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ABSTRACT - THE MISSOURI COMPROMISE REVISITED

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This study concentrates on the period from the introduction of the Tallmadge amendment in February 1819 to the settling of the controversy with the famous Compromise in March 1820. The Missouri crisis is erroneously viewed as the product of politics first, with antislavery a poor second. There are examples of growing sectional antagonism before 1819. But at no time was consistent sectional unity possible on economic and political issues. Only slavery produced the unity and strength of feeling to provoke a major sectional conflict. Although strongly tainted with hatred of the Negro, Northerners were committed to antislavery in 1819. This is evident in the strength of feeling in Congress and the lasting support for anti-Missourianism amongst Northern constituents. For a majority of Northerners the crisis was not a scheme to wrestle political power from the Southern states. Such a desire cannot even be attributed to many Federalists who were accused by the South of instigating the crisis to create sectional parties.

The South, whilst admitting slavery to be an evil, was absolutely committed to the economic, political and social baggage of slavery. Adopting strict construction of the Constitution was a pragmatic response best suited to the defence of slavery.

Responsibility for passage of the Compromise lies with a minority of Northern Congressmen. These "doughfaces" cannot be treated as a coherent group, but some general conclusions are possible. The threat to Maine's statehood and the fear of a Federalist-inspired plot did not influence the doughfaces to vote with the South. Nor was the prospect of prohibiting slavery in the territories north of 36°30' a factor in their decision. The Thomas amendment, whilst appearing significant, was at the time of only minimal and symbolic importance. Both sections appreciated that Thomas's restriction was of little value. The "ceded" lands were considered to be worthless as seen through federal Indian policy, foreign affairs and the general attitude to the far West.

Another factor in securing the Compromise was the Executive. President Monroe and his Cabinet did not sit idly by, but through correspondence and policies took an active interest in the development and acceptance of the Compromise package.

The history of the Missouri Compromise is well known; but it is time for a review of the controversy and a reappraisal of the answers to a range of interesting questions.

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DECLARATION

I declare that no material in this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree in Durham or any other university.

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CHAPTER ONE - INTRODUCTION

In December 1818 the territory of Missouri applied to the United States Congress for permission to enter the Union as a state in its own right. On 13 February 1819 Representative James Tallmadge of Dutchess County, New York, introduced an amendment to the Missouri statehood bill. It provided "...That the further introduction of slavery or involuntary servitude be prohibited, except for the punishment of crimes, whereof the party shall be fully convicted, and that all children born within the said State, after the admission thereof into the Union, shall be free at the age of twenty-five years." The Tallmadge amendment was accepted by the House after a sectional vote. However, the South defeated the restrictive proviso in the Senate, leaving the issue deadlocked, as both houses refused to rescind, when the Fifteenth Congress closed on 3 March.¹

Contemporary with this debate was the discussion over admitting Arkansas to territorial status. Being a new territory there was a good constitutional justification for prohibiting slavery; Representative John W. Taylor of New York moved a motion to this effect. There was solid Southern opposition to the motion. Arkansas, being in such a southerly latitude, was always expected to be a slave territory. The bill without the restriction narrowly passed the House by a vote of 89:87; it passed the Senate after a restrictive amendment was defeated 19:14. A majority of Northern Congressmen voted against slavery as their constituents wished. But nineteen (fifteen in the House and four in the Senate) voted with the South.²

With James Tallmadge not sitting in the Sixteenth Congress, the antislavery banner was taken up by his colleague John W. Taylor. It has not been stressed enough

¹. *Annals of Congress*, 15th Congress, 2nd Session, p.1170, 1214-1216, 1438, 273-279. Hereafter references to the *Annals* will be in the following format: *Annals*, 15.ii.1170. Thus 15.ii. refers to the 1818-1819 session, 16.i. to 1819-1820 and 16.ii. to 1820-1821.

². *Annals*, 15.ii.1273-1274, 274.

that Taylor's restrictive amendment was even more moderate than that offered in 1819. Tallmadge had hoped to bar the further introduction of slavery and to set slave children free once they reached maturity. Taylor only proposed to prohibit the further introduction of slavery. No mention was made of children born into slavery.³ This meant that Missouri would enter as a slave state and would be a Southern-orientated state for more than a generation. The greater strength of feeling evident in the emotional, long and frequently tedious debates in 1820 is more surprising considering the North now sought far less than in 1819. It demonstrates the determination of the South to reject any Congressional interference with slavery whatsoever.

The Compromise solution was presented by a conference committee on 2 March 1820. Missouri would enter as a slave state with no restrictions. At the same time Maine, whose proposed statehood was threatened by the Missouri question, would be admitted as a free state in a separate bill, although as we shall see this action was of little significance in securing the Compromise. As suggested by Senator Jesse B. Thomas, slavery was to be prohibited from expanding into the territories north of the latitude 36°30', which was Missouri's southern border.⁴ The unrestricted entry of Missouri and the Thomas amendment, which had earlier been rejected by the House, were now accepted. Taylor's antislavery amendment was expunged in the House 90:87; the Thomas amendment passed 134:42.⁵

The dispute reopened for a third time in the second session of the Sixteenth Congress in 1820-1821 when Missouri's constitution was presented for approval before statehood could be granted. The 1821 debate represents an interesting postscript which sheds light on the more significant 1819-1820 crisis. The Missouri constitution included

³ Donald J. Ratcliffe, "Captain James Riley and Antislavery Sentiment in Ohio, 1819-1824," *Ohio History*, LXXXI (1972), p.85. For a different interpretation see George Dangerfield, *The Awakening of American Nationalism, 1815-1828* (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), pp.122-123n. Taylor proposed: "...that there shall be neither slavery nor involuntary servitude in the said State...And, Also, That the said provision shall not be construed to alter the condition or civil rights of any person now held to service or labor in the said Territory." *Annals*, 16.i.947.

⁴ Rep. J.W. Taylor had made a similar proposal during the Arkansas debate, but his line would have excluded slavery from Missouri. *Annals*, 15.ii.1279-1283.

⁵ *Annals*, 16.i.1586-1588.

a clause providing for the prohibition of free Negro immigration into the new state.⁶ The Senate accepted the constitution with a rider,⁷ whereas a House committee, chaired by William Lowndes of South Carolina, recommended acceptance of the constitution, leaving the judiciary to determine whether or not the federal Constitution was being violated.⁸ After this Southern-controlled committee had implied that the constitution was seriously flawed, the House rejected the statehood bill in a sectional vote on 13 December 1820 by 93 votes to 79 votes.⁹

The issue was deadlocked between the two sections and was never going to be resolved by a debate which at times resembled what Representative Archer of Maryland called "a mere dispute between tweedle-dum and tweedle-dee."¹⁰ The solution was a declaratory proviso, accepted in late February 1821, in which Congress effectively avoided its responsibilities as the only way to end the wrangling.¹¹ The 1821 crisis demonstrated the reluctance of the North to submit to Southern demands which, with some justification, were thought to be unreasonable.

⁶. For the full text of the Missouri constitution see, Floyd C. Shoemaker, *Missouri's Struggle for Statehood, 1804-1821* (Jefferson City, 1916; reprinted - Russell & Russell, 1969), app.III, pp.329-359. The offending clause was article III, section 26.

⁷. The rider was suggested by Tennessee's John Eaton and said, that passage should not be interpreted to mean that Congress approved of any clause in the Missouri constitution which might be in conflict with the federal Constitution. *Annals*, 16.ii.100, 102, 116.

⁸. *Annals*, 16.ii.453-455.

⁹. *Annals*, 16.ii.670.

¹⁰. *Annals*, 16.ii.852. Archer was referring to the debate on amending the House journal on 12 January 1821. In a succession of votes the House decided that Missouri was not yet a state, nor a territory nor a late territory. Then they discussed whether the Speaker had "altered" or "corrected" the journal when referring to Missouri's status. *Annals*, 16.ii.842-856, 862. The Missouri issue also disrupted the counting of the electoral college votes for the Presidential election. Because Missouri was in a condition of legal limbo, it was agreed that the college vote would be announced in two ways, with and without Missouri's votes, which either way would not effect Monroe's unchallenged victory. During the announcement of the result uproar occurred when it was asked whether or not Missouri's votes had been counted. Although Southerners argued that both incidents served to highlight Missouri's plight, such delay was not conducive to finding a solution or soothing Northern tempers. *Annals*, 16.ii.1152. Glyndon Van Deusen, *The Life of Henry Clay* (Boston: Little, Brown & Co, 1937), p.143. Alfred Lightfoot, "Henry Clay and the Missouri Question," *Missouri Historical Review*, LXI (1967), p.160. *Scioto Gazette* (Chillicothe, Ohio), 28 Feb 1821.

¹¹. *Annals*, 16.ii.390, 1239-1240.

The bare history of the Missouri question is well known, and it is widely recognised as an important crisis in the pre-Civil War era. Yet it has been the subject of only one thorough historical work. Glover Moore's *Missouri Controversy* is a very persuasive and cogent analysis of the crisis as well as being a mine of information. But perhaps the Missouri question has been the victim of Moore's success. By stressing the political aspects of the dispute, at the expense of antislavery, the whole question seems less important in the context of the ante-bellum period. Furthermore, by suggesting Congress exaggerated the importance of the issue, the crisis appears little stonger than a Congressional flight of fancy.¹² Public interest, particularly in the North, Moore claims, went through a cycle of indifference during the first debate, temporary enthusiasm during the winter of 1819-1820, apathetic resignation for the Compromise and then a desire to bury the issue.¹³ His emphasis is too negative. If the public were not greatly agitated, then the crisis, as regards the safety of the Union, was not too serious. Therefore, to give the Missouri question its status as a major break-up, it is necessary to quash the notion that the public were uninterested in the fate of Missouri.

It is true to say that public interest was limited during the first Missouri debate. The panic and economic depression of 1819 were the overriding topics of conversation. In hard times it is to be expected that people will be more concerned with their own survival than with a humanitarian gesture to a disliked race. The Missouri question, "does not excite half the attention of a Royal birthday," said the Boston *Yankee* in May 1819.¹⁴ It should be remembered that these Missouri debates lasted only three weeks and Senate speeches were hardly reported; communications were very slow, which made it very difficult to whip up public enthusiasm quickly, especially when Congress was no longer sitting.¹⁵ However, in June and July 1819, once it had finished printing

¹² Moore argues that it was more than a "Congressional tempest in a teapot," but he still concludes that "the mass of the people were not unduly alarmed." Glover Moore, *The Missouri Controversy* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1953; reprinted - Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1967), p.175.

¹³ Moore, p.186.

¹⁴ *Scioto Gazette*, 11 June 1819; also in Moore, p.66.

¹⁵ Don E. Fehrenbacher, *The Dred Scott Case: Its Significance in American Law and Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), p.106.

the space-consuming Congressional debates, the *Scioto Gazette* in Ohio printed a number of articles critical of slavery.¹⁶ Missouri was not the main theme of these articles but they at least show some public debate on the slave issue at a time when public opinion had been thought to be dormant.

The greater popular enthusiasm for the Missouri question was produced by public meetings throughout the North held in the winter of 1819-1820. The *St. Louis Enquirer* complained that meetings were held in "every dog hole town...in the Northern states."¹⁷ The antislavery crusade tapped a deep well of Northern public concern. Surely the wave of meetings ended because they had served their purpose. There was little point in producing further resolutions when Congressmen had returned to Washington fully aware of constituency opinion.

After the wave of popular interest in the Missouri controversy, indifference set in, believes Moore. Newspaper evidence is used by Moore to demonstrate the decline in public participation in the debates. "Never was representation less representative of the sentiment at home than in this affair," said the *Philadelphia Democratic Press*. The *Pittsburgh Statesman* would not print an essay on Missouri because the paper was fed up with the issue. The *National Intelligencer* pointed out that interest in Congress was far greater than in public circles. All these comments are taken, by Moore, from 1821. By then there was disenchantment with what appeared to be a pointless and never ending debate. But this evidence cannot be used to imply a similar sentiment in 1820. Furthermore, evidence from 1820 has been misinterpreted. After contrasting attitudes in and out of Congress the *Baltimore Patriot* remarked, "The people do not yet participate in that unhappy heat of zeal and controversy." But how does this prove that the people were not interested? Lack of agitation does not imply apathy. The South were committed to opposing the restriction, yet agitation was not necessary because there was a consensus in the section on the issue. Why cannot such an explanation be used to justify a similar situation in the North? The interpretation given to a comment by the

¹⁶. *Scioto Gazette*, 11 June, 2, 23, July 1819.

¹⁷. Moore, p.81.

Cincinnati *Inquisitor Advertiser* of 21 March 1820 seems particularly one-sided. "The *black* question with which they have been so long agitated, and with which the country had become much disgusted," is such a vague statement that it can support two points of view.¹⁸ Disgust was aroused either because interest had abated in the subject (as Moore suggests), or because a controversial topic commanding public attention had not yet been settled. Surely equal credence must be given to the analysis of the *Cleveland Herald*: "A question which excited more interest and anxiety in the minds of the people of the United States, we believe, has not been agitated in Congress since the formation of the Federal Constitution."¹⁹

Slight coverage of the Missouri question in some papers does not necessarily mean that the issue was unimportant or unable to command interest. Most papers had a set view on the question which they stated and which usually coincided with that of their readership. Repetition of the basic point was unnecessary and would make for poor reading. With the Congressional debate at stalemate between January and March 1820 there was little to be written which had not been printed before. The *National Intelligencer*, which was critical of some papers for not paying Missouri enough attention, even decided to limit its coverage of the question (though it found it impossible to do so). With commendable common sense, the editors wrote, "...we decline to publish any more essays on the Missouri question, or in any manner connected with it, until the subject shall have been acted on by Congress. Further contention will only serve to exasperate into enmity what is now mere difference of opinion, in which some feeling mingles."²⁰

Contrasts have been made between strength of feeling in Washington and elsewhere, leading to the accusation that politicians exaggerated the importance of the issue. Congressmen were good judges of public opinion, gathered through frequently

¹⁸. Moore, pp.171-172.

¹⁹. *Cleveland Herald*, 8 Feb 1820, in *Annals of Cleveland, 1818-1935, a Digest and Index of the Newspaper Record of Events and Opinions*, abstracted by J.Young & W.Kenney (Works Progress Administration of Ohio project no. 16823), vol.III, p.66. Hereafter referred to as *Annals of Cleveland*.

²⁰. *National Intelligencer* (Washington, D.C.), 25 Dec 1819.

copious correspondence with their constituency friends. In the Congressional debates there are many references to constituency opinion. Representative Edwards of Connecticut spoke of "extreme interest," and Anderson of Kentucky talked of, "an interest in the proceedings...which no recent occasion has inspired...interest, so deeply felt and universally displayed."²¹ Admittedly disenchantment and weariness grew as the debates appeared to be fruitless. But this was in the nature of the system. Congressmen wanted to be heard on the issue, not least to satisfy their constituents, this obviously led to numerous repetitive speeches.²² Is it not to be expected that agitation on Missouri would be greatest in Washington? Unlike economic distress which was visible, the Missouri question could have no immediate tangible impact on Northerners. Therefore it was logical for most heat to be generated in the centre of debate - Washington. The capital was the only place where the two opposing sections could meet on equal terms. In no other place was it possible for passions to be raised to the same extent through debate with the opposition. Interest in Washington went beyond the politicians. Mrs Margaret Smith provides a vivid picture of society interest in the question. So many ladies attended the Senate debates in 1820 that they were accommodated on the Senate floor and Mrs Smith commented that Caroline B. "is quite enchanted with the debates and spends all her mornings on the Capitol."²³

By suggesting that the Compromise was met, by the Democratic press, with indifference, and a desire to forget the whole issue, Moore seems to cast doubt on the strength of the earlier (and in his view temporary) interest in the affair.²⁴ Reasons for accepting the Compromise will be dealt with later, but here it is enough to say that

²¹. *Annals*, 16.i.1440, 1253.

²². Rep. Plumer said he could not add to "what has already been repeatedly said by others...." Everett S. Brown (ed), *The Missouri Compromises and Presidential Politics, 1820-1825 from the Letters of William Plumer, Jr.* (St. Louis: Missouri Historical Society, 1926), p.8. Hereafter referred to as *Plumer Letters*.

²³. Mrs. Smith to Mrs. Kirkpatrick, 30 Jan 1820, in Gaillard Hunt (ed), *The First Forty Years of Washington Society in the Family Letters of Margaret Bayard Smith* (New York, 1906; reprinted - New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co, 1965), pp.148-149.

²⁴. Moore, p.188.

acceptance of the Compromise cannot be used as evidence of either fickle interest or of later indifference.

This study aims to answer two broad sets of questions about this major crisis. First, why was there a crisis? Or rather, what did each side seek to gain or defend? A political analysis of the controversy points to both sections hoping to bring Missouri into their sphere of influence. Missouri's votes in Congress, particularly in the Senate where there was an even sectional balance, would help determine whether the United States developed along a path set out by the North or South. Of course, for the South political power was also a means by which to defend slavery. Erroneously, a Southern critique of Northern motives in the crisis has often been accepted, putting greater emphasis on political considerations rather than on morality.

For the Northern free states, Missouri provided the first justifiable opportunity to limit the expansion of slavery. Prior to 1819 restriction was rendered unnecessary by the Northwest Ordinance and inappropriate in the South by the Southwest Ordinance, specific requirements to recognise slavery in lands ceded by Georgia and North Carolina (the future states of Alabama, Mississippi and Tennessee) and by the Louisiana Purchase Treaty (affecting the property of those resident in Louisiana and Missouri).²⁵ Northerners felt justified in ignoring the latter Treaty as regarding Missouri because it could be argued slavery was now reaching too far North. Not only did Missouri share her latitude with slave-holding states but also with free Indiana, Illinois, Ohio, Pennsylvania and New Jersey. Furthermore the unofficial boundary between free and slave states would be violated.²⁶ The Mason-Dixon line linking with the Ohio River formed a mental and physical divide between the two sections; the line could be

²⁵ The Southwest Ordinance of 1790 by omitting all reference to slavery, implied slavery could exist in the Southern territories. Donald L. Robinson, *Slavery in the Structure of American Politics, 1765-1820* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1971), p.385.

