editor of the Opelousas Courier in July of 1890: "Had the friends of the Lottery Bill had their way, the question would have been disposed of at an early date by a white primary." "If we get the lottery out of the way, what are we going to fight Sam D. McEnery with? There was the nigger in the woodpile. With the lottery question out of the way, McEnery would walk to a triumphant and almost unanimous nomination. That was a thing they could not have at the price of the return of the Republican Party to power," stated the Bourbons quoting the "antis."¹⁰

The election of delegates to the Democratic Nominating Convention provoked charges and counter-charges of controlling Negro votes. The "pros" were accused of brow-beating and intimidating Negro voters to keep them from the polls. It was further charged that "repeating" was openly conducted. Two Negro Republicans, named Cage and Guichard, allegedly received \$15,000 of lottery money as a bribe for

⁹New Orleans Times-Democrat, October 15, 1891; Lake Providence Carroll Democrat, January 9, 1892.

¹⁰Newspaper clipping, no date, Peytavin Scrapbook, Peytavin Papers, Department of Archives, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

their votes. The New Orleans Republican was sued by these Negroes for criminal libel for publicizing the bribes and calling these Negroes "Lottery thieves."¹¹ Bribery in a unique form was charged by the "antis." The reverse side of the tickets upon which the names of lottery candidates were printed looked so much like five dollar bills that one could not tell whether or not a voter handed a ticket or a bribe.¹² Henry McCall wrote W. P. Miles an account of the cost to the planters of Ascension Parish of buying Negro voters during this election. The Democratic Executive Committee of Ascension Parish, wrote McCall, had incurred a debt of \$3100 "to buy votes in Donaldsonville, Smoke Bend, Darrow & other plantations."¹³ McCall complained bitterly about this expense. The debt had to be liquidated by assessing each planter and office holder in the parish from \$100 to \$400. The "antis" were accused of similar outrages in their efforts to control Negro votes.

When the nominating convention assembled, the "antis" demanded an anti-lottery plank in the party platform. The "pros" refused. The "antis" bolted the party, reassembled

¹¹Lake Providence Carroll Democrat, February 6, 1892.

¹²New Orleans Times-Democrat, November 12, 1891.

¹³Henry McCall to W. P. Miles, May 4, 1892, William Porcher Miles Papers, cited in P. D. Uzee, "Republican Politics in Louisiana, 1877-1900," Ph.D. dissertation, Louisiana State University (1950), 133.

in the Hall of the House of Representatives, and nominated Murphy J. Foster for gubernatorial candidate.

The pro-lottery Bourbons were indignant at the bolt. "The policy of the men whom M. J. Foster, Don Caffery, and Stubbs have led out of the Democratic Party is to have all or ruin everything. But the people of Louisiana will make it their business to see that the bolters ruin nothing and get nothing," stated the editor of the Carroll Democrat on December 26, 1891. This same publication expressed further indignation in these lines:

That the Republican Party in this state should periodically split is not surprising, seeing how numerically strong the colored disturbing element is in their midst; but that the white Democracy, with its pretentious intelligence and great superiority should go to pieces on the eve of an important campaign, is an enigma that puzzles the most experienced in the Democratic ranks. The number of bright Democratic stars was increasing too rapidly to admit of their all shining in the contracted hemisphere of the party limits afforded in Louisiana; hence the "Murphy Foster Baton Rouge bolt" with all its bitter animosities.¹⁴

Other pro-lottery newspapers expressed their disgust with the situation in these terms:

The treason of the Fosterites gives the Republicans a chance and in the campaign now about to open the real danger that the Democratic Party faces is nigger rule, and so far as the antifaction is concerned it will not be anything more than a tail to the Republican kite. Mr. Foster and his party rejected white primaries and appealed to the Negro votes for a verdict. They will get it--in the neck--if the signs of the times mean anything. Murphy J. Foster's remedy

¹⁴January 30, 1892.

for the lottery will remove him from politics and leave the lottery as a legacy of his ambitious folly.¹⁵

Meanwhile the so-called "regular" convention nominated S. D. McEnery for governor. Both lottery and anti-lottery factions claimed to be the regular Democratic organization and each called the other the "rump."¹⁶

Factionalism was not limited to the Democrats. The Republicans themselves split on the lottery issue. The lottery Republicans, led by William P. Kellogg, put out a ticket headed by A. H. Leonard of Caddo Parish. Leonard was said to have quite a strong following in several sections of North Louisiana, particularly in Caddo, in which parish the able Negro, William Harper, controlled the Negro voters.¹⁷ The anti-lottery Republicans, led by H. C. Warmoth, headed their ticket with John A. Breaux. Republicans believed that the Democratic Party was so weakened by the lottery fight that they would win the election. The New Orleans Item, on January 15, 1892, quoted from the New Era (a Negro newspaper) the following article threatening

¹⁵ Lake Providence Carroll Banner, January 30, 1892.

¹⁶ Berthold C. Alwes, "The History of the Louisiana State Lottery Company," The Louisiana Historical Quarterly, IV (1944), 1090.

¹⁷ Lucia E. Daniel, "The Louisiana People's Party," The Louisiana Historical Quarterly, XXVI (1943), 1082.

dire results from Republican dissension:

The Republicans throughout the state realize the excellent opportunity presented to redeem the state from the clutches of the robber hordes that have so miserably clutched its affairs for fifteen years under the name of Democracy and they will not treat lightly those Republicans who dare endeavor to create division in our ranks, or who refuse to be amenable to party discipline. This election is an important one, and the chances of the party have not been so good since 1876; but if a few thousand Republicans should neglect to register, and thus lose their votes, it might seriously jeopardize the success of the ticket. Let no Republican, then, fail to qualify himself at once, so that he can help boost his party into power.

There was yet another candidate to join the ranks of pro-lottery and anti-lottery Democratic and Republican Parties. The People's Party held a nominating convention at Alexandria on February 1, 1892. White farmers were outstanding among the delegates. However twenty-four Negro delegates attended, prominent among whom was C. A. Roxborough of Iberia Parish.¹⁸ This body nominated R. L. Tannehill of Winn Parish for governor and placed a full slate of candidates in the field. The Comrade, organ of the People's Party published at Winnfield, stated: "With these two factions waging war one with the other in the 'father's house,'" with the probability of the Republicans putting out a State ticket, the outlook for the new-born babe in this State, the People's Party, to be ultimately crowned victor in this campaign is quite flattering indeed."¹⁹

¹⁸ Ibid., 1080.

¹⁹ Cited in New Orleans Times-Democrat, January 4, 1892.

While yet convened in its first meeting, the Louisiana People's Party also adopted the platform of the National Farmers Alliance, drafted at Ocala, Florida. It called upon voters of the state who were suffering from the effects of Bourbon legislation to throw off the party shackles that had bound them for so many years and to reassert their political freedom by voting for men from their own ranks whose interests demanded the legislative reforms that they advocated.

Bourbon Democrats viewed the People's Party with distrust and disfavor. They described the organization as "a plot to pave the way for Republican victory in 1892, by breaking the Solid South." Warned the editor of the Opelousas Courier on December 20, 1890: "Our farmers should ponder over it as we believe they will do, and emphatically refuse to have anything to do with it. Their future depends upon a united Democratic Party, and if they are led from allegiance to the Democratic Party, the day is sure to come when they will be forced to chew the cud of bitter reflection."

As the lottery fight became more bitter, the scramble for Negro votes was accelerated. The Bourbons expressed their alarm in an article in the Opelousas Courier entitled "Time to Call a Halt." This article stated:

There is on foot here to organize this evening, not a white anti-lottery league, not a Democratic anti-lottery league, but a mongrel anti-lottery concern which "all voters without regard to race or politics" are invited to join. We are threatened with

imminent danger. Persons high in positions in the Democratic Party manifest an eager desire to array the colored race against their white brethren, only to rouse and agitate. Are the Anti-lotteryites determined to disrupt the Democratic Party? We call upon conservative Democrats of both sides of the lottery question to frown down any mongrel organization "without regard to race or politics." The safety and integrity of the Democratic Party demands it. . . . We say to all, differ if you please on the lottery question. Vote as you please, but stop and go no further. We want the Democratic Party united.²⁰

The organization of Negro voters into anti-lottery clubs became quite common throughout the state. One such club in Lincoln Parish had 25 black, to 28 white, members. In Concordia Parish an anti-lottery club passed a resolution soliciting the cooperation of all good colored citizens to aid in defeating the Lottery Bill. "And so endeth the Anti-lottery white primary project of the Nicholls Morality combination," commented the Lake Providence Carroll Democrat.²¹

The critical state of the Democratic Party in 1892 led opposing factions, after several futile attempts, to a compromise in the matter of nominations. Both factions agreed to settle their differences through the means of a white primary. The ticket receiving the highest number of votes was to be declared the ticket of the Democratic Party.²² The arrival at such a solution was explained by the Carroll Democrat on February 21, 1892 in these terms:

²⁰July 19, 26, 1890.

²¹October 3, 1891.

²²New Orleans Times-Democrat, February 21, 1892.

The Regulars, the true Democrats, under the leadership of McEnery, had two powerful incentives in forcing the Foster bolting faction to submit to the arbitration of white Democratic primaries. The first was to eliminate the nigger from any party wrangles; the second was to emasculate the power for fraud which F. Tiddlewinks Nicholls was preparing to exercise at the general election.

The primary was held on March 22, 1892. The vote was so close that for several days both McEnery and Foster claimed victory. The result was declared to be 36,342 for McEnery and 34,615 for Foster. However a Committee of Seven designated to recount and examine the returns rendered the final result of the primary election--McEnery 43,053, Foster 43,602--thus declaring Foster the Democratic nominee by a majority of 549 votes.²³

The People's (or Populist) Party was pleasantly excited over the decision of the Committee. In a broadside issued a few days prior to the general election the Populists extended "many thanks to the Committee of Seven for the full and complete view they have afforded us of the hideous rottenness so long concealed by the bepraised and be-painted exterior of the Democratic Party."²⁴

The "pros" charged with these indignant words that the Fosterites had disrupted the Democracy:

²³Ibid., March 28, April 6, 1892.

²⁴Copy of Populist broadside, April 9, 1892, Ellis Family Papers, Department of Archives, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

The saintly gang, headed by Murphy Foster, showed their hand in the St. Mary primary elections in a most shameful manner. . . . We have not had the St. Mary Plan of carrying elections since the Republicans went out of power. The Democrats would not stand it then and will not stand it now. . . . Made furious by the exposure of their attempt to rob McEnery of votes in St. Mary, Foster and his side partner, Don Caffery, have branded as lies the reports regarding their highhanded methods of controlling the election and defeating the will of the people.²⁵

A few days before the gubernatorial election on April 19, Foster accepted support from Warmoth and his Negro followers. Warmoth instigated the combination, since he desired very much to defeat his old enemy, S. D. McEnery. Judge Tom Ellis of Livingston Parish wrote in a letter to his brother:

Warmoth has passed the word to his people to work for Foster and to vote for Breaux only when they cannot cast it for Foster. There is great danger. Tell our people this, urge them to take hold of the colored vote and control it for the right or suppress it. It is life or death with the white people now. No use to play the dummy now. See our trusted men and put them up to the fighting point. Tell them to take counsel, and act firmly and boldly to carry it at all hazards. Close, quiet, bold work and we win.²⁶

The East Carroll Democrat on April 16, 1892 had this to say of the Foster-Warmoth combine:

Warmoth advised his Republicans to vote for Foster to defeat McEnery. He has not forgotten the great campaign McEnery made for Nicholls in 1888 which snowed

²⁵Opelousas Courier, December 5, 1891.

²⁶Tom Ellis to Steve Ellis, April 8, 1892, Ellis Family Papers, Department of Archives, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

him under in his efforts to be governor of Louisiana. He now joins hands with the grateful Nicholls, Foster, and others, and they are trying to pay McEnery back, but Fraudulency Foster won't win even with Warmoth's help.