²⁶ Moore, pp.24-25.

naturally extended along the River Missouri or more sensibly along Missouri's southern border.²⁷

Missouri's request for admission coincided with a greater inclination in the North to prohibit slavery. After the War of 1812 the Republic enjoyed a surer international footing, and Americans could examine their own internal problems. Any analysis of the Republic must have pointed to the contradiction of the presence of slavery in a liberal society. The raising of such a controversial question was made easier by the Era of Good Feelings. The era saw a burying of party differences and a broad agreement on policies made possible by the national experience in the War of 1812. The era was largely associated with Virginian President James Monroe who enjoyed bipartisan support for two terms whilst believing the "existence of parties is not necessary to free government." Politicians, no longer confined by party discipline, were less likely to resist sectional pressures.²⁸ The issue which divided the sections more than any other was Negro slavery. The extent of the Northern commitment to antislavery has not been taken seriously enough by historians of the Missouri crisis.²⁹ Whilst political motivation, as emphasized in the Federalist-plot interpretation, cannot be overlooked, this study aims to demonstrate slavery to be the crux of the matter.

The strength of convictions in both sections manifested between 1819 and 1821 prompts a second major question: how was the Compromise of 1820 produced and what did it mean? Greater emphasis must be put on the role of the minority of Northern Congressmen, known as the doughfaces, who voted with the South to secure the Compromise. Did the fear of a Federalist plot to create sectional parties really influence their vote, or was fear of disunion more important? Was their support for the South really unexpected?

27. This is what Thomas's line at 36°30' effectively did, although of course Missouri was the exception to the rule. See, Zed H. Burns, "Sectional Controversy and the Missouri Compromise," *Southern Quarterly*, V (1967), p.342; D.L.Robinson, p.416.

28. Harry Ammon, *James Monroe: The Quest for National Identity* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1971), pp.371, 378. Don E.Fehrenbacher, *The South and Three Sectional Crises* (Baton Rouge & London: Louisiana State University Press, 1980), pp.13-14.

29. For example, Moore, p.25; Eric Foner, *Politics and Ideology in the Age of the Civil War* (New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), pp.38-39. Burns, p.344.

It appears that the South made concessions to an uncompromising North. The South allowed the vast Northern territories to be shut off to slavery, whilst the institution could only expand in a confined space below 36°30'. So, why did the South agree to a Compromise which was so detrimental to their future interests - a solution supported at the time by John C. Calhoun, but later repudiated as dangerous and iniquitous? There are a number of explanatory factors but one in particular has been disregarded. Only by looking at men's concepts of what the United States constituted in geographic terms is it possible to understand why Southerners and a minority of Northerners agreed to the Compromise.

Whilst examining the traditional explanations of voting on the Compromise, this study will also look at a neglected source of pressure on Congressmen. The Executive's role has been either overlooked or criticised which is unfortunate because President Monroe and his Cabinet played a major role in securing the passage and acceptance of the Compromise. In this respect, was the administration far-sighted enough to accommodate the problem of slavery expansion?

CHAPTER TWO - THE NATURE OF SECTIONALISM

The Missouri crisis can be brought down to a simple political analysis. By 1819 the North and South were already pursuing their own sectional interests, to the detriment of the other section, whilst also being critical of the others' lifestyle and culture. The slave issue was the ideal vehicle for voicing political aspirations as slavery could be blamed for a whole host of Northern ills. The existence of slavery in Missouri would determine whether or not the state would have a Northern or Southern outlook. Each section wanted Missouri to be added to their sphere of economic and political influence so as to affect the Congressional balance of power, particularly in the Senate. In 1819, after the admission of Alabama, there were eleven free and eleven slave states, so Missouri would tip the balance one way or the other. The South naturally expected Missouri to become a slave state. She already had an established slave population of 10,222 out of a total population of 66,000 and she lay in the same latitude as slave holding Delaware, Kentucky, Maryland and Virginia. In the past, the existence of slavery had never proved a great obstacle to a territory applying for statehood. It was the unexpected popular Northern objection to slavery in Missouri which frightened the South and prompted them to view the restrictive movement as an attempt by the North to gain greater political power and the benefits to be brought by such power.¹ "It is a question of political ascendancy, and power, and the Eastern interests are determined to succeed regardless of the consequences, the constitution or our national happiness," wrote Andrew Jackson of the Missouri question. The South was defending

¹. There had been other attempts to restrict slavery in the territories, but these had not been widely supported. Antislavery restrictions were proposed, unsuccessfully, on both the prospective Mississippi and Louisiana territories in 1798 and 1804 respectively. D.L.Robinson, pp.387-391, 397-400, 408. In 1812, when Missouri became a territory, an amendment restricting slavery was offered in the House. It was defeated by a wide margin attributed to the wish to avoid the issue when war was imminent. In April 1818, the House refused to consider Rep. Livermore's proposal for a constitutional amendment to prohibit slavery in all future states. Tallmadge objected to the Illinois constitution in November 1818 because it sanctioned indentured servitude which was too similar to slavery. His motion passed but 33 Northerners stood in opposition with the South. Moore, pp.32-34.

constitutional rights, argued Jackson; the General did not even mention the question of slavery in this letter.² This type of analysis is used by Glover Moore to explain the crisis presented by the restrictive amendment.³ It is, as will be shown, a persuasive argument, explaining the crisis in terms of sectional paranoia over their political and economic interests. But this assumes that sectional feelings over such matters were strong enough to produce this crisis; and that the slave issue alone was not sufficiently powerful to provoke sectional tempers. The extent of sectionalism, on issues other than slavery, must be questioned.

It was not necessary for the South to identify power-seeking as a Northern motive, it was made perfectly clear by Northern spokesmen. The three-fifths compromise in the Constitution which counted slaves as three-fifths of a man for representation and taxation purposes rankled many Northerners. Federalist Senator Rufus King, in particular, was a lifelong critic of slave representation. He estimated that an end to the three-fifths clause would result in the South losing twenty Representatives from the House and therefore twenty Presidential electors.⁴ Thomas Jefferson's narrow victory over John Adams in 1801 was attributed to slave representation. As many as fifteen electors may have represented slaves and helped Jefferson to a majority of nine in the electoral college.⁵ "To secure to the owner of property in slaves greater political power than is allowed to the owners of other and equivalent property, seems to be contrary to our theory of the equality of personal rights," Rufus King argued. Legislative memorials from Massachusetts, New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Vermont openly supported the stance against the ratio.⁶

2. Andrew Jackson to Andrew Jackson Donelson, 16 April 1820, in John S. Bassett (ed), *The Correspondence of Andrew Jackson* (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Institution, 1926-1935; reprinted - New York: Klaus Reprint Co, 1969), vol.III, pp.20-21. Hereafter referred to as *Jackson Correspondence*.

3. Moore, ch.1.

4. Charles R.King (ed), *The Life and Correspondence of Rufus King* (New York, 1894-1900; reprinted - New York: Da Capo Press, 1971), vol.VI, app.IV, pp.690-703. Hereafter referred to as *King Correspondence*.

5. Moore, p.11. Don E.Fehrenbacher, *The South and Three Sectional Crises*, p.11.

6. Charles S.Sydnor, *The Development of Southern Sectionalism, 1819-1848* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1948), p.127. Albert F.Simpson, "The Political Significance of Slave

Northern criticism of the three-fifths ratio was aimed at not just recovering power from the South but in particular, from Virginia which was legitimately viewed as the most powerful state in the Union. Virginia's domination of the Presidency was criticised by Rufus King: "Old Mr Adams as he is the first, will on this hypothesis be the last President from a free state."⁷ The Dominion State was seen as a bedrock of conservatism which only served to block Northern economic expansion. A good example of how Northerners equated Virginia with both excessive influence and slavery is shown by a satirical pamphlet produced in Connecticut in 1820 which finished: "Given at our imperial city of Richmond, the first year of the crusade for unlimited slavery."⁸

This critique of Southern control of the political system could not command enough Northern support to produce a major crisis. The issue was not new and in the past had proved to be only a minor inconvenience. Attacking slave representation was not the hobby of Northerners as a whole, but primarily the Federalist party and those from Massachusetts. In 1804 the Massachusetts legislature proposed a constitutional amendment to abolish slave representation, after President Jefferson had repealed Federalist laws and Louisiana had been purchased in the face of Federalist opposition. The Ely amendment was introduced to Congress in December 1804 by Senator Timothy Pickering, who hinted at disunion, and it was immediately tabled. Another legislative memorial from Massachusetts to Congress in 1813 called for a ban on the admittance of slave states to the Union and for an end to slave representation. The Hartford Convention in 1814 pointed to the ratio as their major grievance.⁹ There was much Northern opposition to such proposals. The Ohio legislature described the Ely amendment as "inexpedient" as it would "tend to excite state jealousies." A rejection of

Representation, 1787-1821," *Journal of Southern History*, VII (1941), pp.335, 337. *King Correspondence*, VI, app.IV, pp.697-699.

7. Rufus King to J.A.King, 6 Feb 1820, *King Correspondence*, VI, pp.266-267.

8. Alice D.Adams, *The Neglected Period of Antislavery in America, 1801-1831* (Boston, 1908; reprinted - Gloucester, Mass.: Athenaeum Press, 1964), pp.213-214.

9. Simpson, pp.323-326, 332. Linda K.Kerber, *Federalists in Dissent: Imagery and Ideology in Jeffersonian America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1970), ch.2.

the clause would be "inconsistent with good policy," declared Ohio in 1816.¹⁰ Throughout the whole period the North had a majority in the House of Representatives. It was lack of Northern solidarity more than Southern intransigence which blocked controversial measures. Of greater significance, an end to the ratio would not affect the balance of power in the Senate where each state had two Senators regardless of the size of the state. Before Missouri threatened the sectional balance, the South controlled the Senate because Northerners like Senators Edwards and Thomas of Illinois were often willing to vote with the South. Furthermore the North had not objected to the entry of Southern states in the past which had also affected the so-called balance of power. Even if Missouri was to come in as a free state there would be no guarantee it would side with the North.¹¹ Sectional labels are rather distracting here. Members normally voted, not to maintain the ascendancy of a sectional block but in the best interests of their state. As the Missouri Compromise showed, even on issues which could secure unity like the future of slavery, a Northern majority could not be sustained in the House and it was impossible in the Senate.

Moreover the South was able to defend slave representation. After all it was constitutional and an essential compromise to which the North had agreed as the price for Union.¹² As Senator William Smith of South Carolina pointed out, slave representation also meant a heavier tax bill for the Southern states which paid for measures to benefit all Americans. Representative Alexander Smyth of Virginia argued slave representation meant that "We represent the States, the whole population, and the whole wealth of the community."¹³

10. William C. Cochran, "The Western Reserve and the Fugitive Slave Law: a Prelude to the Civil War," *Western Reserve Historical Society Collections*, CI (1920), pp.68-69.

11. A point made by Rep. Plumer (N.H.); *Annals*, 16.i.1437.

12. Although Rep. Plumer said the North would not have agreed to the Union if it was to be in a permanent minority; *Annals*, 16.i.1438. Fehrenbacher, *Dred Scott*, p.21.

13. Ronald C. Woolsey, "The West Becomes a Problem: the Missouri Controversy and Slavery Expansion as the Southern Dilemma," *Missouri Historical Review*, LXXVII (1983), p.414. It should be noted that internal taxes were abolished in 1801 after the Federalists had lost office. Such taxes were reinstated to fund the War of 1812, and were repealed in December 1817.

Thus it can be seen that the issue of Northern ambition for political power should not be given much influence as a cause of the Missouri crisis. It was an oft-quoted debating point which was merely on the supplementary list of grievances. Although power was not the driving force behind the Northern restrictionists, it was important because the South mistakenly perceived this to be the case. This was especially so when the South associated the crisis with a Federalist party plot to increase its own waning influence.

By 1819 an economic depression shook the Era of Good Feelings and the ideal of one-party unity faced the reality of divisive issues. However, there was still enough of the positive spirit of the era left for people to believe that antagonistic issues would be avoided if at all possible. Therefore it was a shock to the South to face the Tallmadge amendment, the first popular challenge to the expansion of slavery. It was unthinkable that the Union should be threatened for the Negro, so political power must have been the motive, the South argued.

It was inevitable that the Federalist party should be the object of Southern jibes. One of the purposes of the Era of Good Feelings was to appease the Federalist party, many of whose members had been alienated by the Jeffersonian Republican party and the War of 1812.¹⁴ The Federalists had threatened disunion in 1804, 1808 and 1814-1815. The adoption of Federalist policies like the national Bank, and Monroe's assertion that he would govern without distinction of party, did much to conciliate the Federalists. The official party dwindled as voters and politicians moved into the Republican camp. But Federalists were still held in suspicion; Monroe did not appoint any to offices within his gift (with the sole exception of Van Rensselaer in the second term). For the South, the Missouri crisis was the plot of a dying party to reassert itself on a major issue by creating geographic parties on a sectional issue. "The Federalists, completely put down and despairing of ever rising again under the old divisions of Whig and Tory, devised a new one of slave-holding and non-slave-holding States, which, while it had a semblance of being moral, was at the same time geographical, and calculated to give

¹⁴ Shaw Livermore, *The Twilight of Federalism - the Disintegration of the Federalist party, 1815-1830* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1962), pp.56-57.

them ascendancy," claimed Thomas Jefferson.¹⁵ The South had exerted control over the Presidency and Congress by its alliance with the Middle States, such as New York and Pennsylvania. A Northern-based party exploiting the slave issue could pull Pennsylvania, in particular, away from the South, thus diminishing Southern power in national councils. Harrison Gray Otis commented, "As it is, her [Virginia's] hand shakes - Pennsylvania unanimous' against her is what she has never seen that I remember."¹⁶ During the crisis Pennsylvania was "assailed, coaxed, flattered and menaced, in order to detach her from her union with the free states," claimed Rufus King.¹⁷ The South assumed Federalist involvement in the crisis inevitably meant something other than slavery was at stake. Federalists were seen to be closely involved with the Missouri question. Not only was slave representation one of their major grievances, but the Federalists were seen to be behind much anti-Missouri political action, and for good reason.

The first meeting called to support restriction was held in the Federalist stronghold of Burlington, New Jersey on 30 August 1819. This meeting called a statewide meeting at Trenton on 29 October 1819 which unanimously adopted a resolution critical of slavery and established a correspondence committee to encourage other meetings. Prominent former Federalist Congressman for Philadelphia Joseph Hopkinson was associated with this meeting.¹⁸ New York was next to convene a meeting, attended by 2,000 people, on 16 November 1819. Theodore Dwight, editor of the New York *Daily Advertiser* and Secretary of the Hartford Convention, was prominent in encouraging the meeting. He was a keen critic of Virginia, calling the state "Naturally the most arrogant and haughty, and considering it her province...to

15. Jefferson to Gallatin, 26 Dec 1820, in Paul L.Ford (ed), *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson* (London & New York: G.P.Putnam's Sons, 1899), vol.X, pp.175-178. Hereafter referred to as *Writings of Jefferson*. Richard H.Brown, *The Missouri Compromise: Political Statesmanship or Unwise Evasion?* (Boston: D.C.Heath, 1964), p.73.

16. H.G.Otis to William Sullivan, 9 Feb 1820, in Samuel E.Morison, *Harrison Gray Otis, 1765-1848, the Urbane Federalist* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1969), p.427.

17. King to C.Gore, 20 Feb 1820, *King Correspondence*, VI, pp.278-280.

18. Moore, pp.67, 69-71.

dictate...public opinion and public policy."¹⁹ This meeting established an active correspondence committee which spurred meetings throughout the North.²⁰ At the request of the New York correspondence committee Rufus King wrote up his unrecorded Senate speech, putting greater emphasis on the moral side; the committee reproduced the speech in pamphlet form.²¹ It was this pamphlet which led Senator Harrison Gray Otis from Massachusetts to change his allegiance to the restrictionist side.²² King was credited with encouraging the antislavery forces in New England after meeting Daniel Webster, William Tudor (editor of the *North American Review*) and Supreme Court Justice Joseph Story.²³ The Boston memorial to Congress was closely modelled on King's speech.²⁴ So by the end of 1819 King and the Federalists were perceived to be involved at the centre of restrictionist activity. For the South the meetings were proof that the Federalists were misrepresenting and manipulating public opinion.

Throughout the Missouri debates the South were vociferous in their attacks on King's motives. He had been Federalist candidate for the Vice-Presidency in 1804 and 1808, and for the Presidency in 1816, so he was assumed to be the leader of the party. Suspicions about King were raised because of his motivating role in the crisis. In the 1818-1819 session he avoided moral criticism of slavery and concentrated on the constitutional arguments against slavery, especially the iniquity of the three-fifths

¹⁹ New York *Daily Advertiser*, 19 Jan 1820, in Cecil B. Egerton, "Rufus King and the Missouri Question," (Doctoral Dissertation, Claremont University, 1968), p.144.

²⁰ Moore, p.79.

²¹ John T. Irving to Rufus King, 19 Nov 1819; King to Irving, 22 Nov 1819, *King Correspondence*, VI, pp.233-234. 1819 Senate speech in *ibid.*, pp.690-703.

²² Egerton, p.83. Morison, p.426.

²³ Homer C. Hockett, "Rufus King and the Missouri Compromise," *Missouri Historical Review*, II (1908), p.217.

²⁴ "A Memorial to the Congress of the United States on the Subject of Restraining the Increase of Slavery in New States to be Admitted into the Union," in Charles M. Wiltse, *The Papers of Daniel Webster: Speeches and Formal Writings* (Hanover & London: University of New England Press, 1986), vol.I, pp.45-59. Charles M. Wiltse (ed), *The Papers of Daniel Webster: Correspondence* (Hanover, N.H.: University of New England Press, 1974), vol.I, p.268. *King Correspondence*, VI, p.241. Hockett, pp.216-217.

clause. Slavery was bad because it adversely affected national productivity and military power, rather than because it was immoral.²⁵ King's 1820 Senate speech was seen as deliberately provocative and designed to make political capital. In contrast to his 1819 speech, he turned to a moral attack on slavery, declaring all laws void if they sanctioned slavery. He turned from using the law of the Constitution, to the law of nature.²⁶ This speech enraged the South. The *Richmond Enquirer* said King was "exposed in the eyes of his countrymen, goaded by an unholy ambition, attempting to clutch the office, which we forever trust will elude his grasp."²⁷ Writing to Monroe, Jefferson said King was "ready to risk the union for any chance of restoring his party to power."²⁸ Similarly Senator John Williams Walker of Alabama wrote, "He has sailed the tempest which threatens the peace and existence of this Union, merely to ride it into power."²⁹

The creation of a sectional party can be seen as a Federalist aim. Federalist Senator from Maryland, Robert H. Goldsborough, wrote to King of the importance of maintaining the Federalist party and creating an alliance of Northern and Eastern states to secure the next Presidency. In his reply King stated, "You have correctly understood and expressed my political Principles and opinions."³⁰ King later said that the government would now be "in hands which ought to possess it," if Massachusetts had done her duty and resisted Virginia in Congress in 1820.³¹

The plot idea had real potency, giving to the South another issue around which to rally its opposition. Southerners were absolutely convinced that the Missouri crisis was fostered to create sectional parties. This view was put forward by Thomas Hart

²⁵. Robert Ernst, *Rufus King: American Federalist* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1968), pp.370-371.

²⁶. King to C.Gore, 17 Feb 1820, *King Correspondence*, VI, pp.276-278.

²⁷. Quoted in *Zanesville Express* (Zanesville, Ohio), 15 Mar 1820.

²⁸. Jefferson to Monroe, 3 Mar 1820, *Monroe Papers* (Library of Congress). Moore p.253.

²⁹. Senator Walker to Judge Tait, 11 Feb 1820, Hugh C.Bailey, "Alabama Political Leaders and the Missouri Compromise," *Alabama Review*, IX (1956), p.127.

³⁰. Dangerfield, *Nationalism*, pp.120-121.

³¹. King to C.Gore, 9 Feb 1823, *King Correspondence*, VI, pp.499-501.

Benton: "The Missouri question threatened the total overthrow of all political parties upon principle, and the substitution of geographical parties discriminated by the slave line, and of course destroying the just and proper action of the federal government, and leading eventually to a separation of the States."³² Representative Johnson of Virginia explained Federalist motives as "Ambition dressed in the meek habiliments of religion, with humanity on her lips, whilst the love of power swells in her heart."³³ This conviction was only possible because of the deep contempt in which Northern Federalists were held. The Era of Good Feelings had done little to convince Southerners that Federalists were fit to govern or be trusted to maintain the Union.³⁴ Former Virginia Senator John W. Eppes feared a slide back to the "old Federal notions of 1798" and he insisted there was no common ground between himself and Federalists such as Rufus King or Harrison Gray Otis.³⁵ In January 1820 the *National Intelligencer* printed a series of letters from "One of the convention" which claimed disunion was not the wish of the Hartford Convention. A succession of critical replies were received. Massachusetts Congressman Henry Shaw rebuked the paper for printing the original letter; he said the Convention was a "lasting disgrace." Eight letters from "Massachusetts" went to exhaustive lengths to prove that disunion was the aim of the convention.³⁶ Numerous speeches in Congress referred to the present disunionist aims of the Federalists. Hatred of the Hartford Convention men was ever present. In justifying strict construction to John Calhoun, David Walker, Representative from Kentucky, gave this example: "No sir I would not have my son kill Indians, murderers,

³². Thomas Hart Benton, *Thirty Years View* (New York: D.Appleton & Co, 1854-1856), vol.I, p.10.

³³. *Annals*, 16.i.1371.

³⁴. Charles H. Ambler, *Thomas Ritchie: A Study in Virginia Politics* (Richmond: Bell Book & Stationery Co, 1913), p.72.

³⁵. Eppes to James Barbour, 3 May 1820, in Lyon G. Tyler, "Letters to James Barbour, Senator of Virginia in the Congress of the United States," *William and Mary Quarterly Magazine*, 1st series, X (1901), pp.22-24. Hereafter referred to as *Letters to Barbour*.

³⁶. *National Intelligencer*, 8, 11, 13, 15, 18, 25, 27, 29 Jan, 10 Feb 1820. "One of the convention" was a pseudonym for H.G.Otis; see Morison, p.422.

horse thieves, Hartford Convention men or traitors, unless agreeable to the Strict letter...of the law."³⁷

The plot idea thickened because King's involvement was associated with New York politics. It was no secret that the state was disenchanted with the Virginia Dynasty. New York felt it was not receiving enough political influence commensurate with its economic position. In 1812 New York's De Witt Clinton ran against James Madison for the Presidency, losing only narrowly. Hopes for a Northern President in 1816 were dashed when Governor Daniel D.Tompkins was offered only the Vice-Presidency. The second choice of some New Yorkers, Southerner William Crawford, did not even make the ticket.³⁸ On the policy front, the Empire State was angered by the withdrawal of federal funding for the Erie canal.³⁹ Given the state's rather estranged relations with the federal government, it was easy for the South to associate the antislavery movement with a deliberate attempt by New York to harm Southern interests.

The restrictionist movement seemed to be centred on New York. Both James Tallmadge and John Taylor represented New York, as did Rufus King. The two Representatives were connected with the Clintonian faction; and Tallmadge's brother was related to Clinton through marriage.⁴⁰ To Senator Walker of Alabama, Clinton was "that other arch intriguer."⁴¹ By running against Madison in 1812 Clinton alienated Southern Republicans; he had accepted Federal support for his 1812 campaign and his party still courted Federalist votes.⁴² This was because a split occurred in the New York Republican party during 1817 and 1818 which resulted in the Bucktail faction of Martin

³⁷. Walker to Calhoun, 23 Jan 1820, in W.Edwin Hemphill (ed), *The Papers of John C.Calhoun* (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1969), vol.IV, pp.592-594.

³⁸. Donald B.Cole, *Martin Van Buren and the American Political System* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), pp.46-48. Chase C.Mooney, *William H.Crawford, 1772-1834* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1974), pp.213-214.

³⁹. Egerton, pp.10-13.

⁴⁰. Moore, p.36.

⁴¹. Senator Walker to Judge Tait, 11 Feb 1820, Bailey, p.127.

⁴². Cole, p.58.

Van Buren posing a serious challenge to the Clintonians. In order to reassert his position, Clinton began wooing Federalist support, most evident when Federalist Assemblymen helped Clintonians to the Assembly Speakership and on to the Council of Appointments in early 1819. From then on the Bucktails used the charge of Federalism against Clinton as their electioneering weapon.⁴³

In February 1819 the New York legislature was unable to decide upon its choice for United States Senator. The Clinton and Bucktail candidates each received fifty-one votes, King trailed with only twenty-eight votes. Yet by December 1819 both Van Buren and Clinton supported the candidature of King, creating the impression that a deal had been struck with the Federalists. On 8 January 1820 Rufus King was chosen as Senator for New York, with only three electors dissenting.⁴⁴ By uniting on a Federalist candidate New York was seen to endorse his antislavery stance and his position as Northern party leader. The gubernatorial campaign in New York also raised the spectre of a resurrected Federalist party. With Federalist support Clinton beat Tompkins, accusing Tompkins of being uncommitted on Missouri (the Bucktails were subsequently dubbed the "slave ticket").⁴⁵

Yet, the Federalist plot was a myth; the Missouri crisis cannot be attributed to a Federalist conspiracy. The meetings were not part of a Federalist trick. The role of Rufus King has been greatly exaggerated and his relationship with Clinton misunderstood.

Federalists were well represented in the anti-Missouri meetings because of their long established humanitarian commitment. Elias Boudinot, chair of the first New Jersey meeting, had opposed slavery throughout his life, as well as promoting the cause of the Indian. Theodore Dwight, though more politically-minded than Boudinot, filled his paper with pleas for a diverse range of humanitarian causes. Dwight was one of the few editors who actively supported the Tallmadge amendment when it was introduced.

⁴³. Livermore, p.70.

⁴⁴. Egerton, pp.109, 120-122.

⁴⁵. Richard H. Brown, "The Missouri Crisis, Slavery and the Politics of Jacksonism," *South Atlantic Quarterly*, LXV (1966), p.62.

Those prominent at the New York meeting were Federalists but also well-known philanthropists. Richard Varick was treasurer of the American Bible Society and Thomas Eddy was a noted penal reformer.⁴⁶ New York was the centre of restrictionist activity but this is not surprising considering the city was a noted focus for humanitarian and philanthropic societies which were typical products of the patrician reformism of the period.⁴⁷ No matter how dominant the Federalists were in the movement, they relied on bi-partisan public support. Without people attending the meetings, the movement would have been a farce. Meetings were held throughout the North and successfully organized in places like Zanesville (Ohio) in which the Federalists traditionally received little support.⁴⁸ The Federalists, as all politicians would do, reacted to an issue which was of concern to the people. Representative John Taylor of New York said the "excitement" was not generated by politicians but arose from the "intrinsic merits of the subject, and manifested [itself] by the spontaneous expression of public feeling."⁴⁹

King's prominence and eminence made him a natural target for Southern criticism. The issues at stake in the Missouri question were natural objects of his, and Federalist, attention. On a moral issue such as slavery it would have been surprising if King had not been involved.⁵⁰ He had objected to the expansion of slavery all his life. In 1785 King attempted to bar slavery from the northwest.⁵¹ He had opposed slave representation at the federal Constitutional Convention in 1787 and he had been critical of it ever since.⁵² King opposed the second clause of the Tallmadge amendment, concerning the freeing of slave children, because he felt it to be unconstitutional to interfere with property. As a legalist he adhered to constitutionalism rather than

⁴⁶. Moore, pp.68, 74, 78-79.

⁴⁷. Fehrenbacher, *Dred Scott*, p.106.

⁴⁸. Captain James Riley to Governor Ethan A. Brown, 24 Dec 1819, Ratcliffe, pp.81-83.

⁴⁹. *Annals*, 16.i.951.

⁵⁰. Livermore, p.89. "If there was a Mr. Federalist after the death of Federalism, it was Rufus King," Cole, p.56.

⁵¹. Moore, p.56.

⁵². Simpson, p.316.

expediency.⁵³ No such restraint applied in the case of Arkansas, so when given the opportunity to vote against slavery in a new territory he did so.⁵⁴ The Taylor amendment on Missouri in 1820 was satisfactory to King's constitutionalism because it did not threaten existing property. It should be noted that King made his 1819 speech on Missouri after he had failed to be renominated to the Senate, so there was little political capital to be made by the speech.⁵⁵ King did furnish an altered speech to be printed but this was common practice; Congressmen often wrote down what they thought they had said. King was writing months later so some discrepancy was inevitable. Furthermore he was responding to a request, he did not positively seek publication. The success of the pamphlet must be attributed to public demand for and acceptance of his words.⁵⁶ King did not sponsor or attend public meetings held to support the restriction; clearly they relied on widespread popular support. King's 1820 speech was rare in that it was an outright attack on slavery, rather than on just the prospect of slavery in Missouri. Although he said all laws sanctioning slavery were void it is unlikely that he was challenging the right to slave-holding in the Old South.⁵⁷ King received so much criticism in 1820 because in many ways his moral attack on slavery was irrefutable. Stung on an exposed arm, the South was forced to criticise the man and his motives rather than the substance of what he had said.⁵⁸ Northerners attested to King's sincerity. John Quincy Adams wrote, "There is not a man of purer integrity than Rufus King."⁵⁹ Van Buren, who was convinced "its moving springs were rather political than

⁵³. *Annals*, 15.ii.273. Egerton, p.213. Ernst, p.370.

⁵⁴. *Annals*, 15.ii.274.

⁵⁵. Ernst, p.374.

⁵⁶. Hockett, p.219.

⁵⁷. Ernst, pp.370-374. D.L.Robinson, pp.415-416. George Dangerfield, *The Era of Good Feelings* (New York & London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1952), p.226.

⁵⁸. Egerton, p.217. Dangerfield, *Era*, p.225.

⁵⁹. Charles F.Adams (ed), *The Memoirs of John Quincy Adams, Comprising Portions of His Diary from 1795-1848* (Philadelphia, 1874-1877; reprinted - Freeport, N.Y.: Books for Libraries Press, 1969), vol.V, p.13. Hereafter referred to as *Adams Memoirs*.

philanthropical," still conceded that "The Missouri question conceals *so far as he* [King] *is concerned* no plot...."⁶⁰

Neither King nor Clinton aimed to lead a Northern-based party which exploited the slave issue. This is seen in the future career of the leading restrictionists. John Taylor became politically neutral. Tallmadge drifted away from the Clintonians during the Missouri crisis because significantly Clinton was too close to the Federalists. Writing to Taylor, Tallmadge complained, "Will the Republican party support a Governor in power that he may make federal appointments?"⁶¹ There is no evidence that the two Representatives were pushed by either Clinton or King to lead the restrictionist movement. Indeed, Clinton did not mention Missouri in his correspondence, which casts doubt on his interest.⁶² King did not imagine himself as the leader of any party. King's correspondence, and that of his friends, does not reveal any Presidential ambitions after 1816, nor did he mention the rebuilding of the Federalist party.⁶³

However, some Northerners were hoping to use Missouri to produce a Northern candidate for the next Presidential election. In Ohio, leading Federalist Charles Hammond wrote "Give me a Northern President whether J.Q.Adams or D.Clinton - or anybody rather that things remain as they are."⁶⁴ William Duane, editor of the Philadelphia *Aurora*, wanted Clinton to run against Monroe in 1820.⁶⁵ But Clinton showed little inclination to run and he was not a candidate upon which the North could have united. Furthermore, in Ohio where pro-slavery sentiment was a severe liability

⁶⁰. Van Buren to M.M.Noah, 17 Dec 1819, in Martin Van Buren, "The Autobiography of Martin Van Buren," *Annual Report* of the American Historical Association for 1918 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1920), vol.II, p.140. Hereafter referred to as *Van Buren Autobiography*. Also in Livermore, p.89.

⁶¹. Tallmadge to Taylor, 17 July 1819, Livermore, p.72.

⁶². Moore, p.181.

⁶³. Hockett, p.218. Egerton, pp.214-215.

⁶⁴. C.Hammond to J.C.Wright, 20 Feb 1820, Hammond Papers, Ohio Historical Society (Ratcliffe Collection).

⁶⁵. Moore, p.340.

Southern slave-holder Henry Clay enjoyed wide support in 1824 at the expense of John Quincy Adams. On the national political stage Adams was the most prominent Northerner committed to antislavery. But he refused to indulge in canvassing for a Northern Presidential candidate in 1820, although in the North in 1824 he benefitted from the rise of antislavery. Desire for a Northern candidate was not subversive. Southerners were equally reluctant to have any candidate but one from the slave-holding states.

The idea that Clinton and King could unite in the same party is implausible and was recognised as such in New York.⁶⁶ The two were bitter political enemies. In 1812 King angered Clinton by urging Federalists not to support the campaign against Madison. King's reelection to the Senate was an accident of party politics.⁶⁷ Both Clintonians and Bucktails were eager to earn Federalist support for their Gubernatorial candidates and so supported King for the Senate. Federalists were split in their allegiances to New York's current parties, so the idea that a united Federalist party could cooperate with a united Republican party must be rejected. The Clintonian Federalists (known as the "Swiss") were probably in a majority, but the Bucktails gained the allegiance of a group of respected "High Minded" Federalists, who declared the dissolution of the Federalist party in April 1820. Many remained suspicious of both Republican factions. Clinton was not trusted; in 1817 he had said Federalists would rather rule in hell than serve in Heaven. The Bucktails, by contrast, were seen as soft on slavery.⁶⁸ King refused to be committed to any faction, although he was closest to the Bucktails. The gubernatorial elections well illustrate his position. He wrote to Van Buren, "my earnest wish was the exclusion of Mr Clinton."⁶⁹ Yet he was lukewarm in

⁶⁶. Egerton, p.117.

⁶⁷. Egerton, pp.120-122.

⁶⁸. Livermore, pp.74-78.

⁶⁹. King to Van Buren, 31 Jan 1820, *King Correspondence*, VI, pp.263-264.

his support for Tompkins even after the Bucktail candidate had, at last, committed himself to the anti-Missouri side.⁷⁰

By courting Federalist votes, the Bucktails did not intend to endorse the Federalist stance on Missouri. The Federalists who transferred to the Bucktail camp did not do so because of the Bucktail position on Missouri, which was vague, but because of their anti-Clintonianism. It was only the popularity of the slavery issue in New York that stopped Martin Van Buren from being openly critical of the Northern position. Indeed Van Buren viewed the Missouri question as an issue which undermined his party rather than an issue which could be advantageously exploited. At the state level Clinton was successfully using the popular slave issue against the Bucktails. Van Buren wanted to avoid the Missouri issue altogether, opposing discussion of it in the New York legislature and believing, "...the Southern States had dealt with the subject of slavery, down to that period, in a wise and liberal spirit."⁷¹ Van Buren feared the agitation of the slavery issue at the state level would make his Southern candidate for the Presidency, William Henry Crawford, unelectable in the North.

Restriction was not supported by Southern Federalists and the plot idea rather presumes Federalists dominated Northern politics, an "extravagant suggestion" according to Democratic Representative Timothy Fuller of Massachusetts.⁷² The Republicans were by far the dominant party in Congress and of course a majority of the eighty-seven Representatives who opposed the demise of the restrictive proviso were Republicans.⁷³ At a state level only Delaware and Massachusetts were Federalist controlled; Republican legislatures throughout the North supported the restriction as seen in their resolutions and memorials to Congress.⁷⁴

⁷⁰ D.D.Tompkins to J.A.King, 28 Mar 1820, *King Correspondence*, VI, p.323.

⁷¹ *Van Buren Autobiography*, pp.99, 132.

⁷² Livermore, p.93. *Annals*, 16.i.1482.

⁷³ *Annals*, 16.i.1586-1587.

⁷⁴ A point made by Rep. Plumer; *Annals*, 16.i.1436. Livermore, pp.90, 94. Herman V.Ames, *State Documents on Federal Relations: the States and the United States* (Philadelphia, 1900 & 1906; reprinted - New York: Da Capo Press, 1970), pp.196-200. Hereafter referred to as *State Documents*.