In the same edition this newspaper expressed an opinion that McEnery would win the election with this statement: "The cotton parishes are largely controlled politically by the farmers. The [Farmers'] Union men are openly going over to the People's Party and will vote for 'Brother Tannehill' for governor."

The election held on April 19 was a victory for the anti-lottery faction. Murphy Foster has a plurality of over 30,000 votes.²⁷

The McEnery faction was indignant and accused the Fosterites of fraud in counting Negro votes. The Carrcll Banner on April 30, 1892 stated:

The Fosterites now tell a very funny story to the effect that the Negroes in the parishes voted for Foster in large numbers. This is a very clever way to explain the enormous majorities obtained by their candidate, but the truth was that the Negroes voted for Leonard and Breaux and their votes were counted for Foster. The Negroes all over the state were permitted to vote freely, but the Fosterites, who had all the election machinery in their hands, attended to the counting and the results was Murphy J. Foster won by a majority so great as to be absolutely laughable.

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Lucia E. Daniel, "The Louisiana People's Party," The Louisiana Historical Quarterly, XXVI (1943), 1082.

The Bourbons charged that Foster headquarters announced before the election the way the vote should be counted and the total votes to be returned for him from certain parishes. They added that the result of the election could have been announced ten days before the election just as well as ten days afterward.²⁸

Lotteryites charged manipulation of Negro votes in Caddo Parish where Foster received 272 votes at the Greenwood poll (the surrounding locality being inhabited largely by Negroes) in the general election to only one vote for McEnery. They commented upon the returns from this poll with these remarks: "That one vote was perhaps a way the Fosterites had of complimenting the man they counted out. Last March in the primaries, when only white men were allowed to vote, the same Greenwood box gave Foster 29 and McEnery 12 [votes], and this fact is evidence to show that the box was stuffed until the sides bulged out."²⁹

Fosterites were accused of going into jails and soliciting the votes of Negro criminals therein to help them along. Bourbons commented that this "moral innovation" must certainly have been a "dernier resort."³⁰

A Negro newspaper, The Crusader, lambasted Negro

²⁸Lake Providence Carroll Banner, April 23, 1892.

²⁹Lake Providence Carroll Democrat, April 30, 1892.

³⁰Ibid., April 23, 1892.

politicians for campaigning for Foster. The Crusader declared that the notorious Negro politician and ex-candidate for the state legislature, Dave Young of Concordia Parish, should be barred from the Republican body for having betrayed it and given the Negro vote of that parish to Foster. It added that the "moral bargain" between Fosterites and the Negroes resulted in the purchase of 1236 votes for Foster in Concordia Parish on election day: "Tillou's tribe counted 1236 votes for Foster in Concordia. What a whopper!"³¹

Bourbon sources charged that Fosterites tampered with the ballot boxes in the Negro parishes of Ascension, St. Mary, St. Martin, and East Feliciana. Foster's majorities over McEnery in these parishes amounted to 32,663. It was revealed that in the rest of the state, which contained four-fifths of the white population and in which the ballot boxes were not tampered with, the results showed 38,693 votes for McEnery and only 38,507 votes for Foster. It was pointed out by the Bourbons that Governor Foster was elected by Negro votes and that Negro votes had enabled the Fosterites to secure control of the government and the election machinery.³²

³¹ Cited in Lake Providence Carroll Democrat, April 30, 1892.

³² Ibid.

Many Negroes contended that their Republican candidate, A. H. Leonard, had won and they demanded an investigation. Nothing came of their demand, however.³³

In the Louisiana legislative session of 1892, W. B. Boggs of the town of Plain Dealing in Bossier Parish, introduced a bill to prohibit the sale of lottery tickets after December 31, 1893. The bill prohibited lottery drawings, provided penalties for this offense, and repealed other laws in conflict with it. Both houses passed the bill with no dissenting votes. Governor Foster signed the bill, which became Act Number 25 of 1892.³⁴ This act ended the lottery issue in Louisiana politics.

One of the most disturbing events in post-Reconstruction politics in Louisiana was the fusion of the People's Party, or Populists, with the Republicans. This fusion took place during the presidential and congressional campaign of 1892. Fusion tickets were nothing new to the Bourbons. They recalled the "Independents," "Reformers," and "Fusionists" of the decade of the 1880's. These politicians had challenged Bourbon dictatorship, although the

³³Walter Prichard, unpublished Outline of Louisiana History, 200.

³⁴Louisiana House Journal, 1892, 52, 63, 121, 144, 472, 483, 562; Louisiana Senate Journal, 1892, 87, 95, 113, 131, 228, 251, 289; Acts of Louisiana, 1892, 35.

Bourbons had weathered political storms by using devious devices of purchase, fraud, economic pressure, and, when necessary, terror. Often, however, they were able to control the Negro vote by exploiting the sentimental theme of the Negro's loyalty to "his white folks" who understood him and his needs. By using the theme of "noblesse oblige," they had usually succeeded in marshalling the Negro vote against white malcontents. However, the Populist fusion with the Negroes in 1892 was more difficult to contend with than had been previous combinations of dissident whites, while the Negroes had finally realized that they were being used as pawns. By the 1890's the Negroes had begun to question what they had in common with Bourbon landlords, bankers, and merchants that would justify selling their votes to them when there were other buyers in the market. There was in the Populist approach none of the Bourbon pose of "paternalistic protector," but rather a limited type of equalitarianism, a condition created by "want and poverty, and the kinship of a common grievance and a common oppressor."³⁵ By fusion with the Negroes the Populists hoped to elect state officials and fight Bourbons with their own weapons. They appealed to the masses to have the manhood to assert their

³⁵ C. Vann Woodward, The Strange Career of Jim Crow (New York, 1955), 42.

rights of freedom and not to permit the scarecrow of Negro supremacy to drive them to "the wigwam of the Democratic boss." They urged the poor whites and the Negroes to rally to the People's Party standard and to elect the fusion ticket as a rebuff to "the Democratic Party in its strength and the Republican Party in its weakness."³⁶

The worried Bourbons concluded that Louisiana must be "redeemed again." Alarmed by the success that the Populists were enjoying in their appeal to the Negro voter, the Bourbons themselves raised the cry of "white supremacy" and enlisted the Negrophobe elements against the white Populists.³⁷ "Negro domination has been held as a lash over the white people for many years, but at last the intelligent white man has become determined to act for himself," countered a Populist editor. "He has decided to join forces with the People's Party. The Democratic Party plainly recognizes this pact and is now pleading with the Negro to save it. . . . How the might have fallen. The great party of Jefferson (?) uniting with the Negro to crush white supremacy rather than the white people shall rule independently of despoilers of our fair land," concluded the editor of the Louisiana Populist on August 24, 1894.

³⁶New Orleans Times-Democrat, October 21, 1892.

³⁷C. Vann Woodward, The Strange Career of Jim Crow, (New York, 1955), 61.

The Bourbons denounced the Populist-Republican fusion in the Fifth Congressional District of the state. The Warmoth-sponsored Republican candidate, J. B. Donnally, stepped down in favor of the Populist candidate, R. P. Webb. Bourbons alleged that eight Negroes met as the Republican District Executive Committee:

They embraced the occasion to become a nominating convention, with the result of paving the way, with the Populist gourd-like gathering in the state, to down the Democracy. This last trade of the Warmoth leaders is entirely too transparent for even the Negroes to entertain without feelings of indignation. Selling them off like so many cattle; "Webbing them," as it were, smacks too much of many years ago to be passively endured by the colored people. But the trade is closed. Donnally is down and the Democracy is Webb'd up.³⁸

The Ouachita Telegraph, published at Monroe, warned Negroes of Ouachita Parish that they must support C. J. Boatner and the candidates of the Democratic Party if they would "avoid the re-inauguration of the reign of terror of 1878." The Bourbons of East Carroll Parish stated that the Ouachita Plan and the predicted reign of terror in Ouachita Parish was "just, true, and proper," and would apply with equal force to the colored people of East Carroll if they supported the Populists. "They have been sold out to Webb, as far as the congressional question is concerned, by their leaders and it is about time they were coming over to their

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Lake Providence Banner Democrat, October 29, 1892.

true friends," added the Bourbons.³⁹

Boatner stated that his chances of election against the Populist candidate, R. P. Webb, lay in the Negro vote. "We can get their votes with money and whisky" allegedly stated Boatner, "and if we can't carry the district by that means, we will try the counting process," added Boatner.⁴⁰ In a rousing Democratic meeting at Rayville, in Richland Parish, candidate Boatner addressed Negro voters and in his speech "handled Populists' candidates without gloves" and forcibly appealed to Negroes to vote for him and other Bourbon Democrats.⁴¹

In the Fourth Congressional District, Populist candidate, L. J. Guice, held Negro political meetings throughout DeSoto Parish and won many converts to Populism. Bourbons stated that Guice's incendiary speeches were lost on the Negroes of the Fourth District, who were habitually "easy to control," and that N. C. Blanchard's majority could be estimated at 4000 votes.⁴² On the other hand Populists were quoted as saying: "There is no use in gainsaying it--Bourbonism is doomed. If they don't give us a fair count, they'll get the Force Bill or H-11."⁴³

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ New Orleans Daily Picayune, October 27, 1892.

⁴² Ibid., November 9, 1892.

⁴³ Lake Providence Banner Democrat, November 5, 1892.

In the presidential and gubernatorial elections of 1892 the Democrats carried Louisiana. Cleveland got a popular vote of 87,922 for president. The Democrats elected their entire congressional ticket also.⁴⁴ This election revealed that the Bourbons still controlled Louisiana government, but the agitation and the grievances of the agricultural classes had had an effect upon Louisiana politics. The membership of the Louisiana legislature in 1892 revealed this fact. Farmers and planters in this assembly numbered 62; while lawyers, merchants, and manufacturers combined numbered only 39.⁴⁵ One candidate elected to the Louisiana Senate in 1892 was a Populist, the Reverend B. F. Brian, a farmer of Grant Parish.⁴⁶ The depression of 1893 and the destitute conditions of Louisiana farmers for the next few years caused many of them to desert the Bourbon Democracy and to seek a panacea for their grievances with the new Populist Party. It was stated that four-and-a-half-cent cotton was making People's Party men daily.⁴⁷

⁴⁴Edward Stanwood, A History of the Presidency from 1788 to 1897 (New York, 1924), 517.

⁴⁵Lucia E. Daniel, "The Louisiana People's Party," The Louisiana Historical Quarterly, XXVI (1943), 1082.

⁴⁶Biennial Report of the Secretary of the State of Louisiana to the General Assembly, 1894 (Baton Rouge, 1896), 102.

⁴⁷Natchitoches Louisiana Populist, October 5, 1894.

It was generally acknowledged by Bourbons and Populists alike that Louisiana had poor election laws. Both white parties recognized the problem of the Negro vote. Negroes constituted a majority of the registered voters of the state. The lottery imbroglio in 1892 brought the Negro back into politics in a very vital way. Whereas in 1878 there were only 78,123 Negro voters in the state, in 1892 their number had risen to 128,150.⁴⁸ Negro supremacy again threatened the state. The division of the white electorate into Bourbon and Populist factions made it possible for ignorant Negro voters to be the balance of power. Both white factions conceded that some method must be found to restrict the Negro vote.⁴⁹ The state legislature in 1892 appointed a committee to investigate the situation and make recommendations. Facts and plans were to be formulated at the next session of the legislature.

The Populists insisted that the state legislature should enact a law providing for the Australian Ballot system. The editor of the Opelousas Courier urged:

It is fast becoming obvious that a qualified and limited suffrage is absolutely necessary in this state and that all elections should be held under the protection of the Australian System. The

⁴⁸ Report of the Secretary of the State of Louisiana, 1902 (Baton Rouge, 1902), 553.

⁴⁹ Lucia E. Daniel, "The Louisiana People's Party," The Louisiana Historical Quarterly, XXVI (1943), 1083.

General Assembly of the state knows that more than half of all constitutional voters of the state are colored men. They know, too, that our constitution declares them entitled to vote as freely as white men. Yet they find it expedient at every election to refuse the free exercise of the right and power to do so. When we see votes bought, voters intimidated, ballots counterfeited, ignorance taken advantage of, boxes stuffed, false counting and perjured returns taking place at every election all over the state, we say give us the Australian System.⁵⁰

The Louisiana legislature in 1894 passed an act to regulate elections. This act provided punishment for violation of election laws, by falsifying or altering returns, and for intimidation of voters and neglect of duty by election officials.⁵¹ Governor Foster at this session recommended an educational and property qualification for suffrage. His object was to strengthen the Democratic Party by disfranchising Negroes. In accordance with the governor's recommendation, the legislature adopted by joint resolution a proposed suffrage amendment requiring literacy and property for voters. (The literacy test was the ability to read the state Constitution; the property requirement was \$200 or more).⁵² This amendment was to be voted upon at the 1896 general election. The Bourbons deemed such requirement sufficient to eliminate the danger of the Negro vote, and at the same time to quiet the protests of the "wild-eyed red necks" from the hill

⁵⁰Opelousas Courier, April 30, 1892.

⁵¹Acts of Louisiana, 1894, No. 181; New Orleans Times-Democrat, July 13, 1894.

⁵²Ibid., Joint Resolution No. 200.

parishes. The Populists denounced the new election law. They charged that the Democrats controlled the state government and refused to give them a just election law by which their votes and those of their supporters could be honestly counted as cast. They continued to demand the Australian System.

The Populist Party was the only party in Louisiana that took a clear-cut stand upon any of the questions confronting the nation in 1894. The Populists put out a full slate of congressmen, James Leonard, Charles Callaghan, John Lightner, B. W. Bailey, Alex Benoit, and W. R. Wilson representing respectively the six Congressional Districts. Each Populist candidate stood squarely on a platform of free coinage of silver. An attempt was made by the Populists of the Fourth District to get the Democrats to submit the nomination of a candidate to a white primary, the candidate successful in the primary to be declared the "White Man's candidate" and the defeated candidate to be withdrawn.⁵³ The proposition was declined by the Democrats. "Of course, we deem it as settled as to which of the two parties wants white supremacy under a fair count," stated the editor of the Louisiana Populist. "It is now time for all those who have been frightened at the prospect of Negro domination to understand that it has always been one of the party lashes

⁵³Natchitoches Louisiana Populist, August 31, 1894.

of the Democratic Party, and the People's Party has shown a willingness to settle it in the only manner that it can be done and the Democrats of this district have prevented it," added the editor.⁵⁴

The Populists accused the Democrats of the Fourth District of presenting their candidate, H. W. Ogden as an avowed advocate of free coinage. The Populists pointed out that Odgen was known to have endorsed the Cleveland administration which was "diametrically opposed to free coinage of silver." This, the Populists defined as "straddling the fence" by Ogden in an attempt to be elected.⁵⁵

The Populists prided themselves with being the "poor man's party." As the editor of the Louisiana Populist stated:

There are enough poor men to run the government in their own interest, if they will but vote together, and let the rich men who run the two old parties get along as best they can without them. The old party bosses and the tools of the privileged classes may bluster and snort about the state as much as they please, but they will find out that the farmers are in dead earnest in their righteous warfare against plutocracy.⁵⁶

The activities of the Populists created great anxiety among the Bourbon Democrats as the congressional election approached. "Keep away from Populist meetings, and if you can't vote the Democratic ticket, for God's sake vote the Republican

⁵⁴ Ibid., September 7, 1894.

⁵⁵ Ibid., October 19, 1894.

⁵⁶ Ibid., October 19, November 9, 1894.

ticket," warned one prominent Democrat.⁵⁷

When the votes were counted each of the six Congressional Districts returned a Democrat to Congress. Election day was characterized by the customary Bourbon frauds. In St. Landry Parish three of the strongest Populist polls were not open because of political machination.⁵⁸ It was asserted that if frauds had not occurred in the Fourth District, Bailey would have won there instead of his Democratic opponent, Ogden. Populists alleged that in Red River Parish, their commissioners were barred from serving, poll books were tampered with, and Negroes were marched to the polls and voted for the Democrats under threats of intimidation.

Democratic sources charged the Populists in Natchitoches Parish with polling the Negro vote there. Populists replied in these terms:

One cause of the great Populist majority was that, for the first time since the war, Natchitoches Parish had a fair election and votes were counted as put in the ballot box. The Democratic Party claims the Negroes voted the Democratic ticket with great delight. It is a well-known fact that the Negro in Natchitoches Parish did not vote to any extent, not more than one hundred voted the Democratic ticket. The Democrats of Natchitoches Parish are a contented looking set. They have nothing to regret. No perjured consciences; no stolen majorities to account for; no miserable subterfuges like "Negro Democrats"; no outraged fellow-citizens seeking revenge, no dire forebodings that "those who live by the sword shall die by the sword." Truly, the Natchitoches Democrat must be a happy mortal compared

⁵⁷ Ibid., November 3, 1894.

⁵⁸ Ibid., July 12, 1894.

with his brethren.⁵⁹

Gross frauds were alleged in Rapides Parish. The Populists stated that in the years past it had been a "curiosity" to see a Negro vote the Democratic ticket. They derided the Democratic contention that in the preceding election Negroes had learned that the Democrats were the only true friends that the Negroes could depend on when in need of help. This, the Populists stated, was the "miserable excuse for 3000 votes piled up at less than half of the precincts in Rapides Parish, one precinct legally polling 876 votes in one box in twenty minutes." They caustically asked the Democrats to account for the extremely heavy vote at the precincts carried by Ogden compared with the extremely light vote at those carried by Bailey:

Was it because these enthusiastic precincts were on or near railroad lines and got a telegram about twelve o'clock to "open the throttle valves" or Ogden was gone "world without end"? Tell us all these easy riddles, and then resume your hypocritical twaddle about "ballot reform," "white supremacy," and the "general and needed relief!"⁶⁰

Elections in Caddo and DeSoto Parishes were accompanied by fraud to defeat the Populists. In Bossier Parish the Negroes outvoted the whites by a ratio of ten to one, coming to the "relief of the Democrats in maintaining white supremacy

⁵⁹ Ibid., November 16, 1894.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

with 2,500 majority Negro votes."⁶¹

Populists summed up the congressional election in this account:

They [Democrats] saved themselves wherever they could manage the Negro vote and nowhere else. . . . In all the hill parishes where the white people are in the majority, the Populists polled big majorities, but in the river parishes where the Negroes were in the majority the Democrats succeeded in maintaining white supremacy (?) with Negro votes. Lincoln went Populist, but the Democrats of the fifth district congratulate themselves that Tensas and Ouachita, with their big Negro majorities, came to their aid in maintaining white supremacy (?). Now don't you know that the Negro is an indispensable attachment to Murphy's election machinery, and the machinery never grinds out anything but Democratic votes, and it does this whether the Negro goes to the polls or not, or whether he is dead or alive; with the machine at work he is ever faithful in his efforts to maintain white supremacy (?). We thank God that the time is near when it will be considered treason for the chief executive to announce to the public that his efforts will be used to perpetrate fraud and ballot box stuffing in the interest of rings and robbers.⁶²

The general election of 1896 in Louisiana marked a climax in the Negro voting issue. One factor which accelerated Negro voting was the bolt of the sugar planters from the Bourbon Democratic ranks and their organization of the National (or Lily-white) Republican Party in Louisiana. This action was provoked by the Wilson Tariff Bill which repealed the sugar bounty. The Bourbons of the sugar country protested against the repeal of the bounty as breach of a moral contract and resolved to register their protest by voting with the Republican Party on the national tariff issue.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid., November 23, 1894.

The leadership of the sugar planters' bolt was assumed by Henry McCall, Richard McCall, and Edward Pugh, all of Ascension Parish and all of whom had formerly been the "most Bourbon of the Bourbons." The McCalls and Pugh announced their decision at a meeting of the Ascension Parish Democracy and advised their fellow planters to follow their example. An eyewitness reported that everyone was struck speechless at the announcement.⁶³ In September, 1894, three hundred planters from the sugar country met at New Orleans to consider following the example of the Ascension men. A substantial number of those planters decided to leave the Democratic Party. On September 17, 1894 they organized the National Republican Party of Louisiana.⁶⁴ The "national" in the name adopted indicated that they were Republicans on national issues but had not changed their views or prejudices on state and local questions.

The Washington Bee, a Negro national organ, had this to say of the Lily-whites:

Some white Republicans organize a White Man's Republican Party. Is this discriminating spirit because the Negro is no longer a political slave of the scheming politicians? Is it because the Negro cannot be turned

⁶³R. P. Landry to William P. Miles, September 5, 1894, William Porcher Miles Papers, cited by P. D. Uzee, "Republican Politics in Louisiana, 1877-1900," Ph.D. dissertation, Louisiana State University (1950), 149.

⁶⁴New York Tribune, September 18, 1894.

to suit the taste of the white Republicans, who after the victory, feed the Negro on fish bones and they take the meat? The time will no doubt come when the Negro will be compelled to seek protection in the house of his enemy. . . .⁶⁵

At the same time the Bourbons became alarmed at the loss of their erstwhile allies to the National Republicans. These Lily-whites had proved themselves formidable fighters in the previous congressional election when they had provoked the Bourbons to threaten:

The Democratic lion is thoroughly aroused, and when the Pops and Sugar-teat Republicans hear his roar, they'll wish they hadn't twisted his tail.⁶⁶

The Bourbons composed the following "Song of the Louisiana 'Democratic-Republican' Sugar Planter" in an attempt to anger the "sugar teats":

I'll be an honest Democrat in every state election,
 In every state election, I'll never show defection.
 I'll vote the ticket 'straight' without counting cast
 or figure,
 And do my very best to cheat or intimidate the nigger.
 But when it comes to the Nation, I'll take another
 view,
 I'll vote with the Republican, as I think I ought to
 do.
 I'll say to every colored man, to all the colored race,
 'Come to my arms, OH, quickly come, I wish you to em-
 brace'.
 Don't think it strange my principles should wear such
 different collars,
 No principles are worth a d--n when measured by my
 dollars.⁶⁷

The New Orleans Times-Democrat on September 18, 1894 had this to say of the bolt:

⁶⁵April 25, 1896.

⁶⁶Bellevue Bossier Banner, November 1, 1894.

⁶⁷Natchitoches Louisiana Populist, November 9, 1894.

The planters propose to organize a Republican Party of their own and keep the Negroes out. Others have tried this; and if the planters can show us a single instance where such a movement has not landed the bolters into the bosom of the Republican Party, we will admit the possibility of their scheme of remaining National Republicans, yet [not without] a scramble with the Negroes over State offices. Every bolt from the Democratic Party has resulted in the bolters' sitting in convention where the African odor was strong and the Negroes outnumbered them ten to every one white. Every bolt from the Democracy will end thus, no matter how good the intentions of the bolters, until the Negroes lose the ballot.

Governor Foster stated his doubt that the bulk of the sugar planters would affiliate with the National Republicans, and added that the only hope of success by the planters was the Negro vote of the state. He prophetically stated, "I fear that the introduction of the Negro into the politics of this state as a prominent factor will breed struggle, strife, and turmoil."⁶⁸

The Democratic press ridiculed the idea of a "Lily-white" Republican Party in Louisiana. The press stated that the sugar planters who had controlled the votes of their Negro field hands and tenants would continue to do so in spite of all the talk about "Lily-whites." One St. Mary Parish planter allegedly declared: "I shall vote every Negro on our plantation even if it is necessary to kill white men to do so."⁶⁹ Some Bourbons confidently stated:

⁶⁸ St. Joseph Tensas Gazette, September 14, 1894.