Thus it can be seen that there was no deliberate Federalist plot to seize control of the Union using the Missouri question. The Federalists influenced the restrictionist movement, but they were not its primary motivating force. Undoubtedly Federalists did exploit the issue once it had been agitated; they would have been politically incompetent not to have done so. The crisis brought satisfaction to the Federalists as they were once again able to earn respect and provide leadership on the national stage.⁷⁵ Federalists sought to increase their standing in existing Republican circles rather than resurrect the body of their dying party. Cooperation with the Republicans might lead to offices, influence in policy-making and a Northern President, desires neither subversive nor confined to just Federalists. It was an input into the direction of policy which the Federalists really sought. They hoped the spirit of Federalism would survive through the passing on of Northern principles, later known as the values of the "Universal Yankee Nation"⁷⁶. This view was expressed by the editors of the *New York American*, a Federalist, anti-Clinton paper established in March 1819. The editors aimed to "...support the character, and to promote the interests of the country, without reference to the present nominal distinctions of party. Federal in their attachments to the Union, and those principles on which it is grounded; republican in their veneration for all the institutions of their native land; and democratic in their deference to the will of the people....Our aim is to level all obnoxious distinctions."⁷⁷ Contributing ideas was a more realistic aim than hoping the Republicans would part like the Red Sea allowing the Federalists to walk into a promised land of offices and power. This was partly proved by the poor electoral performance of Federalist candidates after the crisis.⁷⁸

The South can also be charged with exploiting the slave issue for its own economic and political interests. A strict construction of the Constitution was essential to the Southern defence of slavery in the crisis; and Southerners appeared committed to

⁷⁵. Livermore, p.93. Egerton, pp.222-225.

⁷⁶. Livermore, p.95.

⁷⁷. *New York American*, 3 Mar 1819, Livermore, pp.57-58.

⁷⁸. Moore, p.339.

such an interpretation of the Constitution. Representative Charles Pinckney of South Carolina said "On the subject of the constitution, no compromise ought ever to be made."⁷⁹ Louis McLane writing to Caesar A. Rodney declared "It is in no degree a question of Slavery. It is simply whether Congress can take from the people of any one State the right of self-government, or the enjoyment of any political right secured by the Constitution...and possessed by the other States."⁸⁰ The popularity of the states' rights banner in the South can be seen in the return to favour of such doughty defenders of the Constitution as John Taylor of Caroline, John Randolph and Nathaniel Macon.

It would be rash to suggest that constitutional construction was not an important issue to the Southern states. But it must be emphasised that unity could only be guaranteed on the slave issue - the issue in which the whole South had the same overriding interest. On all other matters interpretation of the Constitution depended on how the issue would affect each state, not the South as a whole. When it suited, expediency was justified.⁸¹ Southern thought on the Missouri constitution is a prime example of the triumph of expediency over principle. Representative Alexander Smyth from Virginia, the state most vigorous in defending states' rights, declared "A construction should, if possible, be given to the constitution of Missouri, making it consistent with the Constitution of the United States."⁸²

Throughout the period states' rights was more of a Virginian than a Southern cause. The state had her Southern critics such as Henry Clay who was growing frustrated at Virginia's influence in national politics.⁸³ Northern criticism of the state's power was somewhat accurate. Virginia's power and prestige in the South was extensive. Furnishing all but one President, holding the largest Congressional delegation

⁷⁹. *Annals*, 16.i.1328.

⁸⁰. McLane to Rodney, 14 Jan 1820, John A. Munroe, *Louis McLane: Federalist and Jacksonian* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1973), p.102.

⁸¹. Moore, p.60. Dangerfield, *Era*, p.237.

⁸². *Annals*, 16.ii.561.

⁸³. Clay to Amos Kendall, 16 April 1820, James F. Hopkins (ed), *The Papers of Henry Clay* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1961), vol.II, pp.822-824. Hereafter referred to as *Clay Papers*.

in the South and having a supply of true statesman such as Jefferson and Madison to advise the South, Virginia wielded more power than was her due. It is tempting to use self-interest as the motivating factor for all political animals. But in Virginia the case is less clear. There does appear to be a consistent concern for states' rights. Men like President Monroe did not adopt states' rights because it was expedient but because, in his view, it was constitutionally right. For example, federally-sponsored internal improvements were unconstitutional but he was willing to sanction them through a constitutional amendment.⁸⁴ However it is very difficult to determine where principle ends and expediency begins. Jefferson was regarded as a principled man defending strict construction as the best way to govern a true Republic. He endorsed John Taylor's *Construction Construed, and Constitutions Vindicated*, the epitome of the Virginian states' rights view.⁸⁵ Yet as President, Jefferson had been rather liberal in interpreting parts of the Constitution: policies adopted towards the purchase of Louisiana, the embargo and the judiciary were influenced more by circumstance rather than by a strict reading of the Constitution.

The revival of states' rights ideology in Virginia before the Missouri crisis was largely based on self-interest. Virginia's early acceptance of the postwar nationalism waned as self-interest became a greater consideration. An economic depression, affecting the staple crops of cotton and tobacco, led to falling prices and the sight of towns such as Georgetown and Norfolk "half in ruins."⁸⁶ A resurgence was seen in support for state rightist "Old Republicans." In Virginia Representatives Philip Barbour, John Floyd, Alexander Smyth and John Tyler stood out as Old Republicans. The reaction was confined to the Upper South, as yet there was no great following for the

⁸⁴. *Adams Memoirs*, IV, pp.469-470.

⁸⁵. Jefferson to Roane, 27 June 1821, *Writings of Jefferson*, X, pp.189-190n.

⁸⁶. Dangerfield, *Nationalism*, pp.104-105. Charles D.Lowery, *James Barbour: A Jeffersonian Republican* (University of Alabama Press, 1984), p.124. Norman K.Risjord, *The Old Republicans: Southern Conservatism in the Age of Jefferson*, (New York & London: Columbia University Press, 1965), p.178.

Old Republicans in the expanding lower South. Indeed South Carolina, destined to be virulently state rightist within ten years, was represented by nationalists.⁸⁷

Hard line state rightists in Virginia hoped to use the Missouri crisis to quell nationalist, or centralizing, tendencies in the South and to provoke a Southern reaction against what they viewed as the dangerous concentration of power in the federal government.⁸⁸ If the United States remained a league of states Virginia could retain some influence and independence. But if a powerful national government was to develop then she might be affected by unwanted external influences. Such a situation was developing as the Supreme Court justified a broad construction of the Constitution, giving powers to the federal government which Virginia believed belonged to the states.

In 1816 state courts were seen as inferior in the *Martin v. Hunter's Lessee* case; *Dartmouth College v. Woodward* in February 1819 declared corporation charters to be contracts and thus immune from legislative control; *McCulloch v. Maryland* was the most significant nationalist decision. On 6 March 1819, after the first Missouri debates had finished, Chief Justice Marshall declared the federal Constitution and federal laws to be superior to their state counterparts.⁸⁹ Marshall effectively proposed that the federal government could act in any sphere in which it was not specifically prohibited from so doing. Jefferson feared the Constitution would become "a mere thing of wax in the hands of the judiciary, which they may twist and shape into any form they please."⁹⁰ Spencer Roane, the man Jefferson wanted as Chief Justice in 1801 instead of Marshall, suggested Virginia might have to use physical force to protect states' rights. Roane proposed a constitutional amendment to exclude the Supreme Court from cases involving the states, except where states were in conflict with each other. Marshall later commented, "A deep design to convert our government into a mere league of states has

⁸⁷. Risjord, pp.179-187. Ambler, p.73.

⁸⁸. Duncan Macleod, "The Triple Crisis," in Rhodri Jeffreys-Jones & Bruce Collins, *The Growth of Federal Power in American History* (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1983), pp.17-19.

⁸⁹. Risjord, p.178. Dangerfield, *Era*, pp.166-174. Ambler, pp.80-81.

⁹⁰. Jefferson to Roane, 6 Sept 1819, *Writings of Jefferson*, X, pp.140-143. Robert E. Shalhope, "Thomas Jefferson's Republicanism and Antebellum Southern Thought," *Journal of Southern History*, XLII (1976), p.547.

taken a strong hold of a powerful and violent party in Virginia."⁹¹ This clearly reveals his position and why Virginia held him in such suspicion.

However, criticism of Supreme Court decisions was not an issue on which sectional unity could be achieved. Marshall's nationalist decisions were welcomed by the *National Intelligencer*, which traditionally took a Southern viewpoint, *Charleston Patriot* and *Kentucky Reporter*, much to the disgust of the *Richmond Enquirer*, whereas outside the South, after *McCulloch v. Maryland*, Virginia had allies in the legislatures of Illinois, Indiana, Ohio and Pennsylvania.⁹² The Roane amendment received support from Clintonians and the *Washington Gazette*.⁹³

Disagreement within both sections over construction of the Constitution makes an economic and political analysis of the controversy less convincing. What does damage the case, for economic and political ambition as the cause of the Missouri crisis, is an examination of the contemporary economic debates. These cast considerable doubt on the strength of clearcut sectional animosity on key issues.

The Era of Good Feelings manifested itself in a consensus on economic issues. In particular 1816 saw the incorporation of the Second Bank of the United States (B.U.S.), later regarded as the chief symbol of broad construction. The same year also saw agreement on a tariff bill which protected industry and gave cotton a measure of protection from Indian imports.⁹⁴ An economic view of the Missouri crisis would point to growing Southern antagonism at the postwar nationalism. Protectionism had gone far enough, any more would mean the South was financing Northern growth, for example, in the form of internal improvements. Poor management of the Bank of the United States and the view that it precipitated the panic of 1819, of which the South felt it bore the brunt, led to some Southern calls for the Bank's demise. In short, constitutional

⁹¹. William E. Dodd, "Chief Justice Marshall and Virginia, 1813-1821," *American Historical Review*, XII (1907), pp.780, 786, 785.

⁹². Ambler, p.80. Dangerfield, *Era*, p.173.

⁹³. Dodd, p.785.

⁹⁴. Murray N. Rothbard, *The Panic of 1819; Reaction and Policies* (New York & London: Columbia University Press, 1962), p.160.

construction was being used to benefit Northern economic development which threatened the South's economy and culture.⁹⁵

Attitudes towards the Bank were not as sectionally orientated as at first may be believed, nor were they shaped solely by the panic of 1819. The Bank was meant to provide a uniform and stable currency, which it did with reasonable success for a short period. It received government taxes paid in local paper money. By not presenting these notes for redemption, it encouraged an expansionist boom. When Bank of the United States notes were presented for redemption specie was paid out, whilst specie was not coming in. By 1818 the B.U.S. had demand liabilities of \$23 million, yet had a specie reserve of only \$2.5 million.⁹⁶ To dampen the expansionist boom the Bank began in July 1818 a year long deflationary curtailment. The withdrawal of \$7 million from circulation reduced confidence in existing paper and put specie at a premium of 6.5% in Boston by October 1818.⁹⁷ The curtailment coinciding with a recession in trade contributed to the financial panic of 1819. The postwar boom was built upon European demand, which declined when European harvests gradually recovered from 1817 onwards. American exports were worth a total of \$93 million in 1818, in 1819-1820 they declined to \$70 million.⁹⁸ Britain, now also looking to East Indies cotton, reduced her demand for American produce. Thus at Richmond the price of cotton, the major export staple and specie earner, halved during 1819.⁹⁹ American farmers who had bought land at high speculative prices to meet rising European demand now faced paying huge bills with a deflated currency whilst their profits were slashed. It is folly to believe that the panic and depression were just Southern phenomena. In New York the value of real and personal property dropped from \$315 million to \$256 million in 1819.

⁹⁵. Dangerfield, *Era*, p.216. The "conspiracy" theory was best expressed by John Taylor of Caroline, *Construction Construed, and Constitutions Vindicated* (Richmond: Shepherd & Pollard, 1820), pp.294, 298. Also see Shalhope, p.549.

⁹⁶. Rothbard, p.8.

⁹⁷. Dangerfield, *Era*, p.183.

⁹⁸. Rothbard, p.13.

⁹⁹. Sydnor, p.104.

Soup kitchens had to be established in large cities such as Baltimore, New York and Philadelphia. It was the expanding West which was really hit. In Cincinnati, the panic led to warehouses, foundries and hotels being repossessed by the Bank of the United States. John Quincy Adams declared, "Distress [was] universal in every part of the country."¹⁰⁰

The Bank was under attack before the panic. In April 1818 a bill to provide for another Bank Vice President was postponed (and so killed) in the House. Conservatives from the South played a key role in opposing the measure. A House committee report on the Bank in January 1819 accused it of mismanagement and violation of its charter. Subsequently two cashiers from the Baltimore branch confessed their fraudulent behaviour. Representative Richard Johnson of Kentucky called for a repeal of the Bank charter. Other anti-Bank Southerners such as John Tyler (Virginia) and David Trimble (Kentucky) considered revoking the charter as a breach of contract, and so favoured serving a writ of *scire facias*.¹⁰¹ Although revoking the charter was not really a possibility there was considerable debate on how the Bank should operate, often seen in a sectional light. But opinions on the Bank and panic demonstrate how difficult it was to achieve sectional unity on major issues. Secretary of the Treasury William H. Crawford, a conservative Georgian, in his Report on the Currency in February 1820 recognised the advantages of an inconvertible currency. He reluctantly rejected his own imaginative plan on the basis that governments historically abused their control of paper money and that specie would still drain from the South and West. Yet many men from diverse backgrounds favoured a hard currency. New York City and Virginia were agreed on the desirability of a specie:paper ratio of 1:1. Governor Clinton of New York, who favoured hard money, in his 1819 message called for an end to new bank charters and Spencer Roane believed "Banking is an evil of the first magnitude."¹⁰² In Ohio opposition to the

¹⁰⁰. Samuel Reznick, "The Depression of 1819: A Social History," *American Historical Review*, XXXIX (1933), pp.31-32. Thomas H. Greer, "Economic and Social Effects of the Depression of 1819 in the Old Northwest," *Indiana Magazine of History*, XLIV (1948), p.240. Dangerfield, *Nationalism*, pp.84-85. *Adams Memoirs*, IV, p.375.

¹⁰¹. Risjord, pp.204, 206-207. Dangerfield, *Era*, pp.179-189.

¹⁰². Rothbard, pp.123-125, 137-145.

Bank was high because of the ferocity of its curtailment. The state challenged *McCulloch v. Maryland* by taxing the two Ohio branches of the B.U.S., and by forcibly seizing \$50,000 from the Chillicothe branch.¹⁰³ Yet in Kentucky it was realised that a well-run bank was essential to the economic development of the state. This is well illustrated in a letter written to President Monroe in March 1819. Writing from Kentucky, Worden Pope said it was vital that the popular branch at Louisville should continue to operate, whereas the branch at Lexington was locally unpopular.¹⁰⁴

Relief measures also reveal a lack of sectional division. Stay laws passed in Maryland, Vermont, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Missouri, Louisiana, Tennessee and Kentucky. On a national level, a relief bill passed in February 1821 making payments on public lands easier. The bill received support from all sections with only New England divided.¹⁰⁵ It should be borne in mind that the bill passed during the heated and sectional arguments over the Missouri constitution.

A similar pattern of sectional non-alignment is evident in the debate on internal improvements. Division was not on North-South lines but rather between the relatively developed East and expanding West. Just before he left the Presidency in 1817, James Madison vetoed the Bonus bill which intended to fund internal improvements through the dividend paid on Bank of the United States stock. Although a Virginian President blocked the bill it should be noted that it was sponsored by South Carolinian John Calhoun. In 1820 a bill to continue funding the Cumberland Road passed the House by a vote of 90:66 with twenty-one Southerners in opposition together with those Northerners who had no direct interest in the road. In the Senate, William Smith of South Carolina proposed to postpone a bill for the appointment of surveyors for the road. The North was solidly against the motion, whilst the South favoured it. But the split in the South was ten for postponement and eight against, hardly the vote of the tight sectional block seen in the Missouri debates. In the House, the bill passed 74:35

¹⁰³. *Scioto Gazette*, 27 Jan 1820. Dangerfield, *Era*, p.189.

¹⁰⁴. Pope to Monroe, 1 Mar 1819, *Monroe Papers*.

¹⁰⁵. Rothbard, pp.56, 43, 30. Greer, p.237.

with nineteen Southerners in opposition. These Southerners were, on the whole, Old Republicans from the seaboard states.¹⁰⁶ Opposition from Old Republicans to internal improvements was long standing and should not be seen as an issue taken up in a deliberate sectional confrontation. For example, Representative Smyth of south-west Virginia, which needed roads, opposed federally sponsored internal improvements as unconstitutional. However, some nationalists undoubtedly adopted Old Republican views because they fitted their present needs.¹⁰⁷ The attitude of Missouri is particularly revealing. Throughout the debates concerning its admission as a state, Missouri took a strict states' rights view. However at the same time, Missourians adopted a loose construction of the Constitution to justify the massive internal improvements needed by the state. Benton's *St.Louis Enquirer* in June 1819 proposed a thirteen-point plan of improvements. Post roads to Washington and New Orleans were desired, as well as a canal to link the River Mississippi with Lake Superior. The *National Intelligencer* was aghast: "There is probably no one of the States in the Union, even the largest, which would make larger demands on the attention and funds of the general government were a carte blanche offered to it."¹⁰⁸

Finally, the most sectional economic issue: the tariff. The aura of the Era of Good Feelings together with measures the South desired ensured a safe passage for the 1816 tariff bill.¹⁰⁹ Flourishing economic conditions in 1818 made higher duties on iron products a formality.¹¹⁰ The Baldwin tariff bill, introduced in 1820 after the passage of the Missouri Compromise, encountered sectional opposition. Cotton and wool duties would be increased from 25% to 33%, at a time when American producers were struggling in the international market. The bill passed the House 91:78 with solid

¹⁰⁶. Risjord, p.203. Moore, pp.334-335.

¹⁰⁷. Risjord, pp.204, 199.

¹⁰⁸. *National Intelligencer*, 4 Aug 1819. William N.Chambers, *Old Bullion Benton: Senator from the New West* (Boston, 1956; reprinted - New York: Russell & Russell, 1970), p.88.

¹⁰⁹. Norris W.Preyer, "Southern Support of the Tariff of 1816: A Reappraisal," *Journal of Southern History*, XXV (1959), pp.306-322.

¹¹⁰. Risjord, pp.207-208.

support from the Mid-Atlantic states, solid opposition from the South and Southwest and a split occurred in the Northwest and New England. The bill was killed by postponement in the Senate by a close vote of 22:21, only three Southerners voted to save the bill. Although Southern opposition was crucial to the fate of the bill, and not unexpected considering the bill offered nothing to the South, it is the attitude of New England which is significant. In the House, New England favoured the bill 22:18, Massachusetts splitting ten for and seven against. In the Senate four New Englanders helped the South to victory.¹¹¹ Federalist Senators Prentiss Mellen and Harrison Gray Otis from Massachusetts had been critical of the doughfaces on the Missouri Compromise vote. Yet here they were helping the South to an important symbolic victory. Surely this shows that concepts of sectional blocks are exaggerated. Their votes demonstrate concern for immediate local interests, like shipping, rather than for attacking the South at every opportunity.