⁶⁹ New Orleans Times-Democrat, October 17, 1894.

A few rich planters can break away from the Democratic Party, but those in Louisiana have nowhere to go. The Negroes have filled their places and their votes won't be missed in the next election. When you come right down to the voting, a common field hand's vote counts just as much as any planter's. Every Negro's vote cast will certainly be counted. The Democrats will see to that.⁷⁰

The editor of the Tensas Gazette declared in the January 3, 1896 edition:

When the sugar planters of Southwest Louisiana bolted the Democratic Party and set up what they termed a "National Republican Party," it was proclaimed that the Republican Party would cease to be a "Nigger Party" and would become quite respectable and high-toned. But the Ethiopian cannot change his skin nor the leopard his spots. The Republican Party is in this year of 1895 just as thoroughly a "nigger party" as it was in 1868. It denounces the suffrage amendment as a conspiracy against the Negro's liberty. . . . [To it] the preservation of Negro government and degraded suffrage are paramount to all other issues in the present crisis.

While Bourbons ridiculed "sugar teats," the Bourbons themselves came in for some ridicule by the Populists. These opponents composed the following "Democratic Prayer" to poke fun at Bourbon hypocrisy:

Oh, Grover, our political Father, we bow down before thee as a persimmon sprout bends beneath the weight of a big fat 'possum. Oh, most admirable Cleveland, what can we do for thee that we haven't done to humble ourselves in thy sight. In the name of Democracy we are willing to steal ballots, kill niggers, intimidate Populists, desecrate the ballot box, crucify liberty, corrupt counts, buy legislatures, and undermine our republican institutions. It is written: "Can the

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St. Joseph Tensas Gazette, October 12, 1894.

Ethiopian (which is the nigger) change his skin?" We can, not only change it for him, but we can skin him in the most approved style. We are Democrats of the modern type, with all the latest attachments. Let thy Fatness depend on us. Thee only do we serve. Thy name will be our meat, and whisky our drink, now and forever more, Amen.⁷¹

The political condition of Louisiana was chaotic as the gubernatorial campaign of 1896 took shape. There were Bourbon Democrats, Populists, Custom House Republicans, Stalwart Republicans, and Lily-white Republicans. Many of the farmers who bitterly opposed Murphy J. Foster exerted all their political energy to elect a Populist governor. It was rumored that the sugar planters, the Populists, and the various Republican factions would combine to nominate a full state ticket in the hope of defeating Foster and the candidates of the Democratic Party.⁷²

At a conference held at Alexandria, November 26, 1895, the sugar planters, Populists, and Republicans agreed to put out a fusion ticket under the leadership of the Populists.⁷³ However the Lily-whites held a convention at Hotel Royal in New Orleans, January 4, 1896, and nominated a partial state ticket. They assumed that their candidates would be endorsed

⁷¹Natchitoches Louisiana Populist, March 15, 1895.

⁷²S. J. Romero, "The Political Career of Murphy J. Foster," The Louisiana Historical Quarterly, XXVIII (1945), 1174.

⁷³Lucia E. Daniel, "The Louisiana People's Party," The Louisiana Historical Quarterly, XXVI (1943), 1100.

by Populists and Republicans. Edward N. Pugh, sugar planter of Ascension, was nominated for governor. The New Orleans Times-Democrat, on January 5, 1896, expressed surprise at Pugh's nomination in these words:

Hon. E. N. Pugh, a pronounced supporter of white supremacy and opponent of Negro suffrage, was finally chosen. Mr. Pugh declared in favor of white supremacy and the suffrage amendment. The old time Republicans of Ascension addressed to Mr. Pugh's committee a timid letter pledging their solid vote. All they asked was that the Nationals [Lily-whites] would not support the suffrage amendment and the disfranchisement of Negro voters of the state. This mild request was indignantly scoffed, and Mr. Pugh declared in favor of the suffrage amendment and the disfranchisement of Negro voters as necessary for good government in Louisiana.

The Populist Party held its state nominating convention at Alexandria on January 8, 1896. The sugar planters presented their nominees to the Populists in the hope of getting their endorsement. Republicans and Populists expressed disappointment at the sugar planters' nominees. Pugh was unpopular because of his staunch stand on the suffrage amendment. Populists realized all too clearly that the object of this amendment was to disfranchise illiterate and propertyless whites within their party as well as the Negroes. After considerable wrangling and confusion, the Populists brought forth a fusion ticket which was acceptable to sugar planters and other Republicans. The choice of the Populists for governor was Captain J. N. Pharr, a Republican who had formerly been a steamboat captain, a temperance

lecturer, and who was now a St. Mary Parish sugar planter. J. B. Kleinpeter, of East Baton Rouge Parish, was his running mate. Captain Pharr accepted his nomination for governor; however he became a candidate almost without a platform and without a party. To take a definite stand on any issue would be to offend some faction of his supporters.⁷⁴

The fusionists had in common only a few issues, namely opposition to the suffrage amendment, desire for protection by the national government, and hatred of the politics of Murphy J. Foster.

Murphy J. Foster was the most prominent candidate for the gubernatorial nomination of the Democratic Party in 1896. Senator Newton C. Blanchard launched Foster's candidacy for re-election. The Democrats declared their intention of electing a full state ticket without any assistance from Populists and Republicans.⁷⁵ However Democrats made overtures to Populists in an attempt to get them to return to the Democratic fold.⁷⁶ The editor of the Louisiana Populist on December 6, 1895 replied to such overtures:

⁷⁴New Orleans Times-Democrat, February 7, 1896; Natchitoches Louisiana Populist, February 7, 1896.

⁷⁵Natchitoches Louisiana Populist, September 27, 1895, quoting Natchitoches Enterprise.

⁷⁶Lucia E. Daniel, "The Louisiana People's Party," The Louisiana Historical Quarterly, XXVI, (1943), 1099.

Our neighbor, the Natchitoches Enterprise, implores the Pops to "come back," to return to the Democratic fold. "Come back!" For what? Come back to a party that is grounded upon the bugbear and fear of Negro domination. Come back to a party which has been sustained and upheld only by the ability of the machine to vote dead Negroes. Come back to a party whose chief executive is the sworn foe of ballot reform. Come back to a party whose chief organs fight a white primary, endorsing a mixed one, who sanctions the unlawful practice of counting every Negro as a Democrat. Come back! Of course, we will come back when we can bring the millennium with us. Then, only then, will we come back!

Despite denials, Bourbons predicted that many Populists would not support the fusion ticket, but would vote with the Democrats.⁷⁷ The fusion party lacked cohesion.

Some Populists of North Louisiana were opposed to the former Republican, Pharr, as a candidate for governor. In South Louisiana still more disunion was observed among Republican factions. Democrats noted this lack of unity and predicted that their party would be victorious by appealing to white supremacy for approval of the suffrage amendment.⁷⁸

Ex-Governor S. D. McEnery sounded a warning note to the over-confident among the Democrats. He realized that the campaign was one of white supremacy in opposition to Negro supremacy. He recalled the baneful consequences of Negro voting since Reconstruction days, the fact that the Negro was always the determining factor in popular elections, and that every two years the Negroes had banded together for

⁷⁷Ibid., 1104.

⁷⁸New Orleans Times-Democrat, February 21, 1896.

the purpose of selling their votes to the highest bidder.

In a speech at Thibodaux he advised ratification of the suffrage amendment as the only solution to Louisiana's election expenses and difficulties. He voiced an opinion that politicians were "afraid to thwart the Negro's whim." He stated that few voters throughout the entire state had the moral courage to insist upon the adoption of the proposed constitutional amendment relating to suffrage. He added:

The Negro today is the dominant power in this State. If we are to have peace and quiet, if we are to have a well organized government, if we are to have a virtuous society and intelligent, growing, progressive spirit, we will be compelled to restrict the right of suffrage to its intelligent exercise.⁷⁹

McEnery stated that the danger of Negro government would continue as long as white men descended to the level of the Negro for his votes and pandered his vices and prejudices:

Let the Negro once get Pharr, or any other men, in power by their votes and the white man and the Negro politician will become necessary to each other; the former to retain his hold, will go down and down and worship at the Fetish altar, and will be as devout as any of the darky supporters. . . . The danger can only be arrested when the Negro, as a race, is no longer a political factor.⁸⁰

The main issue of the campaign was the problem of Negro suffrage. That each party attempted to secure the

⁷⁹ New Orleans Times-Democrat, April 3, 1896.

⁸⁰ Opelousas Courier, April 11, 1896.

Negro vote is revealed in the following editorial published in the Baton Rouge Advocate:

Today the Negro rules. . . . His slightest wish is anticipated, his will is law. For him torchlight processions and flamboyant transparencies are prepared. For him hecatombs of bull beef are offered up, and cellars and wine chests are ransacked for libations to conciliate his favor. Lawyers and statesmen twang their tuneful lyres in honor of his presence. His virtues are proclaimed from the brazen throats of a hundred bands. Cannons thunder their salute in his honor and citizens behold their sovereigns of a day with mingled feelings of apprehension and awe.⁸¹

The Bossier Banner, referring to this situation, prophesied, "But the day of reckoning will surely come and the fearful drama begun in venality and debauchery will be rung out in woe and blood."⁸²

As the election date drew near, wagon loads of Negroes were herded together and driven to registration offices by Democrats and fusionists alike. Bourbons of East Carroll Parish told the Negroes to vote for Foster and the suffrage amendment and that all would be well. They told Negroes that brave white men had promised them in 1876 that, if they would vote with the white people, no harm would come to them and that the promise had been faithfully kept. "Ever since the overthrow of Negro rule in politics, the white man has been the Negro's best friend," stated the

⁸¹Cited in Bellevue Bossier Banner, April 16, 1896.

⁸²Ibid.

Democrats of East Carroll Parish.⁸³

Despite the preachments of the politicians, the Negroes of East Carroll Parish seemed impelled to take a degree in the mysteries of the "redisher's office" and to cast their votes against the woeful "suffering amendment." Once more the planters pleaded persuasively, "Stand by and vote for the white people who have made it possible for you to worship God in your own churches and educate your children with the same advantages as white children. This is no time for the Negro to desert the white Democrats of Louisiana."⁸⁴ Despite this plea, Negroes continued to frequent the "redisher's office" and to express unhappiness over the "suffering amendment." The planters changed their tactics:

A few colored roosters of East Carroll, who have received a little "stuff" from the Pharr Campaign Committee to do certain things, had better keep mum, if they know what side their bread is buttered. . . . We learn that Republican leaders are urging ignorant Negroes to go to the ballot box and vote against the Democratic ticket. Now we advise, for their own good, if they want to live in this parish peaceably, that Messrs. Henry Atkins, of the 1st Ward, Matthew Page, J. B. Bryant, and Thomas Overton, of the 2nd Ward, and Ananias Robinson and John Divine of the 4th Ward, to leave politics severely alone, as they are brewing trouble, and if it should come, they will be the sufferers. The white people of East Carroll . . . are not going to allow the Negro to vote. This is no secret, and the Negro might as well know it now as later on. We believe that good feeling between the races will continue if the few niggers, such as we

⁸³ Lake Providence Banner Democrat, March 21, 1896.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

have mentioned, will keep out of politics and leave the hard working colored man alone and let him continue to make an honest living.⁸⁵

Vituperative editorials appeared in both Bourbon and fusionist press organs. Articles supporting the Bourbons proclaimed:

White supremacy will carry everything before it on April 21, and the sooner those white men, who are disgracing their race by slobbering over the Negro in the hope of getting his vote, open their eyes to that fact, the better it will be for the community. . . . The Democratic Party in Louisiana is a white man's party; and the Republican Party in Louisiana is a nigger party. That the Populists should clasp hands with that element that recognized the Negro is sufficient to demonstrate their thirst for place and power. . . .⁸⁶

Another Bourbon editorial stated:

Before the 1896 campaign, Pharr had stated that the white man should control the government and the Negro had nothing to complain of when he got protection of the law. Next we hear this candidate for the office of Chief Magistrate of the State of Louisiana openly advising men to go to the polls avowed to "do a little business on their own accounts that would require coffins"; standing before an audience of which two-thirds were Negroes, teaching them the same "coffin business," and eliciting from them assurances of full approval and that they would be prepared to obey instructions. During the Berwick [Negro labor] troubles a few years ago, Pharr, the Saint, offered to buy one hundred Winchester rifles, provided the guns were returned to him or paid for after the niggers were cleared out or made to work at reduced wages. And still you might as well talk to a brick wall as to make the nigger believe who is his best friend.⁸⁷

⁸⁵ Ibid., March 28, 1896.

⁸⁶ Opelousas Courier, January 4, March 28, 1896.

⁸⁷ Lake Providence Banner Democrat, April 4, 1896.

"The hybrid Sugar Republican and Populist ticket patched up with Pharr at the head has been endorsed by the Negro. Everything is lovely in the camp of the bounty-grabbers and the niggers," stated the Opelousas Courier on February 1, 1896.

In an outspoken article entitled "Listen Sambo" the editor of the Opelousas Courier had these words for Negro voters:

The state has got to be ruled by white people at any and all odds. . . . [The Negroes] will not rest content unless they are permitted to overmatch the white people of Louisiana by their black mass of ignorance. And now they are permitting bulldozers and nigger-killers, together with a lot of sugar planters to lead them into a combine, out of which they will get nothing but trouble and the cold shoulder after the election is over. Neither the planters, nor the Populists, nor Kellogg and Leonard, nor Warmoth and Beattie care one cent for their interests beyond securing their votes.⁸⁸

The Democrats accused the Pharrites of a game of bluff in Natchitoches Parish:

In the Southern parishes the Pharrites have made no concealment of their expectations of carrying the state by the aid of the Negro vote; in the sugar parishes they have been openly coddling and petting and making much to the Senegambian as if in him lay the only hope of the State. But in North Louisiana, where white supremacy sticks further home, for weeks Pharr has been screaming himself hoarse for Caucasian Supremacy. . . .⁸⁹

In Natchitoches Parish the respective chairmen of

⁸⁸January 25, 1896.

⁸⁹New Orleans Times-Democrat, April 4, 1896.

Populist and Democratic Parties signed an agreement to use their joint efforts in preventing Negroes from participating in the election of April 21. Stated the editor of the New Orleans Times-Democrat: "This game of bluff which has been played in Natchitoches has been called by the Democrats. They [Populists] had to drop the masks, and they stood exposed as the same Negrophiles in North as in South Louisiana."⁹⁰

The Lake Charles Commercial had this to say about the politics of the state:

Stripped of its technicalities, the question to be settled in this campaign is "Shall the White man continue to govern Louisiana, or shall the Negro again dominate?" The election of the Pharr ticket and the defeat of the suffrage amendment mean the return of the Negro. It is of no avail to say that the sugar Republicans and the Pops will prevent this. Like a limpid, gurgling mountain streamlet, they will be swallowed up in the great ocean of nigger, and sink beneath the black waves of corruption like a shell cast into a raging sea.⁹¹

The Democrats made effective use of ludicrous cartoons in spreading campaign propaganda. One such cartoon in the St. Landry Clarion on April 4, 1896 contained the following caption:

This cut, as you all will see, is of a political nature, and well represents the man (Pharr) and the occasion (Easter). Captain Pharr, the nigger-pop

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Cited in Opelousas Courier, February 22, 1896.

candidate for governor, is represented as an old setting hen, who after the usual time, finally hatched only one chick, "Nigger Domination." The remainder of the "eggs" (Captain Pharr's principles) are all rotten, and greet the farmer (the voter) with nauseating fumes.⁹²

The Populist press countered Democratic campaign propaganda with equally biting editorials. A typical one entitled "No Cause for Alarm" stated:

If the Democrats of Natchitoches Parish are interested in white supremacy, kindly desist from giving so much importance to the colored voter. . . . The colored voter has come long since to the conclusion that the white people must and will control the affairs, and if they are let alone, they will voluntarily stay away from the polls; they recognize that their votes are not counted as cast. . . . The last two elections were practically the voice of the white people. The wild shrieks of Negro domination fall on deaf ears. Your continual howling and tone of fright leads the colored man to the belief that he can go to the polls, armed with a corncob and a lightning-bug, and run the Democrats. Be brave. The colored man will not be allowed to bulldoze the Democracy.⁹³

Tensions mounted as the campaign drew to a close.

Violence and bloodshed occurred in St. Landry Parish, a center of Populist strength. A majority of the white men of St. Landry were determined to eliminate the Negro from the political scene, and began by impeding their registration. M. L. Swords, the registrar, sided with the Democrats to stop Negroes from registering. The whites were divided into

⁹²Cited in S. J. Romero, "The Political Career of Murphy J. Foster," The Louisiana Historical Quarterly, XXVIII (1945), 1179.

⁹³Natchitoches Louisiana Populist, March 13, 1896.

a Fontenot (or white supremacy) faction led by Sheriff Theophile Fontenot and a Thompson (or Negro suffrage) faction led by Mayor C. J. Thompson.

In February, Registrar Swords, together with several other white supremists of the parish, was arrested by town authorities and placed in jail for impeding registration of Negroes. The other whites made bail, but Swords reasoned that his position as registrar enabled him, by remaining in jail, to thwart the Negro suffragists. An order was issued by the parish judge instructing Sheriff Fontenot to release the prisoner, but Swords refused to leave jail. The Opelousas Courier on February 29, 1896 lauded him with these words:

Swords had better apply for a patent upon this new scheme to suppress Negro votes. It certainly has the merit of originality, and we hope it will prove effective. We dare say that St. Landry is the only place on earth that can produce a registrar who would have been equal to this emergency. But great is St. Landry! Greater is Marion Swords.

Eventually Swords was persuaded to leave jail, but resorted to his former policy of impeding Negro registration.

In March a group of self-appointed Regulators assembled at the Grand Prairie precinct to keep Negroes from registering. Two Roy brothers, peace officers appointed by Mayor Thompson, clashed with the Regulators and were wounded. White supremists attributed the clash to the overzealousness on the part of the Roy brothers to carry out

Pharr's "damnable scheme to vote the Negroes though it cost the blood of white men."⁹⁴

The white supremist faction stated that they had "just drawn a deep breath, thanking God that regulating was a thing of the past" when they were forced to resort to it again. This was due to the efforts of the Negro suffragists to register Negro voters at the Palmetto precinct. This precinct was the heart of the Negro section of St. Landry Parish and ordinarily about 400 Negroes registered and voted at this precinct. When the books were opened for registration on March 27, Registrar Swords appeared, accompanied by over 200 armed Regulators, representing the Fontenot "white supremacist" faction of the parish. The Regulators served notice that no Negro should register or vote. One Negro applicant for registration, who was named Rideau, was promptly and thoroughly whipped as an object lesson to the other Negroes. He left without registering. Other Negroes were kept from the registration office by white pickets. Julien Stelly, a Negro from the Port Barre settlement, succeeded in registering and thus became the target of the Regulators. His death resulted in the death of a white Regulator also. Dr. G. W. Martin of Arnaudville, one of the Regulators, recounted events in this manner:

⁹⁴ Lafayette Advertiser, cited in Opelousas Courier, March 28, 1896.

I thought I'd go around and talk in a friendly way with the leading Negroes, and explain to them that this was a white man's country and that white men meant to control the political destiny in the future, and all we asked of them was to stay at home and let politics alone. The Negroes assured me that they were perfectly willing to let the white people settle the election among themselves. No Negroes wanted to register and everything was quiet. At Port Barre a Negro named Julien Stelly had registered, but after seeing the sentiments of the whites were so strong against him, sent one of his colored friends, Numa Landrio, to Mr. Adam Guidroz, a member of the White Supremacy League, to inquire if the whites would accept his apologies for having registered and to say that he would stay out of politics and not vote. As we were in the immediate neighborhood of Stelly and I had quite a number of men with me, I thought it a good opportunity to have Stelly come, in the presence of these men and make these explanations. . . . We called at his house and he replied that he would not surrender to anyone, backed into his house from the gallery and closed the door. I ordered my men to dismount and put themselves under cover as much as possible. I walked right to the house and called him three times, reminding him of the message he had sent to Mr. Guidroz. While waiting for his reply, I heard a shot from a side window and saw one of my men fall. My men were standing behind trees and shooting into the windows. The Negro was inside shooting at us through the same windows. When I was satisfied the Negro was killed, I led my men away. About 75 shots were fired, of which the Negro fired about 25 before he was killed. Mr. Boutee, who was wounded by the Negro, received the last rites of the Catholic Church and died about two and a half hours after receiving the death wound. Constable Moreau investigated the premises next morning and found seven shot-guns, one rifle, and a sack full of cartridges."95

The Thompson "Negro suffrage" faction stationed armed guards around the entrances to the town of Washington to prevent Swords and the white supremist Regulators from

⁹⁵Opelousas Courier, April 4, 1896.

keeping Negroes from registering. On April 3, the date set for the opening of the registration office at Washington, Registrar Swords failed to show up. Irate Populists took possession of the books and registered the Negroes. Regulators throughout the countryside attempted to intimidate Negroes by whipping and bulldozing. A few days after the Populist registration procedure at Washington, a crowd of Negroes from Grand Prairie were on their way to Opelousas to register. Registrar Swords had arrived at the Opelousas office without his army and Negroes were hastening there to register before the anticipated arrival of the Regulators. The Thompson "Negro suffragists" were allegedly "busy having all the Negroes registered that it was possible for them to get into the office." Over 3000 Negroes registered. Their votes combined with those of the Populists would insure the defeat of the Democratic white supremists. The Grand Prairie Negroes were intercepted before they reached Opelousas and told that they could not register. The leader of the Negroes "made a motion to use his gun when he was shot all to pieces." Another Negro was killed, several wounded, and many whipped.⁹⁶ White supremacy Regulators began a

⁹⁶New Orleans Times-Democrat, April 8, 1896; Melvin J. White, "Populism in Louisiana During the 1890's," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, V, (1918), 13-14; Lucia E. Daniel, "The Louisiana People's Party," Louisiana History Quarterly, XXVI (1943), 1108.

series of nighttime raids. They captured Negroes and forced them, at gun point, to sign slips of paper stating that they would allow their names to be removed from registration books. During a few such short raids, 1000 Negroes of St. Landry Parish forfeited their right to vote.⁹⁷

The state election took place on April 21. It was characterized by ballot box stuffing, fraud, intimidation, and the murder of a Negro named Pickett at the Waxia poll in St. Landry Parish.⁹⁸ The state militia was called out in Natchitoches and St. Landry Parishes to quell riots.⁹⁹ True to the prediction of Ex-Governor McEnery, the suffrage amendment was defeated by methods proclaimed disgraceful.¹⁰⁰ For several days the results of the election were unknown. Both Democrats and Populists claimed victory. Concerning the final election results, one self-confident Democrat had stated: "There is no question about how the state will go, and we know that if majorities are lacking, it will be very easy for the Administration to grind them

⁹⁷John S. Fontenot, "The Last Shotgun Army," Baton Rouge Morning Advocate, August 21, 1960.

⁹⁸New Orleans Times-Democrat, April 22, 1896.

⁹⁹Ibid., April 23, 25, 1896; Paul Lewinson, Race, Class, and Party: A History of Negro Suffrage and White Politics in the South (New York, 1932), 77-78.