The Missouri controversy in and out of Congress did generate much debate on supposedly sectional economic and political issues. Some newspaper opinion would seem to suggest that on these issues the sections were bitterly opposed. The Norfolk and Portsmouth *Herald* of 28 January 1820 claimed the North "boldly displays the cloven foot which marks their real design in advocating restriction - Power, power."¹¹² "Phocion" writing in the Baltimore *Federal Gazette* commented "Already the southern states begin to regard the question of *manufactures* in the manner suggested by their local interests!...Our northern brethren little think of the evil they are doing."¹¹³ The strength of such newspaper opinion must be questioned.

More moderate newspaper opinion seems to have been ignored by historians. In April 1819, straight after the first Missouri debates, the *National Intelligencer* printed and praised a letter originally sent to the *Darien Gazette* in Georgia. The letter, by "A Southerner" about "The Yankees" was critical of those in the South hostile to the North.

¹¹¹. Moore, pp.327-329. Rothbard, p.170.

¹¹². Moore, pp.299-301.

¹¹³. Quoted in the *National Intelligencer*, 27 Nov 1819.

The writer pointed to the benefits Northern merchants brought to the South and he said Northerners were equally attached to the Union. "We are necessary to each other's welfare," was the writer's parting advice.¹¹⁴ On 11 October 1820 the *National Intelligencer* printed various extracts from other papers. Both the Boston *Daily Advertiser* and the New York *Daily Advertiser* were critical of Southern manners and "intimidation." These sectionally hostile opinions were contrasted to those of the New York *Hudson Advertiser* which wanted "charity" between the "brethren". In December of the same year the *Connecticut Herald* said "It is impossible that one part should long exist without the other. As to "conflicting interests", we know not where to find them."¹¹⁵ The *Cleveland Herald* in July 1822 reported the wish of some New York editors for an alliance of New York, Ohio, and Pennsylvania to swing the 1824 Presidential election. The *Herald* objected to a "sectional confederacy which is in opposition to the whole theory of our republican government."¹¹⁶ In Ohio in 1820 the correspondence between John Bailhache and "Civis" in the columns of the *Scioto Gazette* also illustrates the point. "Civis" wrote sharp attacks on slavery and the South. These were countered by much more moderate replies by Bailhache. Whilst hating slavery he did not hate the South. He pointed to the loyal efforts of the South in the War of 1812 and accused antislavery writers of being politically motivated.¹¹⁷ Finally, as Moore has demonstrated, large sections of the Northern Democratic press welcomed the Compromise as, amongst other reasons, it might at least put an end to sectional bickering.¹¹⁸ Sectional arguments in the press, on issues other than slavery itself, therefore should be regarded with some suspicion. In the heat of the moment, newspapers like politicians were prone to add long-standing grievances to their argument against slavery.

¹¹⁴. *National Intelligencer*, 1 April 1819.

¹¹⁵. Quoted in the *National Intelligencer*, 5 December 1820.

¹¹⁶. *Cleveland Herald*, 25 July 1822, in *Annals of Cleveland*, V.

¹¹⁷. *Scioto Gazette*, 9, 16 Nov, 7, 14 Dec 1820.

¹¹⁸. Moore, pp.188-209.

Economic and political issues should not be seen as causes of the Missouri controversy.¹¹⁹ There was not enough unity on the issues regionally or sectionally for either side to provoke a crisis. Congressmen and their constituents determined their opinion on issues through their local interests rather than by testing them against a rigid sectional ideology. The only ideology adhered to was republicanism, a remarkably vague creed. Americans were agreed it meant that there should be no monarchy or aristocracy and a form of representative democracy, but after that agreement ended. In looking at things from a local vantage point, all Americans believed they were acting in a republican manner. Arguments occurred because interpretations over the nature of republicanism, and constitutionalism, differed.¹²⁰ Sectional economic disputes could not destroy the Republic because on them no consistent consensus could be achieved; agreement on goals was essential if political power was to be exploited. Only one issue was capable of destroying the Union, because it solidly united the two sections against each other - Negro slavery. It was the issue which more than any other questioned the nature of American republicanism.

¹¹⁹. Egerton, p.2.

¹²⁰. Shalhope, pp.533, 556.

CHAPTER THREE - THE CENTRALITY OF SLAVERY

For the South, and indeed the North, the way in which the restrictive amendment was dealt with would have consequences far beyond the borders of Missouri. Jefferson's "fire bell in the night" sounded because Tallmadge threatened to undermine the basis of Southern life.¹ The Congressional debates illustrate just why slavery, for better or worse, was seen as an indispensable institution in the South, at a time when Northern antislavery sentiment was growing.

On a financial basis the South had a lot to lose by a challenge to the slave labour which underpinned the sections' economy. Rising demand during the industrial revolution, together with the invention of the cotton gin by Ely Whitney in 1793, led to cotton becoming a major export crop. Cotton accounted for nearly half of all American exports in this period. Together with rice and tobacco, also produced by slave labour, these Southern crops contributed two-thirds of the average value of the total exports for all goods between 1820-1823.² Slavery, providing cheap workers and suited to regimented and labour intensive tasks, was ideal for the cotton economy. The expansion of the cotton lands went hand in hand with the growth of slavery. The period 1815 to 1820 saw a doubling of the area under cultivation for cotton; whilst by 1820 America had a slave population three times greater than during the Revolution, despite emancipation in the North and an end to the legal importation of slaves in 1808.³ Not only was Southern wealth based upon slave labour producing cotton, but Southern wealth was invested in slavery. Any challenge to the institution might threaten a total

1. Jefferson to John Holmes, 22 April 1820, *Writings of Jefferson*, X, pp.157-158.

2. Sydnor, p.23.

3. David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution, 1770-1823* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1975), p.122. Egerton, p.24.

investment of possibly \$300 million.⁴ With slave numbers standing at approximately 1.5 million this would mean an average price of \$200 per slave, although in 1820 Andrew Jackson paid between \$450 and \$475 each, for five male slaves in their prime.⁵ So, emancipation meant even the smallest-scale farmer holding one or two slaves stood to lose a considerable amount of money. Next to land, slaves were the biggest article of Southern investment.

Most Southerners regarded slavery as a necessary evil. It was an inherited evil and the South were victims of a burdensome institution. In Congress nearly all speakers on the Southern side would rise, protest their detestation of slavery and then at length go on to say why slavery should not be restricted. John Randolph claimed the greatest misfortune in his life was being a slave-holder.⁶ A slave master "wears a cancer in his bosom," said Reid of Georgia.⁷ Slave masters tried to justify their position morally. Jefferson, believing few black men capable of independent living, viewed his masterdom as almost a service to the poor and needy - "a Christian trusteeship".⁸ In his *Notes on Virginia* Jefferson had clearly showed that he had doubts as to the worthiness of slave-holding. Similarly Henry Clay, whilst being a slave-holder and a staunch defender of slavery during the Missouri crisis, did advocate gradual emancipation there. He wanted such a provision to be added to the Kentucky constitution at the state constitutional convention in 1799. Before the Missouri constitutional convention Clay suggested to John Scott, Missouri's delegate to Congress, that an emancipating clause be added to Missouri's constitution.⁹ Southerners often claimed to support emancipation with the proviso that it could not safely be achieved. The potential problem caused by free Negroes was seen as a major obstacle to emancipation. As Jefferson said, "We have

4. Charles M. Wiltse, *The New Nation, 1800-1845* (London & Melbourne: Macmillan, 1965), p.69.

5. James J. Hanna to Jackson, 30 Jan 1820, *Jackson Correspondence*, III, pp.12-13.

6. Frederick Jackson Turner, *The Rise of the New West, 1819-1829* (New York, 1906; reprinted - Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1961), p.163.

7. *Annals*, 16.i.1025.

8. Davis, p.212.

9. Clay to William Henry Russel, 18 July 1835, *Clay Papers*, VIII, p.789.

the wolf by the ears, and we can neither hold him, nor safely let him go. Justice is in one scale, and self preservation in the other." As far as Southerners were concerned the problems of any form of emancipation easily outweighed the moral benefits.¹⁰

American slavery was specifically Negro slavery, its key elements were associated with race, not status.¹¹ In his speech on the Missouri constitution, Representative Philip Barbour, denied citizenship to free Negroes, pointing out there was no state in which the free Negro possessed all the rights of a white citizen.¹² No matter how able or wealthy, the free Negro was denied equal rights through a colour bar. In his speech on the same subject Louis McLane appeared utterly sincere in his belief in Negro inferiority and the impossibility of assimilation on equal terms.¹³ For the South, slavery acted as a method to control an inferior, immoral and dangerous population.

Slavery also helped raise the condition of the white man.¹⁴ Lower class whites were not at the bottom of the economic or social ladder, as the Negroes were below them. This reduced the chances of an unruly white lower class developing.¹⁵ Indeed some Southerners argued emancipation would put poor whites in a servile position, a reversal of roles which could never be tolerated. "Limner" of Georgia, writing in September 1819, said "...there is no such thing as universal freedom."¹⁶

Anxious to shrug off the tag of inhumanity Southerners claimed their slaves were well kept. The condition of the English working class and the free Negro in New

10. Jefferson to John Holmes, 22 Apr 1820, *Writings of Jefferson*, X, pp.157-158. Jesse T.Carpenter, *The South as a Conscious Minority, 1789-1861* (New York: New York University Press, 1930), p.16. Also see Shalhope, p.556; Duncan MacLeod, "The Political Economy of John Taylor of Caroline," *Journal of American Studies*, XIV (1980), p.403.

11. Arthur Styron, *The Last of the Cockeyed Hats - James Monroe and the Virginia Dynasty* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1945), p.365.

12. *Annals*, 16.ii.544-545.

13. *Annals*, 16.ii.617.

14. *Annals*, 16.ii.1204.

15. Davis, p.260.

16. *National Intelligencer*, 4 Sept 1819.

York and Philadelphia was contrasted unfavourably to the slaves who were always fed and housed. "That great body of slaves are happier in their present situation than they could be in any other, and the man or men who would attempt to give them freedom would be their greatest enemies," said Representative Pinckney of South Carolina.¹⁷ Philip Barbour said masters provided "many drops of consolation...continually increasing melioration in the condition of that people."¹⁸ Even Representative Fuller from Massachusetts agreed English factory labourers were worse off than slaves.¹⁹ Nathaniel Macon from North Carolina portrayed a meeting of master and slave: "...see the glad faces and the hearty shaking of hands."²⁰ These arguments approached the "positive good" view developed later in the 1820s and 1830s but espoused in 1820 by Senator William Smith of South Carolina: "Slavery has prevailed in every country on the globe," and American slaves were "the happiest poor people in the world." Smith denied that slavery was unchristian, "Christ himself gave a sanction to slavery...there is not a word in the whole of his life which forbids it."²¹ Christian justifications of slavery by Senator Smith and Representative Pinckney were ably refuted by Representative Darlington of Pennsylvania who demonstrated that these Southerners could justify all evil from their reading of the Bible.²² The positive good argument was in a minority in 1820; most masters were liberal and humane, believing slavery to be an evil. Whilst admitting slavery to be an evil most agreed it was not an absolute evil. It gave the troublesome (as far as whites were concerned) Negro a set economic and social position, benefitting both black and white by keeping racial tensions at a minimum.²³ Representative William Brown of Kentucky expressed a view typical of the South: "I

¹⁷. *Annals*, 16.i.1324. John Hope Franklin, *A Southern Odyssey: Travelers in the Antebellum North* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1976), p.212.

¹⁸. *Annals*, 16.i.1219.

¹⁹. *Annals*, 16.i.1487.

²⁰. Risjord, p.215.

²¹. *Annals*, 16.i.259-275.

²². *Annals*, 16.i.1379.

²³. Styron, p.365.

am no friend of African slavery...because it is a violation of the rights of man, as derived from God, and I will pledge myself to go as far as most men for its amelioration or abolition. But I owe higher obligations to the white population of the United States...."²⁴

A small minority of Southerners not only admitted slavery to be an evil but also adopted antislavery views. Antislavery societies were concentrated in the Upper South where slave numbers were at their lowest. There were twenty-five societies in Tennessee, eleven in Maryland, eight in Kentucky and two in Delaware.²⁵ In Delaware, where three-quarters of Negroes were free, the Federalist controlled legislature passed resolutions approving of Congressional restriction of slavery in new states. In Congress Representative Louis McLane and Senators Nicholas Van Dyke and Outerbridge Horsey, who were all Federalists, voted with the South. But Democratic Representative Willard Hall consistently voted with the North. He was defeated in the 1820 election but replaced by Caesar A. Rodney who supported antislavery.²⁶

In December 1819 a restrictionist memorial was signed by 2,000 people after a meeting in Baltimore, Maryland. Anti-Missouri sentiment was confined to Baltimore despite widespread support for the Federalists and the large number of free Negroes in Maryland. The state legislature and Congressional delegation were pro-Southern.

North Carolina was also very active in antislavery where Quakers were prominent in the Manumission Society. The North Carolina Society's first annual meeting in 1816 was attended by 147 members; by 1819, 281 attended. Total membership of the Society in the state by 1825 was 1,150. Despite Alice Adams' attempt to portray these societies as the foremost workers for the antislavery cause, the case should not be exaggerated.²⁷ Their impact was negligible, being short-lived and drawing support from only a small minority of the community. The membership figures

²⁴. *Annals*, 16.ii.1206.

²⁵. Woolsey, p.419.

²⁶. Moore, pp.221-224.

²⁷. Moore, pp.224-226. Adams, pp.48, 121, 137, 249.

may have been inflated by zealots like Benjamin Lundy, who were keen to promote the cause. Quakers dominated the movement in the South almost to the exclusion of other groups. The presence of slave holders in the societies, whilst laudable, made the movement inherently conservative.²⁸

The South suggested it was sincere in its views that slavery was an evil by indicating support for tighter controls on the slave trade, favouring colonization and backing diffusion. In response to Monroe's annual message of 1818, the House formed a committee which reported a bill on the slave trade in January 1819. The bill which became law with Southern support allowed the American Navy to stop and search any American ship suspected of carrying Negroes. The ship would be forced to return the Negroes to Africa.²⁹ In January 1820, Representative Cuthbert of Georgia proposed an enquiry be established to see if it was viable to register all slaves, making it easier to spot illegal imports. The enquiry was approved though not without John Randolph objecting to a register of property.³⁰ Later in 1820 slave trading was defined as piracy and so carried the death penalty.³¹ The South seemed genuinely concerned to end the slave trade. This is quite a paradox as Representative Plumer noted: what was the difference in humanitarian terms between slavery and tearing a family apart in Africa before transporting them in dreadful conditions across the Atlantic?³² Also, action against the slave trade was long overdue. The "negative pregnant" expired at the beginning of 1808 yet it was not until 1819-1820, tens of thousands of illicit imports later, that the government sanctioned the use of the Navy against the slave trade.³³ The fact that the internal market was able to supply much of the demand for slaves was a

²⁸. Davis, p.210.

²⁹. *Annals*, 15.ii.540, 1431, 16.i.30.

³⁰. *Annals*, 16.i.925-926.

³¹. Adams, p.195.

³². *Annals*, 16.i.1432-1433.

³³. D.L.Robinson, p.345. Davis, p.137.

source of some frustration to Northerners who had hoped an end to imports would threaten the viability of slavery.³⁴

The American Colonization Society, founded in 1816, in many ways presents the epitome of the problem facing slave-holders. The Society, which counted Henry Clay, William H. Crawford and Andrew Jackson amongst its Vice Presidents, aimed to repatriate free Negroes in Africa. At the time, in North and South colonization was viewed as an ingenious and genuine antislavery measure as it would solve the perceived economic, moral and social problem caused by the free Negro.³⁵ Northerners Rufus King and Representative Henry Meigs both offered resolutions for public land sales to fund emancipation and colonization.³⁶ If there was no risk of the free Negro damaging American society, best achieved by removing the free Negro from the United States, then emancipation could be brought about more easily. Representative Smyth of Virginia made it perfectly clear that colonization was to stop any possibility of the development of a mixed race.³⁷ Jefferson was willing to free his slaves if they were also repatriated (though this would mean freedom and colonization for all slaves, as he would not free his slaves independently of others).³⁸ President Monroe approved of the Society but he and his Cabinet could find no colonizing power in the Constitution. However the government did send two agents to administer the African colony, named Liberia, bought by the Society.³⁹ Furthermore, the logistical problems of colonization show that it could never be seriously considered⁴⁰. As was pointed out in debate in 1820, the number of blacks the society planned to colonize in 1820 was not greater than

³⁴. Fehrenbacher, *Dred Scott*, p.100.

³⁵. Ratcliffe, pp.86-88.

³⁶. *King Correspondence*, VI, p.594. *Adams Memoirs*, IV, p.518. *Annals*, 16.i.1405. The Ohio legislature supported colonization in a resolution in 1818.

³⁷. *Annals*, 16.i.1617-1618.

³⁸. Moore, p.303.

³⁹. William P. Cresson, *James Monroe* (University of North Carolina Press, 1946), p.340. *Adams Memoirs*, IV, pp.292-293.

⁴⁰. Although Lincoln supported colonization in 1862 when slave numbers had doubled from their 1820 level. See Morison, pp.473-474.

the rate of slave births per day. To colonize one year's increase of 51,000 slave births would cost in the region of \$20 million. So just to keep the slave population at a standstill would cost \$20 million per annum.⁴¹

Southerners also supported the principle of diffusion meaning the spreading of slavery over a larger area. Henry Clay and his fellow Southerners believed fewer slaves amongst a larger white population would result in a fall in the price of free labour making slave labour uneconomic and pointless. A less concentrated slave population would reduce the chances of insurrection, which would be easier to quell if trouble was to flare.⁴² The fear of a slave revolt troubled Southern minds. The black man, it was thought, was always likely to harm whites if given the chance, a fear confirmed by St.Domingo.⁴³ The *St.Louis Enquirer* predicted, "Torches will be put into the hands of slaves to rouse their sleeping masters from their beds amid the flames of their houses and the cries of their slaughtered children."⁴⁴ Some believed closer relations between master and slave in such conditions would result in better living standards for the Negro and a greater chance of emancipation. As Representative Rankin of Mississippi said, "Such an extension is humanity, is mercy."⁴⁵ Diffusion would also reestablish a white majority in states where blacks threatened to become, or already were, a majority. It was not an extension of slavery, rather it was the relocation of existing slaves. As the *National Intelligencer* explained, the Missouri question did not involve the "extension of slavery, that is, the multiplication of slaves....The question concerns only the *diffusion* or *concentration* of the slaves now in the country."⁴⁶

⁴¹. *Annals*, 16.i.1535.