¹⁰⁰New Orleans Times-Democrat, April 21, 1896.

a little higher."¹⁰¹ On April 27, after estimating Pharr's vote in several parishes in which returns were disputed, the unofficial returns gave Foster 109,241 votes to 82,100 for Pharr.¹⁰²

The protests of the "wild eyed Pops" and the "bounty-grabbing sugar-teats" against the pattern of politics employed by the Democrats resulted in greatly reduced majorities, but the Democrats had won again. The pattern of Democratic dictatorship, though still visible, was rapidly disintegrating before their eyes. The Democrats realized that it would not serve again; therefore they began immediately to work on a new--and legal--design for retaining their leadership of the state.

¹⁰¹ W. W. Dunson to E. J. Hawkins, October 30, 1895. Hawkins Papers, Department of Archives, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

¹⁰² New Orleans Times-Democrat, April 27, 1896.

CHAPTER VI

LEGAL DISFRANCHISEMENT OF NEGROES IN LOUISIANA, 1898-1906

Negro voters of Louisiana could take small comfort from the fact that their votes in 1896 had succeeded in defeating the dreaded "suffrage amendment." Their votes were soon to undergo a revolutionary change. In the decade that followed that eventful election of 1896, Louisianians devised two effective methods for legal disfranchisement of Negroes. These were the Constitution of 1898 and the Democratic white primary of 1906.

In the gubernatorial election of April, 1896 there had been 130,344 registered Negro voters in Louisiana. Two short years later, this number dropped to 12,902.¹ In 1900 there were only 5320 registered Negroes in the state. The 1904 registration lists showed 1342 Negro voters.² The institution of the Democratic white primary in 1906 meant virtually the end of Negro voting in Louisiana for many years. The two methods devised to stop Negro voting were entirely legal.

¹ Report of the Secretary of the State of Louisiana, 1902 (Baton Rouge, 1902), 555.

² C. Vann Woodward, The Strange Career of Jim Crow (New York, 1955), 68.

The new constitution of the state and the white primary system were both adopted with the Negro voter in mind.

A few days prior to the gubernatorial election of April, 1896 the Tensas Gazette published an editorial entitled "The Lesson of the Hour" which stated:

The solid phalanx of black voters is unbroken and the political activities of the Negro, which has for many years been dormant, has received new impetus. It will be an evil day for Louisiana if the lesson of the hour is unheeded. That lesson is that the past and present political conditions and methods in Louisiana end with this campaign, that if the suffrage amendment is not adopted, we can no longer depend upon the solidarity of the white race to rescue the state from the impending doom of Africanization.³

The editorial emphasized the obvious necessity for the state to find some legal means of eliminating the Negro vote. The suffrage amendment prescribing alternative educational or property qualifications had been defeated. Legal disfranchisement by amendment was a complete failure. Negro voters had cast their votes against the amendment and the Populists had added their votes to those of the Negroes. The honest, hard working, God-fearing people from the hill farms of North Louisiana had voted against the amendment. These were the people who by the sweat of their brow had eked out a miserable living from their cotton patches. These were the people who had suffered great privation in their efforts to find money to pay their mortgage notes and to meet their

³St. Joseph Tensas Gazette, April 10, 1896.

debts to the local merchant and banker. These were the people who had competed economically with the Negro laborer. They were the victims of the Negro votes.

The Populist experiment in interracial harmony which had been tried in the election of 1896 came to an abrupt end. In the voting contest most Negroes were controlled by their old masters, the Bourbon Democrats. A last ditch struggle had been made by the Populists to make some small dent in the solid Democratic control of Negroes, and to gain some small measure of political and economic privilege for themselves. Despite these efforts, the Democratic administration was able "to grind out the majorities" necessary to defeat their opponents. It became very obvious to the Populists that their Bourbon opponents had the "longer purse to meet the cost of the purchasable vote."⁴ Purchase money being exhausted presented no problem, for Bourbon never hesitated to steal Negro votes if expediency demanded. The Populists blamed the Negro for their defeat. The biracial partnership of Populists and Negroes dissolved in frustration and bitterness. Populists began to demand the necessity of disfranchising Negroes as a prelude to curtailment of Bourbon domination.⁵ The Bourbons acquiesced in the Populist demands.

⁴V. O. Key, Southern Politics in State and Nation (New York, 1949), 550.

⁵H. B. Parkes, The United States of America, A History (New York, 1954), 392.

The bitter struggle between Bourbons and Populists could be healed only by the "magic formula of white supremacy." The South was a white man's country. White factions must work together to keep it so. The Bourbons had become weary of the Negro voter and the ever increasing expense of purchasing his votes. They desired to be freed of the necessity for bulldozing, regulating, intimidating, and killing of Negro voters. They agreed with the Populists that force and fraud were corrupting and weakening the body politic. On March 7, a few days before the April, 1896 election, the editor of the Opelousas Courier stated:

It would have been a thousand times better if the Federal government had confiscated every foot of soil in the insurgent states instead of putting the ballot in the hands of the blacks. The damage done is well-nigh irreparable, [and] the most damning infamy ever perpetrated since the dawn of time. . . . [It was] a crime unspeakable to take from an ignorant brutal slave his shackles and place upon his stupid head a crown. It required a thousand years of education to fit the thoughtful Saxon for the responsibilities of sovereignty; the stupid Ethiopian was fitted for them by the scratch of a pen and a partisan vote.

The Bourbons, once resolved upon Negro disfranchisement by legal means, found it easy to justify their resolution. The Negro vote, as a balance of power between Bourbons and poor whites, would end. White factions could divide upon fundamental political and economic issues and fight them out within their own party without fear of the Negro or the expense of purchasing him. The removal of the Negro vote would end that corruption in elections which had

for so many years disgraced the state. The Bourbon logic was indisputable. There would be less vote stealing when no Negroes voted, because there would be fewer votes to steal. A final justification for Negro disfranchisement was that this measure would "keep the Negro in his place." And the Bourbon Democrats of Louisiana had a precisely clear conception of the Negro's place.⁶

Governor Foster in a special message to the legislature recommended the calling of a constitutional convention to "put a stop to the voting of the large mass of ignorance and venality to the great detriment of the Commonwealth."⁷ The legislature was agreeable to the governor's recommendation and passed an act submitting to the voters of the state a proposal for the holding of a constitutional convention. The act provided that the convention should meet at New Orleans in February, 1898 and should have full authority to adopt a new constitution for the state without submitting it to the people. There were to be 134 delegates, 36 of whom were to be delegates at large nominated by state conventions of the parties. The remainder of the nominations were to be made by the parish and district conventions. The election to approve or disapprove the convention was to be

⁶C. Vann Woodward, Origins of the New South (Baton Rouge, 1951), 347.

⁷Louisiana Senate Journal, 1896, 231-236.

held on the second Tuesday in January, 1898.⁸

The 1896 legislature also passed an act providing for a new registration of voters, to become effective January 1, 1897.⁹ This act was designed to eliminate Negro voters before the vote on the question of a convention was taken.

The New Orleans Times-Democrat praised the admirable accomplishments of this legislature stating that it had "determined a disputed election for governor, passed an act calling for a constitutional convention, framed a new registration law, and practically established a new suffrage."¹⁰

At the election on January 11, 1898, the revised electorate of the state approved the proposal to call a constitutional convention by a large majority. All the delegates selected were Democrats, with the exception of one Populist and one Lily-white Republican.¹¹

The convention met as scheduled in the old Mechanics' Institute in New Orleans on the second Tuesday of February, 1898. It was called to order by Chief Justice F. T. Nicholls. Honorable E. B. Kurttschnitt was elected president of the

⁸Acts of Louisiana, 1896, No. 52.

⁹Ibid., No. 89.

¹⁰New Orleans Times-Democrat, July 9, 1896.

¹¹Official Journal of the Proceedings of the Constitutional Convention of the State of Louisiana, 1898 (New Orleans, 1898), Appendix.

convention and Robert S. Landry was chosen chief clerk.¹² The convention remained in session until it adopted the Louisiana constitution of 1898. Two problems confronted it--to evade the fifteenth amendment and to frame a document which would not exclude white voters. It worded a clause which enabled virtually all whites to vote. It devised requirements which disfranchised the bulk of the Negro voters of the state.

When the convention had assembled doubting-Thomases had expressed displeasure. One such doubter stated:

The convention has attempted the impossible. It has aimed at placing every white voter on the poll list and keeping out nearly every Negro without violating the Federal constitution. It has sought to frame a suffrage scheme that would endure for all time [and] please everybody. We need only to go to Aesop to learn the fate of the man who tried to please everybody. The indulgence in wild and probably unconstitutional experiments at this juncture may be a well-intentioned blunder, but some blunders are worse than crimes.¹³

The Louisiana Constitution of 1898 was outstanding for its elaborate provisions regulating suffrage and elections. The suffrage article denied illiterate voters the franchise unless they owned and paid taxes on property in Louisiana evaluated at \$300 or more. The article read in part:

Every male, native or naturalized, shall be entitled to vote if he is twenty-one years of age and possesses the following qualifications: Two years residence

¹²Natchitoches Louisiana Populist, February 11, 1898.

¹³New Orleans Times-Democrat, March 4, 1898.

in the state, one year in the parish, and six months in the precinct. He shall be able to read and write, demonstrated by written application for registration in English language or his mother tongue, dated and signed by him in the presence of registration officer or his deputy, supplying the following information: Citizen of the state of Louisiana, name, birth place, date, age (years, months, and days), length of residence in State, parish, and precinct. If he is not able to read and write, . . . he shall be entitled to register and vote if he shall, at time of registration, be the bona fide owner of property assessed at three hundred dollars, such property being personal only and all taxes being paid. . . .

This constitution also provided that the voter in 1900 had to show his poll tax receipts for the previous two years, and these must show that the tax had been paid by December 31 of each year.¹⁴

The first hurdle that confronted the constitution-makers was overcome by these clauses. Literacy and property qualifications automatically disfranchised large numbers of Negro voters, and few Negroes bothered to pay poll taxes and to keep receipts. Most Negroes were neither literate nor property owners, and the few who were could easily be handled by the election officials.¹⁵

Since the end of Reconstruction Negro illiteracy in Louisiana had increased perceptibly. Illiterate Negro voters in 1878 numbered 68,700 as against 13,926 literates; in 1880,

¹⁴ Constitution of the State of Louisiana, 1898, Articles 197-198.

¹⁵ Paul Lewinson, Race, Class, and Party: A History of Negro Suffrage and White Politics in the South (New York, 1932), 81.

there were 76,087 illiterates to 11,403 literates; in 1886, there were 91,947 illiterates to 16,570 literates; in 1888, there were 102,942 illiterates to 23,010 literates. The new registration law of 1896, designed to eliminate Negro voters before the vote on the question of a constitutional convention was submitted to the electorate, had the desired effect. There were only 5361 illiterate Negroes and 7541 literate Negroes registered to vote in 1898.¹⁶ In 1900 there were 4327 Negroes registered under the educational qualification of the new constitution and 916 who registered under the property qualification.¹⁷

The constitution makers realized that the property and literacy qualifications of the new constitution would also disfranchise illiterate and propertyless whites. They wished to devise safeguards to protect the franchise of these people. Section 5 of Article 197 provided the desired protection: It stated:

No male person who on January 1, 1867, or at any date prior thereto, entitled to vote under the constitution or statutes of any State of the United States, wherein he then resided, and no son or grandson of any such person not less than twenty-one years of age at the date of the adoption of this Constitution, and no male person of foreign birth, who was naturalized prior to the first day of January, 1898, shall be denied the right to register and vote in this State by reason of his failure to possess the educational or property qualifications prescribed in this Constitution; provided, he shall have resided in this

¹⁶ Report of the Secretary of the State of Louisiana, 1902 (Baton Rouge, 1902), 551-555.

¹⁷ Ibid.

State for five years next preceding the date at which he shall apply for registration, and shall have registered in accordance with the terms of this article prior to September 1, 1898, and no person shall be entitled to register under this section after said date.

This was the famous "grandfather clause." Qualified voters applying to register under this section before September 1, 1898 were enrolled upon a permanent registration list. Voters failing to meet requirements and to register before the designated date were forever denied the right to do so. The Louisiana Populist on June 3, 1898 urged fellow Populists to register. "Any white man can register and very few Negroes can. Do you want to be classed with Negroes?" it asked.

Louisiana boasted of the invention of the "grandfather clause" and the elasticity of the alternative tests through which Negro disfranchisement was to be accomplished. President E. B. Kruttschnitt in his farewell address to the members of the constitutional convention expressed satisfaction with the document and declared:

We have not drafted the exact constitution we would like to have drafted. . . . What care I whether it be more or less ridiculous or not? Doesn't it let the white man vote, and doesn't it stop the Negro from voting, and isn't that what we came here for?¹⁸

Louisiana showed to other Southern states how the

¹⁸ Official Journal of the Proceedings of the Constitutional Convention of the State of Louisiana, 1898 (New Orleans, 1898), 379-381.

Negro could be disfranchised without interfering with the white voters. The circuitous and paradoxical nature of the suffrage article of the new constitution was questioned when the document was first drafted. To some persons it seemed that disfranchisement of the Negro "to prevent the Democrats from stealing his votes" was punishment to the person who had already been injured. However most white Louisianians in 1898 were in no mood for paradoxes and generally accepted Negro disfranchisement as a positive and progressive reform without giving the matter a second thought.¹⁹ In fact, most white people agreed with the editor of the Baton Rouge Daily Advocate, when on March 4, 1898 he stated:

It is doubtful if, in the campaign preceding the convention, it ever occurred to anyone that it were possible to frame an ordinance which would so perfectly adjust to every condition as to exclude none of the dominant race from suffrage. It was generally conceded that a minimum of the white vote would of necessity be disfranchised by any law which would successfully eliminate any considerable portion of Negro votes.

Senator S. D. McEnery defended the new constitution in this speech:

The more intelligent Negroes accept it as a wise settlement of the question of suffrage. The ignorant of the Negro race are indifferent about it, for they have long ceased to have any political affiliations except those that were monetarily created by the

¹⁹C. Vann Woodward, The Strange Career of Jim Crow (New York, 1955), 66.

purchase of their votes. Reviewing the history of Negro suffrage in Louisiana . . . when the power of the carpetbagger was broken, the Negro voted just as his immediate employer dictated him to vote. He had no will of his own. In some localities the entire vote on the plantation would be cast according to the views of the proprietor, and the presence of the Negroes at the polls was dispensed with. In the cities they soon learned the money value of their votes, and through a chosen leader, would sell to the highest bidder. Intelligent Negroes demanded a reform of the suffrage. . . . The constitution excepts a certain class from the property and literacy qualifications. This does not exclude the Negro from voting. He has the right in common with white people on the condition alike applicable to both races.²⁰

Other political leaders expressed the same sentiment in cruder terms: "White men will be practically solid as against the supremacy of the black man. They will grant him the rights of life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness just so long as he keeps out of politics."²¹ The editor of a New Orleans paper commented that a large portion of the Negro element was excluded from suffrage under the literacy and property provisions of the constitution, noting particularly the drop in the "Negro parishes" of East Carroll, Concordia, Madison, and Tensas. He noted that in these parishes the Negro population was ten times more numerous than the white. He declared that under manhood suffrage, this situation placed "intelligence, thrift, and virtue at the mercy of ignorance, shiftlessness, poverty, and moral

²⁰Baton Rouge Daily Advocate, January 26, 1900.

²¹Lafayette Advertiser, April 19, 1890.

depravity." The editor ended his article with these words:

The constitution of 1898 was designed to correct these evils and to insure honest elections, which it will. When the people of Louisiana had it in their power to make such a reform, they were guilty of a great crime while they delayed to consummate it, and they have only now redeemed themselves from the reproach that has too long rested on them.²²

The Negro college professor, W. E. B. DuBois, made this statement relative to the disfranchisement of his race: "The black men know that when they lose the ballot, they lose all. They are no fools. . . ."²³ To this statement the editor of the New Orleans Daily Picayune replied:

Any Negro in Louisiana who can read and write or who pays taxes on \$300 worth of property has a right to register and vote. If he took the trouble to learn to read and write, or if he economized in liquors or ceased to throw away money on craps and other gambling, he would have \$300 worth of property and he would be able to vote. . . . The Negro is in a condition in regard to suffrage where he is required to make a proper effort. All may become voters if they will, so there is no invidious discrimination.²⁴

The Constitution of 1898 was put into effect immediately and had the desired effect of permitting the propertyless and illiterate whites to retain suffrage rights. In 1900 the total number of persons qualified for registration under the "grandfather clause" was 37,988. Of this

²² New Orleans Daily Picayune, March 30, 1900.

²³ Ibid., April 3, 1904.

²⁴ Ibid.

number 37,877 were whites and 111 were Negroes.²⁵ (The antecedents of these 111 Negroes were obviously white men who had voted prior to 1867 and who had acknowledged their black sons; therefore their black grandsons possessed the constitutional right of suffrage in Louisiana). The Negro registrants under the "grandfather clause" dwindled rapidly. The last Negro to vote under this clause was a man from Tensas Parish who registered for the last time in 1908. The number of Negro registrants dropped sharply after 1900. The registration figures for 1902 revealed 4329 Negro votes. By 1904 this figure had dropped to 1342. In 1906 Negro voters numbered 1201.²⁶ Thus the many legal requirements of the new constitution had produced the desired result of ridding the state of almost all its many illiterate Negro voters.

But if any Negroes did become literate, or did acquire sufficient property to entitle them to vote, and did pay their poll tax and keep their receipts, "they could even then be tripped up by the final hurdle devised for them--the white primary."²⁷ In the final analysis the Democratic white primary as a means of nominating candidates proved to be the most effective Negro disfranchisement measure.

²⁵Report of the Secretary of the State of Louisiana, 1902 (Baton Rouge, 1902), 558.

²⁶Ibid., 1904, 50-52; 1905, XXXI; 1908, 6.

²⁷C. Vann Woodward, The Strange Career of Jim Crow (New York, 1955), 67.

For many years Louisianians had recognized serious defects in the convention method of nominating candidates. The vituperative attack of the Populists in the election of 1896 convinced the Bourbons of the necessity of selecting candidates by preferential popular vote.²⁸ The Bossier Banner on March 8, 1900 congratulated the constitution makers upon having insured the supremacy of the white race and the salvation of the Caucasian civilization in Louisiana, but stated the necessity of a law regulating the conduct of primary elections.

Louisiana's first Primary Election Law was passed on July 22, 1900.²⁹ This act was considered to be a progressive reform which would put a stop to the boss-dominated convention system. The act authorized state, district, and parish committees to adopt such rules and regulations for the conduct of elections as they might see fit. It provided that these rules should have the force of law. It required that political groups, to be eligible to call primary elections, must have cast ten percent of the votes in their electoral districts. Such political groups were required to adopt a resolution setting forth qualifications of voters in addition to those prescribed by the election laws and the

²⁸V. O. Key, Southern Politics in State and Nation (New York, 1949), 620.

²⁹Acts of Louisiana, 1900, No. 133.

constitution of the state.

It is noteworthy that this first primary election law in Louisiana did not make nominations by the primary system obligatory. Democratic Party bosses in Louisiana thought that their control was safer in the conventions, so few elections were held under the law of 1900. A few local elections were held, but no nomination of state candidates was made under this election law.³⁰

As the time for the 1904 state election approached, Democratic newspapers strongly condemned the convention method of nominations and vigorously advocated that the adoption of the primary system be made compulsory for the Democratic Party.³¹ The popular reaction to a change of nomination methods caused many members of the Democratic State Central Committee to favor the primary system.

Several candidates for state offices unqualifiedly endorsed the system. Judge N. C. Blanchard, one of the leading candidates for governor (who was subsequently elected), came out for the primary system of nominating state officers.³² J. Y. Sanders, who was a member of the Democratic State Central Committee, joined forces with Blanchard and they were successful in securing a unanimous vote of the

³⁰ George M. Reynolds, Machine Politics in New Orleans, 1897-1926 (New York, 1936), 82.

³¹ New Orleans Times-Democrat, August 19, 1903.

³² New Orleans States-Item, June 13, 1921.

Committee for the adoption of the primary system.

The state legislature in 1906 passed an act making it obligatory for all party nominations to be made by means of primary elections.³³ Section 9 of this act provided that:

[qualifications of voters in primary elections should be] the same as now required by the constitution and election laws of this state, subject to an additional political qualification which may be prescribed by the State Central Committees of the respective political parties coming under the provisions of this act; the respective State Central Committees of the respective political parties shall meet within sixty (60) days after the promulgation of this act and then fix the said additional political qualification as herein authorized.

Thus the direct primary system in Louisiana was fixed by statute rather than by party rule, and the State Central Committees of political parties were empowered to prescribe qualifications for voters in primaries.³⁴ Governor Blanchard approved the act on June 29, 1906. Within the prescribed time, the Democratic State Central Committee met and on July 8, 1906 adopted the following resolution with reference to primary elections: "Mr. Davey moved, and it was duly seconded and carried, that in compliance with the law, the further qualification of a voter shall be that

³³ Acts of Louisiana, 1906, No. 49.

³⁴ V. O. Key, Southern Politics in State and Nation, (New York, 1949), 620.

he be a white Democrat."³⁵

J. Y. Sanders, a prominent lawyer, declared that the Democratic white primary represented the best thought of the party and added these words of praise:

Thanks to the wisdom and to the patriotism of that party to which we all owe allegiance, the electorate of Louisiana has been purged of the black menace and today the white men of Louisiana decide who shall be their officials.³⁶

The exclusion of Negro voters from the Democratic white primary elections meant virtually the end of Negro voting in Louisiana for over two decades. There were no Republican primaries in the state. The Lily-white movement left the Negro without any effective means of organizing his party. Republicans did not poll the necessary proportion of the total vote of the state and therefore were not eligible to hold primaries.³⁷ On the basis of the 1904 gubernatorial returns, the Democratic Party was the only legal political party in the state. All nominations were made at Democratic white primaries. All candidates were white Democrats. Direct primaries amounted to

³⁵ Louisiana Reports: Cases Argued and Determined in the Supreme Court of Louisiana Sitting at New Orleans, CXXXI (New Orleans, 1913), 437.

³⁶ Scrapbook, 1906-1907, Sanders Family Papers, Department of Archives, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

³⁷ Frank R. Kent, The Great Game of Politics (New York, 1931), 340.

"white men's clubs." White supremacy was triumphant over Africanization. There was no longer any place in Louisiana for the Negro voter.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

The history of Negro voting in Louisiana is a record of methods and mechanisms used to control or to eliminate Negro votes. During the three decades following Reconstruction, white leaders of Louisiana devised several election laws and a constitution in an effort to control Negro voting or to keep Negroes from voting. These white men had to be careful, however, that their election laws and their constitution did not violate the letter of the fifteenth amendment to the Federal constitution.

The post-Reconstruction era was ushered in by a violent political revolution which redeemed the state for the whites. Then followed a decade in which fraud, purchase, statutory devises, and like expediencies sufficed to control Negro voters. It was considered easier to count the Negro's ballot for the Democratic Party than it was to prevent him from casting it. The Bourbons of the black parishes were masters of the situation and Negro votes were used to pass legislation beneficial to Bourbon economic and political welfare. The resentment of the poor whites of the hill parishes at this use of Negro votes to the detriment of themselves led to a competition between poor whites and rich

whites to exploit the Negro voter. The rich whites won the contest. The poor whites then initiated a demand for the legal disfranchisement of the Negro. Legal disfranchisement was accomplished by the restrictive provisions of the state constitution of 1898 and by the statute providing for compulsory white primaries in 1906. The primary became the only important election in the state because the great majority of Louisiana voters were Democrats. The general election became only a formality to satisfy the demands of the Federal constitution.¹

For over two decades following Reconstruction the white population of Louisiana presented a fairly solid front. The Bourbons were able to return to their conservative traditions. The Negro remained docilely in "his place." The poor whites were restive under the conviction that any dissension between themselves and the rich whites might cause a recurrence of the Negro problem.² There were those who claimed that the argument of white Louisianians against Negro suffrage was based upon fear of social equality.³ They stated that political equality implied social equality, or "if you let them vote you've got to let them

¹C. S. Mangum, The Legal Status of the Negro (Chapel Hill, 1940), 410.