⁴². *Annals*, 15.ii.1188.

⁴³. See Linn Banks to James Barbour, 20 Feb 1820, *Letters to Barbour*, pp.20-21.

⁴⁴. *St.Louis Enquirer*, 25 Mar 1820, in Frank H.Hodder, "Side Lights on the Missouri Compromise," *Annual Report of the American Historical Association for 1909* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1911), pp.154-155.

⁴⁵. *Annals*, 16.i.1343.

⁴⁶. *National Intelligencer*, 29 Jan 1820. Moore, p.293.

This Southern argument was held in contempt in the North. Diffusion would not decrease slave numbers. Malthus was quoted to demonstrate that population rose in proportion to the available area of subsistence.⁴⁷ Diffusion was seen as a blatant excuse for the expansion of slavery, for which Representative Taylor of New York found a suitable analogy. Diffusion "...seeks to palliate disease by the application of nostrums, which scatter its disease through the whole system - which saves the finger today, but amputates the arm tomorrow."⁴⁸ Emancipation would be made more difficult, not easier, by such an extension, especially if illegal slave traders took advantage of the demand for new slaves.⁴⁹

Was the Southern commitment to slavery matched in Missouri? It was destined to become neither a cotton nor a major slave state. Cotton requires two hundred frostless days for growth, most of Missouri lies north of this zone.⁵⁰ Hemp, another crop often worked by slave labour, would grow in western Missouri but it was usually unprofitable without tariff protection.⁵¹ However, the existence of a major cash crop was not essential for the employment of slave labour; slaves also worked as household servants or as general farm labourers. In 1820 only Arkansas territory and Delaware, in the South, had fewer slaves, as a percentage of their population, than Missouri. Slaves made up 15.36% of Missouri's population in 1820, compared to an average of over 44% in Georgia, Mississippi and Louisiana, and 51.41% in South Carolina.⁵² From an antislavery point of view Missouri was retrievable, a point acknowledged by Henry

⁴⁷. *Annals*, 16.i.207, 1132-1133.

⁴⁸. *Annals*, 15.ii.1175.

⁴⁹. *Annals*, 16.i.207.

⁵⁰. Ray A. Billington, *Westward Expansion - A History of the American Frontier*, 4th edition (New York: Macmillan Publishing, 1974), p.307.

⁵¹. Dangerfield, *Nationalism*, p.109.

⁵². Adams, p.7.

Clay.⁵³ Slavery was not essential to the local economy and the institution was not as well established as elsewhere.

However, this argument was anathema to Missourians who were committed to slavery. As early as 1805 pro-slavery sentiment was evident when Missouri was joined to the Indiana Territory under the District of Louisiana. Protests were raised because it was feared the status of slavery would be questioned by being associated with free Indiana. Migration into Missouri was dominated by Southerners who between 1810 and 1820 raised slave numbers from 3,011 to 10,222.⁵⁴ Although numbers were smaller than elsewhere there were still a minimum of two hundred slaves in each county, representing a sizeable investment.⁵⁵ It should be noted that in the revolutionary period, in none of the emancipating Northern states were slave numbers equal to those presently in Missouri. Even though small farmers could not afford to hold slaves, it was in their best interests to protect the institution.⁵⁶ They hoped to use slave labour one day and emancipation would be seen as a physical and social threat.

Publicly, a majority of Missourians opposed the restriction primarily on legal grounds. Restriction was unconstitutional and against the treaty of cession. It was an attack on the property rights of immigrants who had settled in Missouri believing slavery to be safeguarded.⁵⁷ Southern immigration would be hindered thus damaging economic development. Missourians viewed the restrictionist movement as an attempt to block Western development, to them the North was being vindictive and narrow-minded. Federalists had been accused of this ever since their opposition to the Louisiana Purchase in 1803-1804.

⁵³. Clay to William Henry Russel, 18 July 1835, *Clay Papers*, VIII, p.789. Clay said there was no danger of a black ascendancy in Missouri as slave numbers were relatively low.

⁵⁴. Harrison A.Trexler, "Slavery in Missouri, 1804-1865," *John Hopkins University Studies in Historical and Political Science* XXXII, no.2 (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1914), pp.101, 102.

⁵⁵. Shoemaker, p.133.

⁵⁶. Trexler, p.104. Moore, p.267.

⁵⁷. Shoemaker, pp.110-112.

Public meetings in Missouri held between April and September 1819, in the counties of Montgomery, St.Louis, Howard, Washington, Ste.Genevieve, New Madrid and Cape Girardeau, all expressed anti-restrictionist sentiment. All the meetings justified their position through a constitutional and states' rights argument. Only one known township, St.Ferdinand in St.Louis county, held an antislavery meeting.⁵⁸ In Howard county, Humphrey Smith was mobbed (and later charged for provoking a mob) for asking how a Methodist could justify being a slave-holder.⁵⁹ The *Missouri Gazette*, edited by Joseph Charless, was the only paper to print defences of the restriction, although Charless had opposed the Tallmadge amendment, believing it to be unconstitutional. The paper supported gradual emancipation in Missouri and hoped antislavery candidates would be elected to Missouri's constitutional convention. This stance led the paper into a bitter battle with Benton's *Enquirer*.⁶⁰ A 4 July toast given at Marthasville read, "Messrs. Tallmadge and Taylor - Politically insane. May the next Congress appoint them a dark room, a straight waistcoat and a thin water gruel diet."⁶¹ Pro-slavery feeling was unequivocally demonstrated in the elections to the state constitutional convention. The determining factor in securing election was a candidate's position on slavery.⁶² Between 7,000 and 11,000 votes were cast in the summer of 1820, of which less than 1,000 were for antislavery candidates. A majority of the antislavery votes were from one county, St.Louis.⁶³ Although the pro-slavery element may have

⁵⁸. Shoemaker, pp.82-91.

⁵⁹. Arvarh E.Strickland, "Aspects of Slavery in Missouri, 1821," *Missouri Historical Review*, LXV (1971), p.517.

⁶⁰. David D.March, "The Admission of Missouri," *Missouri Historical Review*, LXV (1971), pp.431-434. Shoemaker, p.102.

⁶¹. Shoemaker, p.94.

⁶². *Zanesville Express*, 20 May 1820. Shoemaker, p.128.

⁶³. Shoemaker, p.131. Perry McCandless, *History of Missouri: 1820-1860*, Missouri Sequicentennial History Series, vol.II (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1972), p.8.

benefitted from the resentment at Congress' delay, it is clear public opinion was in favour of slavery.⁶⁴

That the South was committed to slavery is undoubted. One of the most accurate descriptions of the Southern position was given by New Englander John Quincy Adams after a conversation with John C. Calhoun. The Missouri question, "has betrayed the secret of their soul. In the abstract they admit that slavery is an evil, they disclaim all participation in the introduction of it, and cast it all upon the shoulders of our old Grandam Britain. But when probed upon the quick upon it, they show at the bottom of their souls pride and vainglory in their condition of masterdom. They fancy themselves more generous and noble hearted than the plain freemen who labor for subsistence."⁶⁵

But how did the possibility of restriction in Missouri threaten slavery in the rest of the South? The institution had become so essential to Southern interests that any challenge to it was seen as a dangerous precedent. Senator John Williams Walker of Alabama wrote of the battle he expected over restriction in Missouri: "It is believed by some and feared by others that it is merely the entering wedge - and that it posits directly to a total emancipation of the blacks."⁶⁶ Missouri's John Scott warned the Southern States, "if she falls in contending against the principles of the restriction, their turn will next come."⁶⁷ The pro-slavery side knew the North would reject an economic and social defence of slavery. Thus throughout the Missouri debates the South concentrated on a constitutional defence of slavery and succeeded in forcing the North to debate the harder constitutional ground rather than the clearer moral one.

The best protection for slavery was found in the United States Constitution, the document around which debate centred between 1819 and 1821. Although the Constitution did not explicitly mention slavery, it did implicitly recognise the

⁶⁴. For explanations, of which Congressional delay is one, of why Missouri framed her constitution in a pro-slavery, anti-black way see: Strickland, pp.513-516; Hodder, p.155; Trexler, p.105; Shoemaker, p.81; Lightfoot, p.155.

⁶⁵. *Adams Memoirs*, V, p.10.

⁶⁶. Walker to Tait, 8 Dec 1819, Bailey, pp.120-121.

⁶⁷. *Annals*, 16.i.1519.

institution. In particular this was seen in the three-fifths clause for the purposes of slave representation and taxation, and a twenty-year ban on prohibiting the slave trade. As slaves were bought and sold, they were considered as property. Furthermore, the fugitive slave clause, and subsequent law of 1793, compelled citizens in North and South to cooperate in the return of property to its rightful owner. Therefore slavery was protected by constitutional guarantees against federal interference with property.

Most Southerners, but not all, recognised that Congress had almost unlimited power over a territory, including control over the existence of slavery. However, such power was not wielded over a state, which was regarded as a sovereign body, though to what extent was open to interpretation. If Congress wished to impose a restriction upon Missouri, then it should have tried to do so when territorial status was discussed, not at the moment of statehood, said the South. Even such a restriction upon Missouri would have been illegal. Existing slave property was safeguarded by the Louisiana Purchase Treaty, and Missouri as part of the Purchase came under this jurisdiction.⁶⁸ As any compromise on the Constitution might be repeated, it was essential for the South to block any broad constitutional construction. Although a loose construction might be tolerated on some economic issues, on slavery it was impossible.

The South was committed to slavery and strict construction on the slave issue. The extent of the commitment was often evident, sometimes reaching the bounds of paranoia about Northern interference. This is clear in two examples. In his speech supporting the Tallmadge amendment, Representative Timothy Fuller from Massachusetts used the Declaration of Independence to claim slaves had the right to liberty. His speech was interrupted by Colston of Virginia who felt these remarks were inflammatory, and might encourage rebellious actions from the slaves listening in the gallery.⁶⁹ Out of Congress the Savannah fire shows how sensitive the South was to the race question. In January 1820 a fire ravaged the city of Savannah, Georgia, making

⁶⁸ The Treaty safeguarded property already there. Southerners interpreted it to mean that all subsequent property was protected.

⁶⁹ *Annals*, 15.ii.1180.

hundreds homeless.⁷⁰ The city's mayor, Thomas Charlton, appealed to American citizens for help, prompting New York to donate \$10,000 which the Northerners asked to be distributed "without distinction of colour." Savannah returned the money, taking the condition as an insult. "It is in short throwing us the fire brand of discord and if perserved in will shake...our liberty," replied the Mayor. Slaves in Savannah, Charlton assured everyone, "would not exchange their position with half the peasantry in the world." In a report, the Mayor said relief had been given equally to "white and black" and New York had given "offence to the humanity and pride" of Savannah."⁷¹

Why was the North at such variance with the South over slavery and why was it willing to threaten the Union to restrict the institution? There were many in the North who were sincerely opposed to slavery. It was unrepugnant and inhumane. Northern Congressmen said they were bound by republicanism to establish republican government (in their eyes, one free from slavery) in new states.⁷² Many Northerners accused the South of hypocrisy: Representative Gross of New York was one of many who pointed to the principles of equality at the centre of the American system of government.⁷³ The South were so sensitive to a usurpation of the Constitution yet they "usurp an unwarrantable power over a large portion of their fellow men," argued Cushman of Massachusetts in the House.⁷⁴ Justifications of slavery were incomprehensible to the moral-minded. Exasperated indignation was expressed with laudable clarity. It is easy to imagine the tone of voice used by Representative William Darlington of Pennsylvania when he said "...it is a source of no little mortification to me to see the Congress of these United States,...seriously sustaining the question whether it be rightful and expedient...to sanction human slavery in the new republics which are to

⁷⁰. Moore, pp.294.

⁷¹. *National Intelligencer*, 27 Jan, 14 Mar, 23 Aug 1820. *Scioto Gazette*, 30 Mar 1820. *Zanesville Express*, 12 Apr 1820.

⁷². D.L.Robinson, p.409.

⁷³. *Annals*, 16.i.1244-1249.

⁷⁴. *Annals*, 16.i.1300.

be added to this Confederacy."⁷⁵ In a similar impassioned plea, James Tallmadge questioned, "Has it already come to this; that in the Congress of the United States...the subject of slavery has become a subject of so much feeling, of such danger, that it cannot safely be discussed?"⁷⁶ In a speech which enraged the South, Rufus King got to the heart of the matter: "I have yet to learn that one man can make a slave of another...I hold that all laws and compacts imposing any such condition upon any human being are absolutely void."⁷⁷

Antislavery sentiment in Congress was a true reflection of a majority of public opinion. Again it seems sincere, keeping away from the economic and political aspects of slavery, and concentrating on the moral evil. An anonymous Pennsylvanian in 1820 wrote, "No *American* ever yet dared to vindicate Human Slavery in the abstract, - or to justify the bondage of his fellow man upon any other plea than that of necessity."⁷⁸ In Ohio, the *Zanesville Express* said slave holders shouted their liberties and rights to drown out the cries of their slaves. The paper asked whites to imagine the effect of having their own family split apart for sale.⁷⁹ The *Scioto Gazette* described slavery as an "inhuman and anti-republican" practice.⁸⁰ The Trenton, New Jersey, restrictionist meeting said Missouri should return to wilderness, for allowing slavery would be "a national crime."⁸¹ The Pennsylvania legislature told Congress in a memorial dated 22 December 1819 that slavery was "an odious stain upon the present race."⁸²

Antislavery societies hoped to galvanize public opinion. The Quakers felt small, local groups would help to create a bedrock of opinion against slavery which could be

⁷⁵. *Annals*, 16.i.1374.

⁷⁶. *Annals*, 15.ii.1205.

⁷⁷. Philip F. Detweiler, "Congressional Debate on Slavery and the Declaration of Independence, 1819-1821," *American Historical Review*, LXVIII (1958), p.611.

⁷⁸. Adams, p.77.

⁷⁹. *Zanesville Express*, 16 Feb 1820.

⁸⁰. *Scioto Gazette*, 2 July 1819.

⁸¹. *Scioto Gazette*, 26 Nov 1819.

⁸². *State Documents*, pp.197-199.

motivated at a national level. This idea was embodied in the Union Humane Society (U.H.S.) founded by Benjamin Lundy in south east Ohio in late 1815. The society opposed slavery on moral grounds, favouring gradual emancipation, education of the free Negro, and it barred its members from voting in elections for candidates who were not committed to antislavery. Eight local associations were founded in Ohio and western Virginia during 1816 attracting 500 members. By 1818 membership had declined to 100, members put off by the society's bureaucracy and failure to make an impact. It never really developed a following outside a Quaker circle, and Quakers themselves favoured a wider reform programme, something the U.H.S. refused to contemplate, being a distraction from their antislavery mission.⁸³ The U.H.S. was affiliated (from 1818) to the "American Convention for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery, and Improving the Condition of the African Race," which was the umbrella organization for antislavery. It was of course dominated by the North. Between 1794 and 1829 over half of all those attending conventions were Northerners with a majority of the rest coming from the border states. The American Convention prepared memorials for Congress, often presented via Representative John Sergeant of Pennsylvania. In 1820 they produced 1,000 pamphlets containing the speeches of King, Tallmadge and Taylor. The Convention opposed forced colonization, favoured restriction in both Missouri and Florida and proposed an end to the domestic slave trade.⁸⁴

Even though it was a false charge, Southerners believed the North to be politically motivated. But this charge was levelled against a minority of Northerners: the leading Federalists and some members of Congress. Jefferson claimed these Northerners had used the slave issue "to throw dust into the eyes of the people, & to fanaticize them" blinding them to the political nature of the crisis.⁸⁵ Such an analysis

⁸³. Randall M. Miller, "The Union Humane Society," *Quaker History*, LXI (1972), pp.91-105.

⁸⁴. Adams, pp.155-157, 189, 197-198.

⁸⁵. Jefferson to Albert Gallatin, 26 Dec 1820, *Writings of Jefferson*, X, pp.175-178. Jefferson also mentioned the "virtuous feelings of the [Northern] people" and the "sincerity in their declamations," Jefferson to Charles Pinckney, 30 Sept 1820, *ibid.*, X, pp.161-163. Shalhope, p.547.

implicitly points to the strength of the antislavery call in the North. The sincerity of antislavery sentiment in the North was recognised in the South. Writing well after the crisis Calhoun informed Tait, "I do not in the least doubt but the Missouri question was got up by a few designing politicians in order to extend their influence and power....But we are not to infer, that, as the politicians were sustained by the North on the Missouri question, the people in that quarter entered into their views, or that even the leaders were actuated by a hatred of the South, rather than a restless ambition. The North considered it a simple question, involving only the extension, or limitation of slavery, and under this view, it is not to be wondered at, that much excitement was caused."⁸⁶ In Howard County, Missouri, "The Grand Jury feel no disposition to impugn the motives of the majority of the house of representatives."⁸⁷ The *National Intelligencer*, which took the Southern side over Missouri, said the motives of the New York Manumission Society, Tallmadge and Taylor were just as sincere as Southern opposition based on constitutional principles.⁸⁸ Representative Thomas Cobb of Georgia knew "The people of New York and Pennsylvania...deem it highly immoral and politically improper to permit slavery."⁸⁹

But, many Northern spokesmen were worried more by the effect of slavery on whites than on blacks. Indeed Northerners found no inconsistency in hating both slavery and the Negro.⁹⁰ Thus free soil principles often went hand in hand with a moral hatred of slavery. The West was seen as a land of opportunity which would be cut off to Northern migrants by the presence of slavery. Similarly Southerners argued Missouri would be closed to development if slavery was barred. Northern white settlement would

⁸⁶. Calhoun continued "They viewed it in some degree in the same light, that they would the opening of the ports to the introduction of Africans; while the South, regarding its possible tendency, considered it a character wholly different, and as involving in its consequence the question of abolition. Thus the question became highly dangerous." Calhoun to Judge Charles Tait, 1 Oct 1821, *Calhoun Papers*, VI, pp.412-415. Also see Charles M. Wiltse, *John C. Calhoun: Nullifier, 1829-1839* (1949; reprinted - New York: Russell & Russell, 1968). p.269.

⁸⁷. Shoemaker, pp.97-98.

⁸⁸. *National Intelligencer*, 12 Mar 1819.

⁸⁹. *Annals*, 15.ii.1437.