²F. B. Simkins, The South Old and New (New York, 1948), 265.

³H. G. Wells, Future in America, 270, cited in Paul Lewinson, Race, Class, and Party: A History of Negro Suffrage and White Politics in the South (New York, 1932), 87.

marry your daughters." Therefore the whites accepted as a solemn duty the obligation "to maintain the supremacy of the Caucasian race and to restrict the African race to that position of political and social inferiority for which God has ordained it."⁴

The provision for regulation of Democratic primaries as private "white men's" organizations was declared to be constitutional by the state courts. The people, through their state government, had the right to exercise all powers not delegated to the Federal government by the Federal constitution. Nowhere in the provisions of the statute did the white primary discriminate against persons because of race.⁵ The white primary proved to be the long-sought cure for the ills of Negro suffrage. It was hoped to be a cure so complete as to prevent any future recurrence of the disease.

Political elections in Louisiana from the enactment of the white primary statute in 1906 until the third decade of the twentieth century were contest between factions of the Democratic Party. The "one party system" of the Solid South was nowhere more firmly entrenched than in this state. The New Deal of the 1930's made a dent in the Democratic

⁴Ibid.

⁵State ex rel LaBauve v. Michel, Louisiana Reports: Cases Argued and Determined Before the Supreme Court of Louisiana, 1908, CXXI.

Solid South and the Negro came into the picture as a "boondoggler" and recipient of Federal commodity rations. The Negro voter of the New Deal era switched his traditional affiliation from the Republican to the Democratic Party. He made this switch so that his votes could assist in the enactment of New Deal legislation beneficial to his economic and political interests.

Upon the heels of the New Deal came World War II and desegregation of the Armed Forces. This desegregation led to demands for civil and political equality. In 1944 the United States Supreme Court handed down a decision which declared the Democratic white primary to be an unconstitutional discrimination against the Negro race.⁶ Fred Odom, Chairman of the Democratic Central Committee in Louisiana, stated: "I doubt that it will change the setup in Louisiana until and unless the colored Democrats are invited to participate in party primaries by white Democrats."⁷ Governor Sam Jones said, "We've always handled that question and always will."⁸

In the fall of that same year (1944) Louisiana Negroes who had never seen a registration office or a voting

⁶Smith vs. Allwright, cited in V. O. Key, Southern Politics in State and Nation (New York, 1949), 620.

⁷Baton Rouge State Times, April 4, 1944.

⁸Ibid.

precinct flocked to registration offices all over the state to see the "reddisher" so that they might qualify themselves for voting in the presidential contest between F. D. Roosevelt and Thomas E. Dewey. They wished to cast their votes for Roosevelt and his New Deal. They stood to gain from the New Deal and they desired to cast their votes for the man who promised to make all its benefits possible for them. Conservative leaders of the state opposed both the New Deal and the accelerated Negro voting it provoked. But there was no device which Conservatives could substitute for the white primary and Negro voting continued to increase.

The most sensational increase in the number of Negro voters in any Southern state was in Louisiana. The number of Negro registrants jumped from 1672 in 1948 to 108,724 in 1952.⁹ These figures presented an interesting reversal of the results of legal disfranchisement a half century earlier when the number of Negro voters dropped from approximately 130,000 in 1896 to slightly over 1000 in 1904.¹⁰

White conservatives and political demagogues at the present time control Negro voting to a great extent just as was true in the decades of the 1880's and 1890's. Registration frauds allegedly occur. Economic pressure is

⁹C. Vann Woodward, The Strange Career of Jim Crow (New York, 1955), 127.

¹⁰Ibid.

exerted. Negroes reportedly receive pecuniary considerations in exchange for their votes. Persuasion and playing upon the Negro's sentiments and emotions are powerful forces for controlling Negro votes. The methods and mechanisms differ very little from those used in previous decades.

During the three decades following Reconstruction white Louisianians disfranchised the Negro because they wished to uphold their heritage of white supremacy. The emphasis given to Negro suffrage as a balance of power between white factions in politics and white classes of society confirms the fundamental reason why conservative whites of the state still persist in their opposition to Negro voting. The white people of Louisiana allegedly "used discrimination to the very extremity of permissible action under the Federal constitution."¹¹ The elimination of Negro voting was initiated by a violent revolution, followed by extra-legal devices, and concluded by constitutional and statutory devices. All the methods and mechanisms used proved more or less effective during the decades under consideration. Proponents of Negro disfranchisement were satisfied with their handiwork. The Negro question was temporarily settled. Most people throughout Louisiana, as well

¹¹ Paul Lewinson, Race, Class, and Party: A History of Negro Suffrage and White Politics in the South (New York, 1932), 86.

as the entire nation, were ready to concede "the failure of the plan formulated at the close of the war to elevate the black man by conferring the suffrage upon him."¹²

The question of Negro suffrage in Louisiana is far from being settled with any degree of finality. At the present time it is in a state of confusion reminiscent of its turbulent past. The Negro vote is ardently wooed by both Republican and Democratic national organizations, and even occasionally by state and local politicians. As in the past, the Negroes themselves appear still to lack a fundamental understanding of the obligations of exercising suffrage, and to a large extent still permit themselves to be used as pawns of the demagogues.

The outcome of this troubled situation in Louisiana can only be surmised. It remains to be seen whether or not the Louisiana electorate, both black and white, can profit by the lessons of the past.

¹² John D. Hicks, The American Nation (New York, 1948), 219.

ESSAY ON SOURCES

The richest primary sources of information on Negro voting in Louisiana for the period under consideration are the Louisiana State University Archives, the Acts Passed by the Legislature of Louisiana, the Constitution of the State of Louisiana (1864, 1868, 1870, 1898), the Annual Reports of the Secretary of the State of Louisiana, the General Records of the Department of Justice in the National Archives, the reports of Federal investigation committees sent to Louisiana, and Louisiana newspapers.

The most valuable collections in the Louisiana State University Archives pertaining to Negro voting are the Breda, Ficklen, Gay, Taliaferro, Ellis, Hero, Pharr, Nicholls, Sanders, Hawkins, and Marston Papers. The John R. Ficklen Papers provide background information on Negro political activities during Reconstruction. The Breda Papers contain copies of the secret ritual of the Knights of the White Camelia and items relating to the organization and activities of that body. The Taliaferro Papers reveal the attitude and activity of James G. Taliaferro, president of the Louisiana Constitutional Convention of 1868 and one of Louisiana's leading proponents of Negro suffrage. The Taliaferro Papers contain a manuscript copy of the vote for and against the Constitution of 1868, drafted pursuant to a

special order from the commander in charge of the Fifth Military District and reflecting the preponderance of Negro votes for that Constitution. The papers of the Executive Department include letters from Negro voters and from white Republicans espousing the cause of Negro voters. The Hawkins Papers and the Marston Diary contain information relative to the exodus of Negroes from Louisiana. The Ellis, Hero, Gibson, and Gay collections reveal activities of candidates for Congress in their efforts to win, or if necessary to buy, Negro votes. The most valuable single collection relating to Negro voting in the Louisiana State University Archives is that of Congressman Edward J. Gay. This collection contains letters from prominent Negro politicians to Gay informing him of their activities in behalf of his candidacy. The collection also contains sworn testimony of Gay's Negro supporters which was used in connection with the contested election between Gay and William P. Kellogg. The Nicholls Letter Books contain scattered items pertaining to Negro voting. The Scrapbooks in the Jared Y. Sanders collection contain valuable statements relative to the necessity for, and effectiveness of, the Democratic white primary system in Louisiana.

Selected acts of the Louisiana legislature, beginning with the act which provided for the printing of ballots in the early 1880's and ending with the white primary statute

in 1906, served to thwart Negro voting during the decades under consideration.

An examination of the Constitutions of Louisiana reveals provisions relating to Negro suffrage. The suffrage article of the Constitution of 1868 gave suffrage rights to all males twenty-one years of age, regardless of race, who were citizens of the United States and residents of the state for one year, with the exception of persons who had performed civil or military service for the Confederacy. The suffrage article of the Constitution of 1898 virtually disfranchised Negro voters by prohibitive literacy or property qualifications.

The Annual Report of the Secretary of the State of Louisiana, for the years 1877-1906, contains valuable statistics relating to Negro registration and to election returns.

The Source Chronological and Year Files of the General Records of the Department of Justice in the National Archives contain numerous letters from Louisiana Negroes who were persecuted for voting, or attempting to vote, for the Republican Party. This collection also contains letters from local Justice officials attempting to protect Negroes' voting rights and from special investigators sent to Louisiana by the Federal Justice Department to investigate intimidation of Negro voters and voting frauds. It also

includes documents pertaining to trials and indictments. The Instruction Books, 1878-1900, in this collection, reveal efforts of the Federal government to protect Negro voters. The bulk of the Justice Department records relating to Negro voting in Louisiana falls within the period 1878-1884, and reveals the effective control of Negro voters assumed by the Bourbon Democrats shortly following Reconstruction.

The reports of Congressional investigating committees sent to Louisiana during Reconstruction and following the riots connected with the campaign of 1878 contain valuable testimony relating to Negro voting during Reconstruction, the early post-Reconstruction period, and the exodus of 1879-1880. There is a certain amount of repetition between these committee reports and the records of the Justice Department. However, there are some noteworthy discrepancies, particularly in accounts of the riots preceding the 1878 election as recorded by Senatorial investigators in their "Reports on Elections in Louisiana"(45 Congress, 3 Session, No. 855) and as related by Negroes in their letters to Federal justice officials.

Louisiana newspapers for the decades under consideration provide valuable information on Negro voting. The New Orleans Times-Democrat, the Opelousas Courier, the Bellevue Bossier Banner, the Lake Providence Carroll Banner, and the

St. Joseph Tensas Gazette were the chief organs of the Bourbon Democracy. The New Orleans Weekly Louisianian and the New Orleans Weekly Pelican espoused the cause of Negro voters. The Weekly Louisianian was the most important Negro organ in the state and the Weekly Pelican was the only important Republican organ. The Washington Bee, a national Negro press organ, reported all major developments relating to Negro voting in Louisiana. The Natchitoches Louisiana Populist provides vital material on the Populist movement and its relation to Negro suffrage.

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of liberal thinkers who have studied Negro suffrage with a view to solving the problem it presents.

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AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Allie Bayne Windham Webb, daughter of T. J. Windham and the late Winnette Barnes Windham, was born at Blanchard, Louisiana, on February 19, 1916.

She attended elementary school at Blanchard and graduated from Mooringsport High School in 1933. She entered Louisiana State University in September, 1935, and received a Bachelor of Arts degree from the College of Arts and Sciences in 1938. After graduation she was engaged in stenographic work at Shreveport for several years.

In September, 1944, she entered the College of Education at Louisiana State University and received a Bachelor of Science degree in 1945. She was employed for two years by the Caddo Parish School Board.

She enrolled in the Louisiana State University Graduate School in June, 1946, and received a Master of Arts degree in 1948. She was employed for ten years by Francis T. Nicholls State College as a member of the faculty in the Department of Social Sciences.

During the 1960-61 school session, she was employed as Reference Archivist by the Louisiana State University, Department of Archives.

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