⁹⁰. Ratcliffe, pp.86-87.

not be blocked because of moral scruples about slavery, nor because slavery distorted the cost of the labour market but because it made free labour disreputable. Whites in North and South could not picture themselves working alongside the Negro as it would imply an equality of status. This was anathema to the many who believed the Negro to be an inferior species incapable of civilised living.

Politicians in Congress did not hide their free soil beliefs. Representative John Taylor, who led the antislavery forces in the Sixteenth Congress, was obviously motivated to keep Missouri's soil free for white labour: "Do you believe that these people will settle in a country where they must take rank with negro slaves? Having neither the ability nor will to hold slaves themselves, they labor cheerfully while labor is honorable; make it disgraceful, they will despise it. You cannot degrade it more effectually than by establishing a system whereby it shall be performed principally by slaves. The business in which they are generally engaged, be it what it may, soon becomes debased in public estimation. It is considered low, and unfit for freemen."⁹¹ Representative Hemphill of Pennsylvania took a similar view: "A population of industrious freemen can never be expected to exist, if they are to be mixed with slaves; they would become idle, and the existence of slavery in that country will prevent many from settling in it."⁹² Free soil views were also expressed by Representatives Fuller and Sergeant. The former believed freemen labouring with Negroes would be "in a state of hopeless insignificance," and the latter summed up, "free labor and slave labor cannot be employed together."⁹³ Henry Clay hit the mark when he said the North suffered from "negrophobia."⁹⁴

The inferior position assigned to the free Negro in the North is ample proof of the racial stance behind Northern antislavery. Southern speakers claimed the free Negro in the North lived in poorer conditions than the slave. The fact that slavery still existed

⁹¹. *Annals*, 15.ii.1176-1177.

⁹². *Annals*, 16.i.1134.

⁹³. *Annals*, 16.i.1484, 1213.

⁹⁴. D.L.Robinson, p.411.

in New Jersey, New York and Pennsylvania because emancipation was only gradual, was glossed over in the North. "In the states of New York and New Jersey the treatment of Americans of color by their white countrymen is worse then that of the brute creation," claimed a traveller in the North. The *New York American* edited by Rufus King's son, Charles, blamed "the ignorance, debauchery, and idleness of the lower class of blacks" for crime and poverty in New York.⁹⁵ The Negro did not enjoy equality of status in Quaker circles, the sect believing the black man should accept his lowly position as God given. Blacks were not encouraged to join the Quakers.⁹⁶

The Negrophobia in Northern antislavery was made clear in the debates over the Missouri constitution. Southern spokesmen were quick to point out that Northerners were being hypocritical if they criticised Missouri's constitution for discriminating against the free Negro, as the free Negro held an unequal status in many states. Free blacks were given citizenship in Massachusetts yet the State imposed penalties on ministers conducting bi-racial marriages. Blacks could not sit on juries and were denied a place in the militia, the body claiming to be of all the people.⁹⁷ Representative Hemphill conducted an able defence of the free Negro's right to citizenship whilst reassuring Congress that differing ambition, ability and culture would keep the races apart.⁹⁸ In New York and Massachusetts Negroes could vote if they satisfied a property qualification. But, on the whole, the North frowned upon Negro suffrage. An excellent example of the prevailing sentiment was provided in the discussion over electing delegates to Missouri's constitutional convention, a motion moved by leading restrictionist John Taylor. John Randolph pointed out the word "white" had been omitted from the description of electors. This amendment was accepted by Taylor without reservation. Then a man of different principles, Allen from Massachusetts,

⁹⁵. Moore, p.302. Adams, p.73.

⁹⁶. Davis, p.254.

⁹⁷. *Annals*, 16.ii.546-547.

⁹⁸. *Annals*, 16.ii.598-601.

proposed dropping the word "white" and substituting the phrase "free male citizen." The resolution was supported by only one vote, that of Allen himself.⁹⁹

However, Northern attitudes to the Missouri constitution must not be simply dismissed as hypocritical. The "obnoxious clause," as the *National Intelligencer* called it, did appear both unnecessary and provocative.¹⁰⁰ It appeared to be a blatant violation of the constitutional rights of a United States citizen; and free Negroes were citizens in some states. To admit Missouri with its constitution intact would be against the antislavery belief in the equality of men, even though these men were of a distrusted race.

Ohio provides a good case study of the position of the free Negro in the North. The State was proud of never having been tainted by slavery but it appeared keen to prevent the settlement of the free Negro. A law of 1804 required Negroes to have a court certificate declaring their freedom. Employers had to see this certificate before offering work; although at least certification was a defence against fugitive slave hunters. Negroes wishing to settle in Ohio had to post a bond of \$500, a very substantial sum, to ensure their good behaviour.¹⁰¹ The Ohio legislature unanimously favoured the restriction of slavery in Missouri.¹⁰² However two years earlier (1818) the General Assembly had disclosed its true attitude towards the Negro. The legislature had instructed its Congressmen to help secure a law in Congress for emancipation, provided this was accompanied by colonization of the free Negro. In 1817 the Kentucky legislature accused Ohio of not enforcing the fugitive slave law. "That a universal prejudice against the principle of slavery does exist and is cherished, is to be expected, and that a desire as universal to get rid of every species of negro population exists, is, in

⁹⁹. *Annals*, 16.i.1555-1556.

¹⁰⁰. *National Intelligencer*, 14 Dec 1820.

¹⁰¹. Cochran, pp.55-56. Eugene H. Berwanger, *The Frontier Against Slavery: Western Anti-Negro Prejudice and the Slavery Expansion Controversy* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1967), pp.22-23.

¹⁰². *Scioto Gazette*, 17 Feb 1820.

my opinion, as certain," replied Governor Thomas Worthington of Ohio revealing how antislavery and anti-Negro feeling could co-exist.¹⁰³

Compliance with the fugitive slave law caused quite a controversy in Ohio in the summer of 1820. Newspapers with significant antislavery constituencies, the *Philanthropist* edited by Elisha Bates, and the *Western Herald* edited by James Wilson, decided not to print advertisements for fugitive slaves and urged other papers to follow their lead.¹⁰⁴ This suggestion resulted in a long running battle of letters in the columns of the *Scioto Gazette* and the *Western Herald*. Wilson condemned the advertisements because, "no pecuniary consideration ought to induce a freeman to consign, or aid in consigning a fellow creature and all his posterity to slavery." The *Scioto Gazette* said it hated slavery but "unfortunately" it was sanctioned by the constitution. The South had a legal right to expect help in the recapture of runaways, just as the North expected cooperation in debt collecting. Wilson was accused of "illiberality and prejudice" by promoting sectionalism and disunion. The advertisements were in the best interests of Ohio, said the *Gazette*: "Ignorant, slothful and immoral" Negroes would "corrupt the minds of our youth." By August 1820 the *Gazette* was carrying fugitive slave advertisements on its front page, something it had not done in the recent past, probably in a clear refutation of Wilson's stance.¹⁰⁵ The *Muskingum Messenger* did not hide its opposition to the appeal behind constitutional niceties. It was preferable to print the advertisements than to allow Negroes "to remain strolling among us, nuisances to society, destroying our peace and quiet, as is frequently the case in this part of the state." Wilson and Bates were in a minority, with the exception of the *Painesville Telegraph* none of the other papers in Ohio accepted their view; most were influenced partly by a concern to preserve trade with the South, more by a negative opinion of the Negro.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰³. Cochran, pp.65-66, 72-73.

¹⁰⁴. Miller, p.100.

¹⁰⁵. *Scioto Gazette*, 15 June, 17, 24, 31, Aug 1820.

¹⁰⁶. Miller, p.100.

Free Negroes in Ohio could encounter more than just hostile white opinion. In 1819 Samuel Gist, a Virginian slave-holder, bought land in southwest Ohio for his freed slaves. Ohioan whites intimidated the Negroes and even kidnapped their children for sale to "fugitive slave" hunters. Trying to help the free Negroes the Union Humane Society bought a new site in the north of the state. The white reaction was similar there and the Wyandot Indians were bribed to attack the Negroes.¹⁰⁷

There was some pro-slavery feeling in the Northwest. By 1820 in Ohio it was insignificant with William Henry Harrison its most notable defender. The pro-slavery sympathisers were a larger minority in Illinois and Indiana. Article six of the Northwest Ordinance had banned the future introduction of slavery into the territories from which these states were formed. However, French settlers continued to hold slaves (safeguarded in the Ordinance) and indentured servitude was a mere mask for slavery.¹⁰⁸ Between 1803 and 1807 Indiana territory (which included Illinois) adopted three indenture laws. Slaves could be brought from other states and signed up for a lifetime of service. A code of conduct was signed imposing conditions similar to those endured by slaves. Only the non-hereditary nature of indentures made them different from slavery. In 1810 there were 405 indentures in the two territories, rising to 1,107 in 1820, with a majority of them in Illinois.¹⁰⁹ This growth is small compared to the situation in Missouri and Arkansas where slave numbers increased by 8,828 in the same period. There were a few attempts to override Article six of the Northwest Ordinance. In 1802 the Indiana territorial convention under Governor William H. Harrison called for the suspension of Article six. This prompted antislavery supporters in the east of the territory to call for a new governor who was not "repugnant to Republicanism."¹¹⁰ In 1806 Indiana claimed the bar on slavery retarded the territory's population growth by discouraging the immigration of slave-holders, therefore reducing the chance of

¹⁰⁷. Miller, p.101.

¹⁰⁸. Moore, p.281.

¹⁰⁹. Berwanger, pp.10-11.

¹¹⁰. Jack E. Eblen, *The First and Second U.S. Empires: Governors and Territorial Government, 1784-1912* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1968), p.61.

statehood.¹¹¹ Pro-slavery sentiment had an exaggerated influence in Indiana, partly because Governor Harrison made pro-slavery appointments.¹¹² So frustrated did some antislavery supporters become, that in 1808 they petitioned that their county, Dearborn, should be annexed to Ohio.¹¹³ However, elections in 1809 brought in a majority mandated to repeal the 1805 indenture act.¹¹⁴

During the Missouri debates a majority in Indiana supported the restriction although Southern immigrants led a vocal pro-slavery faction. Indeed Montgomeryville, in Gibbon county, was the only Northern town known to hold an anti-restriction meeting.¹¹⁵ Representative William Hendricks and Senator James Noble consistently voted with the North but Virginian-born Senator Waller Taylor voted with the South. The Indiana House of Representatives censured Taylor on 23 December 1819 when instructing its Congressmen to vote against admitting any new slave state. After the Compromise had passed, the Indiana House still called for a halt to the further extension of slavery in Missouri.¹¹⁶

As in Indiana, pro-slavery groups in Illinois enjoyed political influence beyond their due, which often led to accusations of misapportionment.¹¹⁷ In 1817 the territorial legislature repealed indenture, only for the bill to be vetoed by Governor Ninian Edwards, who later as Senator from Illinois consistently voted with the South on Missouri.¹¹⁸ The pro-slavery group were willing to adopt slavery for the new state of Illinois in 1818. But they refrained from pushing the issue knowing Congress would be

¹¹¹. Peter S. Onuf, *Statehood and Union: A History of the Northwest Ordinance* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), p.117. Peter S. Onuf, "From Constitution to Higher Law: the Reinterpretation of the Northwest Ordinance," *Ohio History*, XCIV (1985), p.22.

¹¹². Eblen, p.128.

¹¹³. Berwanger, p.11.

¹¹⁴. Onuf, *Statehood and Union*, p.123.

¹¹⁵. Moore, p.209.

¹¹⁶. *National Intelligencer*, 8 Feb 1821.

¹¹⁷. Onuf, "Constitution to Higher Law," p.27.

¹¹⁸. Berwanger, p.12.

unlikely to sanction a challenge to the Northwest Ordinance.¹¹⁹ In Congress Tallmadge opposed Article six of the Illinois constitution because it allowed indentured servitude, which was hereditary until spouses reached the age of twenty-one.¹²⁰ It was in this debate that the South, and indeed Representative William H. Harrison of Ohio, suggested that the Northwest Ordinance was not a binding condition for statehood.¹²¹ With this encouragement the pro-slavery faction openly called for the suspension of Article six from 1819. Politicians and speculators, often the same people, hoped an influx of slave-holding immigrants would purchase lands left unsold during the panic.¹²²

Divisions within Illinois were reflected in Congress. After voting against the Tallmadge amendment Representative John McLean was ousted from office in August 1819 by Daniel Pope Cook who took a clear antislavery stance. The *Kaskaskia Intelligencer* supported Cook, "who will represent us and not the people of Missouri." In the Senate, Ninian Edwards and Jesse B. Thomas always voted with the South on the slave issue. Neither suffered electorally for their position.¹²³ The slave issue in Illinois was settled in 1824 when the pro-slavery camp was able to secure a referendum on whether or not to call a state constitutional convention, at which the future of slavery would be the issue. The referendum vote in August 1824 rejected the convention by 6,640 to 4,972 votes.¹²⁴

In the North an overwhelming majority of the population were antislavery and were agreed slavery was both immoral and unrepublican. This moral viewpoint was linked, for the majority, with a deep underlying fear of the affect of Negro slavery and the free Negro on whites. There was a concern for the status, honour and economic livelihood of white immigrants. The free soil element in Northern antislavery brought a

¹¹⁹. Paul Finkelman, "Slavery and the Northwest Ordinance: A Study in Ambiguity," *Journal of the Early Republic*, VI (1986), p.369.

¹²⁰. *Annals*, 15.ii.306-307.

¹²¹. *Annals*, 15.ii.309-310.

¹²². Berwanger, p.15.

¹²³. Moore, pp.283, 285.

¹²⁴. Onuf, *Statehood and Union*, pp.123, 130.

necessary element of self-interest to their case. A fight for white rights was always more likely to be vigorously pursued than one for only the Negro.¹²⁵ At the same time as Northerners were becoming more concerned about slavery, the institution was increasing in economic significance. As slave numbers rose with the expansion of cotton, emancipation was less likely because economic and social justifications of slavery became more entrenched. Missouri developed into a symbol of the South's right to hold slaves. Slavery caused the crisis because both sides stood poles apart on a definitive issue. It involved morality and the nature of republicanism, concerns which were not open to interpretation and which did not change with the times, unlike economic interests.¹²⁶ Unfortunately North and South could not agree on this key issue which most believed affected the livelihood and stability of the Republic.¹²⁷ Speaker Henry Clay closed the Fifteenth Congress on 3 March 1819 by reflecting on the nature of the sectional division: "...let these unpleasant incidents be consigned to oblivion, and let us recollect only the anxious desire which has uniformly animated *every one to promote what appeared to him to be for the prosperity of our common country.*"¹²⁸

125. It was always hard to match the Southern commitment. As John Quincy Adams said of the South: "their passions and interests are more profoundly agitated, and they have stronger impulses to active energy than their antagonists...." *Adams Memoirs*, IV, p.506.

126. Shalhope, p.539.

127. Shalhope, p.556. Davis, p.131.

128. *Annals*, 15.ii.1443. *Clay Papers*, II, p.680. Italics added.

CHAPTER FOUR - THE DEFEAT OF RESTRICTION

The key decision which effectively ended the crisis was taken on 2 March when the House agreed to admit Missouri as a slave state. The vote itself reveals no compromise: eighty-seven Northern Representatives were implacably opposed to a new slave state and most were willing to remain in opposition until the South gave way.¹ The South secured its majority of three with the help of eighteen Northern Congressmen, fourteen of whom voted with the South, four of whom abstained. These Northerners became known as the "doughfaces," an epithet given by Representative John Randolph of North Carolina, implying they were afraid of the consequences of deadlock. Without their votes or abstentions the Compromise would have been impossible.

The uniting of the Maine statehood bill with the Missouri bill provides a convenient but exaggerated explanation of the motives of doughfaced Massachusetts Representatives Mark Langdon Hill and John Holmes. On 30 December 1819 Speaker of the House Henry Clay gave a strong hint that the Maine and Missouri bills should be united. The bills were tied together in the Senate on 16 February after a sectional vote.² The next day the Senate passed a bill providing for the admission of Maine, and the entry of Missouri with the restriction on slavery suggested by Senator Jesse B. Thomas.³ This joint bill was not split until the conference committee advised such an action in its recommendations for a compromise solution on 2 March.⁴ The South tried to justify the joint bill by suggesting that the two bills were similar and that it followed a precedent of

¹ *Annals*, 16.i.1586-1587.

² *Annals*, 16.i.834, 424.

³ *Annals*, 16.i.427-428.

⁴ *Annals*, 16.i.1576-1577.

admitting states together established by Kentucky and Vermont in 1791.⁵ These claims were easily refuted by the North. The bills were not similar: Maine, being part of Massachusetts, only required a three-line bill for permission to separate and enter the Union. Missouri was a completely new state which was seeking approval to write a constitution. Even after forming a constitution, Congressional permission would be required for entry into the Union. Kentucky and Vermont were not admitted in the same bill. Furthermore, at no time had states been admitted from each section to balance each other out. Statehood was considered once territories met certain requirements, of which sectional location was not one.⁶ Ohio's admission in 1803 gave the North an advantage of one state which was not rectified until Louisiana entered in 1812. Between 1816 and 1819 Indiana, Mississippi, Illinois and Alabama had all entered the Union through four separate bills in four different years. If the balance of power was important, surely such situations would not have occurred. Even Southerners like James Madison thought the joint bill "a very doubtful policy."⁷ The uniting of the bills had an obvious motive. The South hoped Northerners would be forced to vote for Maine and thus also admit a slave Missouri. The fact that the Massachusetts legislature insisted separation occur before 4 March, or not at all, put additional pressure on Northern Congressmen. Senator David Morrill of New Hampshire summed up the Northern dilemma perfectly: "...you compel gentlemen to vote for both or neither."⁸ Northerners were certainly willing to put Maine at risk, believing giving into the South and slavery a greater evil. Charles Hammond of Ohio was "full of wrath at the trick which has been played upon the Yankys about Maine," and he hoped "the House will stand out - Let Maine go to the Devil (I mean the State, a legal entity of little importance now a days) rather than make a State of it upon

⁵. *Annals*, 16.i.86.

⁶. James A. Woodburn, "The Historical Significance of the Missouri Compromise," *Annual Report of the American Historical Association for 1893* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1894), p.254.

⁷. Madison to Monroe, 10 Feb 1820, *Monroe Papers*. Lightfoot, p.153.

⁸. Lowery, pp.111, 113.

the Senatorial plan."⁹ It was feared the South was hoping to create a firm precedent of admitting states together at least to maintain its pre-eminent position in the Senate. Senator Harrison Gray Otis saw the Souths' policy as one aiming to "engross power and influence."¹⁰

John Holmes was perhaps the most widely criticised doughface. Rufus King called him "contemptible and vulgar...the merest sycophant, and hollow hearted man."¹¹ Representative Daniel Pope Cook from Illinois described one of Holmes' speeches as "pathetic" and he was critical of Holmes' ambition and ability.¹² Securing statehood for Maine must have played a part in Holmes' vote, for he claimed admission would have been impossible without the Compromise.¹³ However, it is unlikely that the united bill was a major factor in his decision to vote against the restriction. Holmes had voted against both the Tallmadge amendment and the Taylor amendment on the Arkansas bill in February 1819.¹⁴ He described the proposed restriction as "unconstitutional, inexpedient and dangerous." Reflecting on his vote against Tallmadge, Holmes said that "...to my recollection, not one word of doubt, distrust or regret was ever expressed to me for the vote I had given." Criticism was only made after the Federalist-inspired New York meeting, he claimed. The movement towards sectional parties had caused a crisis for which the Compromise was the "last hope" to save the Union.¹⁵

⁹ C.Hammond to J.C.Wright, 20 Feb 1820, Hammond Papers, Ohio Historical Society (Ratcliffe Collection).

¹⁰ *Annals*, 16.i.110. Historians have criticised Northerners for not thinking of such a trick as the joint bill in 1819. A slave Arkansas could have been used to gain a free Missouri. Fehrenbacher, *Dred Scott*, p.106. But Northerners may well have rejected such a course in 1819 believing it to be wrong.

¹¹ King to C.Gore, 9 Apr 1820, *King Correspondence*, VI, pp.328-330.

¹² *Annals*, 16.i.1113.

¹³ "Mr Holmes' Letter to the People of Maine," 10 Apr 1820, in Noble E.Cunningham, Jr. (ed), *Circular Letters of Congressmen to their Constituents, 1789-1829* (University of North Carolina Press, 1978), vol.III, pp.1109-1115. Hereafter referred to as *Circular Letters*.

¹⁴ William R.Johnson, "Prelude to the Missouri Compromise: A New York Congressman's Effort to Exclude Slavery from Arkansas Territory," *New York Historical Society Quarterly*, XLVIII (1964), p.43.

¹⁵ *Circular Letters*, III, pp.1109-1115. *Annals*, 16.i.804.

Like John Holmes, Mark Langdon Hill represented part of Massachusetts which became Maine. Again the threat to Maine's statehood was not the key factor in Hill's decision. In a circular letter to the citizens of Maine he said he would have voted the same way even if Maine had not been at stake. Hill stressed the unconstitutionality of the restriction and that it was wrong to submit to ambitious men, a clear reference to the Federalists. Above all Hill feared disunion. In a further circular he quoted from letters written to him by Jefferson and Madison who warned of the dangers of sectionalism. Hill also made reference to Washington's Farewell Address, which counselled against geographic parties.¹⁶

The threat to statehood did not effect public opinion in Maine as greatly as perhaps the South expected. Maine's leading politician, Governor William King, at first favoured the restriction. Writing to his half brother, Rufus King, he said he would refrain from bargaining and he commented, "Mr Holmes' course is generally complained of here."¹⁷ But William King soon changed sides. It is likely that Hill and Holmes persuaded King to change sides, rather than his persuading them to vote for the restriction. King received letters from the two doughfaces urging the necessity of compromise and asking for open backing, presumably to help their reelection chances. King was also subject to pressure from Crawfordites who viewed Missouri as a "political hobby horse" designed to influence the 1824 Presidential election.¹⁸ As a supporter of Crawford, Holmes was fully aware of this; he thought the Federalists were "looking towards a northern combination against the Presidential election after next."¹⁹ King eventually wrote to both Hill and Holmes pledging his support, the letter to Hill

16. "To the Citizens of Maine," 31 Mar 1820, *Circular Letters*, III, pp.1101-1104; letter to his constituents, 15 May 1820, *ibid.*, III, pp.1122-1126. Ronald F.Banks, *Maine Becomes A State: the Movement to Separate Maine from Massachusetts, 1785-1820* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1970), p.198.

17. W.King to R.King, 6 Feb 1820, *King Correspondence*, VI, pp.265-266.

18. Egerton, p.152.

19. Holmes to W.King, 29 Mar 1820, Banks, p.197. Egerton, p.149.

arriving too late to make any impression other than confirming support for an action already taken.²⁰

Public opinion was clearly so divided that it cannot have had a major bearing on the Maine delegation. Some were willing to risk statehood for the sake of the restriction. The *Portland Gazette* confessed "we had rather it would sink, than bear up so wicked a freight as the slavery of Missouri."²¹ Delegates to Maine's constitutional convention were agreed that a year's delay of admission was preferable to allowing slavery in Missouri.²² However, the *Eastern Argus* accepted the joint bill "if she can become a state in no other manner."²³ The electoral reaction in Maine reveals the extent to which the population was divided. Holmes was reelected and indeed promoted to the Senate. In a tight contest Hill was reelected to the Seventeenth Congress. Meanwhile Cushman, Lincoln and Whitman of the four restrictionists in the Maine delegation were also returned to office.²⁴

Two other members from Massachusetts voted against the restriction: Jonathon Mason and Henry Shaw. Mason was politically neutral but in the past had leant towards the Federalists.²⁵ He felt the slave issue unimportant and the restriction unconstitutional. Mason hoped his position would appease Southerners so that Massachusetts' militia claims could be considered.²⁶ His votes against the Tallmadge amendment on Missouri and Taylor's amendments on Arkansas and Missouri, together with his unpopular anti-tariff stance insured that Mason was not returned to the next Congress. Henry Shaw also voted with the South on the Tallmadge and Taylor amendments in 1819. In explaining these votes to his constituents Shaw adopted a states' rights position. The restriction was

²⁰. Banks, p.193. Moore, p.277.

²¹. *Portland Gazette*, 18 Jan 1820, Banks, p.190.

²². Banks, p.189.

²³. *Eastern Argus*, 11 Jan 1820, Banks, p.190.

²⁴. Banks, p.202. Moore, p.280.

²⁵. *Biographical Directory of the American Congress, 1774-1971* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1971), pp.1347-1348. Moore, p.106.

²⁶. Mason to David Sears, in *National Intelligencer*, 1 Apr 1820. Moore, p.106.

unconstitutional, being a limit on state sovereignty and a threat to property rights safeguarded by the Louisiana Purchase Treaty. Slavery, although "abhorrent", could not be blamed on the present generation and diffusion could best palliate its ills.²⁷ Shaw's criticism of the *National Intelligencer* for printing a letter defending the Hartford Convention suggests fear of Federalism may also have influenced his decision.²⁸ Shaw did not stand for reelection in 1820.

"One of the chief factors which won Northern support for the Missouri Compromise in Congress was the fear that the Federalists and New York Clintonians were seeking to make political capital out of slavery and use it as a lever to create a new alignment of parties based on geographical distinctions. This was precisely what Rufus King did have in mind," states Glover Moore.²⁹ This view was supported by contemporary Thomas Hart Benton: "the northern democracy became alarmed, and only wanted a turn or abatement in the popular feeling at home, to take the first opportunity to get rid of the question by admitting the State."³⁰ The Federalist plot has already been proved to be a myth. But how important was the myth? Homer C.Hockett speculated that it was crucial: "It may be found, therefore, when the subject is thoroughly investigated, that the passage of the famous compromise by which our commonwealth gained statehood was due to an erroneous belief in the personal ambition of an aged leader of a dead party."³¹ Hill, Holmes and Mason to some extent believed a party plot needed to be crushed. The crisis was "got up entirely for a political purpose, by De Witt Clinton and the Federalists," argued Mason.³² It is possible that the New York doughfaces were influenced by their Bucktail ties to end the dispute. A Northern party

²⁷. To the editor of the *Pittsfield Sun*, 17 Apr 1819, in *National Intelligencer*, 8 May 1819.

²⁸. *National Intelligencer*, 13 Jan 1820.

²⁹. Moore, p.106.

³⁰. Benton, I, p.10. This opinion is widely quoted with reference to the Compromise of 1820, and it probably reflects Benton's view of the situation in 1820. However, he was almost certainly referring to the Compromise of 1821.

³¹. Hockett, p.220.

³². Moore, p.106.

would be an obstacle to the Presidential hopes of Bucktail-favoured candidate William Crawford. Furthermore the South was convinced of the plot and seemed determined to remind Northerners of the danger of the Federalist party. Representative Johnson of Virginia, in an aggressive speech defending the Virginia dynasty, pointed out that the only Northern President, was a Federalist, who had introduced "acts of usurpation" like the Alien and Sedition acts.³³

However, the importance of the fear of Federalism has been exaggerated. It is clear that fear of sectional parties was not the prime motive behind Hill, Holmes or Mason. Henry Meigs was the only New York doughface clearly associated with the Bucktails; Storrs of New York was a Federalist. At this time Martin Van Buren was too involved with defeating Clinton at the state level to be deeply concerned with a national issue effecting the Presidential election which was still four years away.³⁴ It is impossible to point to any doughface who was primarily motivated by fear of a party plot. Six of the doughfaces had been or still were connected with the Federalists.³⁵ Many of the doughfaces voted with the South before the Federalist plot became an issue. Northerners were aware that the plot idea was being encouraged by the South. Northern Republicans and Federalists hoped it would be ignored.³⁶ Federalists were aware that their role in the dispute would be subject to abuse. Senator Harrison Gray Otis, a Federalist, was worried: "The fear of federalism and of Massts federalism may save her [Missouri]," and he urged, "Let them [Northern Republicans] be irretrievably committed on the slave question before the fears on this subject become merged in their fears of federalism which are always likely to predominate."³⁷ Some portrayed the Federalists as an insignificant minority. Representative Gross of New York criticised

³³. *Annals*, 16.i.1358-1370.

³⁴. Cole, p.61. It was thought unlikely that anyone would challenge Monroe in 1820.

³⁵. J.Holmes & J.Bloomfield were no longer Federalists; J.Mason, H.Shaw, H.Storrs & H.Baldwin had all been elected as Federalists to the Sixteenth Congress. See *Biographical Directory of the American Congress; Who Was Who in America: Historical Volume 1607-1896* (Chicago: Marquis Who's Who, 1963).

³⁶. *Annals*, 16.i.1374.

³⁷. Otis to W.Sullivan, 9, 13 Feb 1820, Morison, pp.427-428. Livermore, p.93.

the "illiberal prejudices, which have characterized at least a portion of their brethren of the North and East."³⁸ New Hampshire's William Plumer said New England disavowed Federalists seeking disunion.³⁹ Republican Representative Joshua Cushman from Massachusetts denied that power and ambition were motivating factors. He split the moral issue from the diversionary political one. He hoped "the leading republicans...the real friends of humanity and freedom, of every description, forgetting former animosities, will coalesce for the promotion of more benevolent purposes." Cushman also claimed that "In most of the states which contend for restriction, federalist and republican are scarcely known."⁴⁰ Fear of Federalism was used by some as an excuse for the necessity of the Compromise package.⁴¹ But overall the Federalist plot was not the determining factor in securing the demise of restriction.

By stressing the role of the doughfaces this study implicitly denies the view put forward by Moore, and hinted at by Dangerfield, that many more Northerners were doughfaced than the famous eighteen Representatives. Moore comes to the conclusion that the Northern Democratic Press were doughfaced and largely motivated by a fear of Federalism.⁴² In Connecticut, the New Haven *Columbian Register* said the Federalist press were trying to turn Missouri "into a pure party question."⁴³ A reinterpretation of the evidence justifies the view put forward in this study that the Federalist plot was of negligible importance in securing the Compromise in the North.

Criticism levelled by the Democratic press against the Federalists' role during the crisis should not be instinctively associated with a belief in a party plot. The prominence of the Federalists and their successful response to public opinion during the crisis, brought home to Democratic editors the fact that the Era of Good Feelings was

³⁸. *Annals*, 16.i.1244.

³⁹. *Annals*, 16.i.1435-1436.

⁴⁰. Livermore, p.94. *Annals*, 16.i.1305.

⁴¹. Livermore, pp.90-91.

⁴². Dangerfield, *Nationalism*, p.124. Moore, p.188.

⁴³. *Columbian Register*, 12 Feb 1820, Moore, p.194.

over and that two-party politics was by no means dead. The Federalists did not provoke the crisis but they did realise that the party might be able to mount a recovery on the basis of their contribution to the debates. Rufus King did not take part in the crisis because he sought the creation of a Northern party but he did hope for such a development. The Democratic press were fully aware of such desires and were determined to prevent the Federalists gaining any credit from the crisis. With Congressional and Presidential elections beckoning it was important for the Democratic press to rally the public to their party. The most effective way of criticising the Federalists was to accuse them of exploiting their involvement in a most disruptive crisis. The implication was made that the Federalists had exaggerated the Missouri question to the detriment of the chances of compromise. By blaming the Federalists for the severity of the crisis, the Democratic press created an excuse for accepting the Compromise which was essentially a defeat for the North. Rejecting the Compromise would have played into the hands of the Federalists and increased the likelihood of a division of the Union, the Democratic editors later claimed in defence of the Northern defeat.

It should be noted that, with a few exceptions, Northern criticism of the Federalists did not begin until February and March 1820. Yet the Federalists were becoming prominent in the anti-Missourian movement from November 1819. Surely criticism of the Federalists levelled months after the settling of the crisis must be seen as concern with the two-party battle. Adverse comments in late 1820 and early 1821, which Moore quotes, must be related to the understandable frustration produced by the Missouri constitution debate rather than a reasoned appraisal of the Federalists' role during 1819-1820.⁴⁴ A desire for sectional parties in 1821 should not be extrapolated to mean the same motives were present in 1820. Democratic Representative Joshua Cushman from Maine enraged North and South alike in early 1821 by suggesting the North should unite and act against the South which was "united in a common cause for

⁴⁴. Moore, pp.188-195, especially see pp.189-190.

sectional ascendancy."⁴⁵ This opinion should not cast doubt on the sincerity of his motives in 1820.

The South appeared worryingly committed to dissolving the Union if restriction was passed, regardless of a Federalist plot or not. If the North pursued the restriction "the Union will be dissolved....You have kindled a fire which all the waters of the ocean cannot put out, which seas of blood can only extinguish," threatened Representative Thomas Cobb of Georgia.⁴⁶ Similarly Jones of Tennessee said that if Missouri gave in to the restrictionists "her name will be written in characters of blood."⁴⁷ Charles Pinckney declared that passage of the antislavery amendment would mean the "Southern States must and would dissolve the Union."⁴⁸ Senator James Barbour, reflecting the mood of the Virginia legislature, stated, "...there is a point where submission becomes a crime, and resistance a virtue."⁴⁹ William Plumer reported, "It was seriously proposed by the leading men on the other side, Lowndes, Clay, Barbour & others, if we succeeded, that they would merely pass the appropriation bills, & then adjourn, to consult their constituents whether they should ever come back again!"⁵⁰ John Quincy Adams became very concerned about secession, fearing "it must end in that." He related Clay's prediction that within five years the Union would be divided into three separate confederacies.⁵¹ Indeed Adams came to view disunion as the only answer to the problem of slavery. Threats of disunion were idle and known to be so by many on both sides. "But this is all talk, intended to frighten us out of our purpose - and

⁴⁵. Letter dated 25 Dec 1820, in *National Intelligencer*, 8 Feb 1821.

⁴⁶. Tallmadge quoting Cobb, *Annals*, 15.ii.1204.

⁴⁷. *Annals*, 16.i.1462.

⁴⁸. *Plumer Letters*, p.11.

⁴⁹. Lowery, p.116. Harrison Gray Otis realised there was irony in the situation: "Is it not a queer world? Just as I have demonstrated that Massachusetts did not mean to break the Union...it is about to be shown by Virginia that the thing itself is no crime." Otis to William Sullivan, 13 Feb 1820, Morison, pp.381-382.

⁵⁰. *Plumer Letters*, p.14. *Adams Memoirs*, V, pp.13-14. Moore, p.93.

⁵¹. *Adams Memoirs*, IV, pp.517, 526.

is so understood," opined William Plumer, Jnr.⁵² Representative John Tyler of Virginia said he did not take disunion seriously.⁵³ James Barbour wished "that we shall remain united and free."⁵⁴

However fear of disunion appeared to be the overriding concern of many of the doughfaces. Bernard Smith of New Jersey said he had favoured the restriction but once stalemate set in he feared a "dissolution of the Union." Washington's Farewell Address confirmed his fears and so Smith voted against the restriction "to save my country from a Civil War."⁵⁵ Similar fears affected Henry Meigs of New York and Charles Kinsey of New Jersey. The latter made a very persuasive and conciliatory speech just before the crucial votes on the Compromise were taken. An "olive branch" was required to cease the "sectional vaunting" which was the "deadliest enemy" to the Union.⁵⁶ A "friend" in Massachusetts writing to a Congressman said, "the spirit of compromise ought still to exist" as the Missouri question threatened the Union.⁵⁷ Furthermore, it must have occurred to the doughfaces that it would be impossible to peaceably impose an antislavery restriction on pro-slavery Missouri.⁵⁸

Henry Baldwin of Pennsylvania as the owner of three large iron rolling mills and the leader of the pro-tariff movement, voted with the South hoping to gain Southern support for economic bills.⁵⁹ Daniel Webster summed up Baldwin's position: "...you lamented the agitation of the question now, & thought it not wise in the Gentlemen from the North to have produced it, since there was the subject of the Bankruptcy Bill & other subjects deeply interesting to the people of the North towards which it would be

⁵². *Plumer Letters*, p.12.

⁵³. Lyon G.Tyler, *The Letters and Times of the Tylers* (Richmond, 1884-1896; reprinted - New York: Da Capo Press, 1970), vol.I, p.316.

⁵⁴. Lowery, p.117.

⁵⁵. Smith to a gentleman in New Jersey, 15 Apr 1820, in *National Intelligencer*, 16 Sept 1820.

⁵⁶. *Annals*, 16.i.1578-1582.

⁵⁷. *National Intelligencer*, 20 Jan 1820.

⁵⁸. Fehrenbacher, *Dred Scott*, p.107. Moore, p.92. *Plumer Letters*, p.16.

⁵⁹. Rothbard, p.164.

desirable to conciliate the dispositions of the South."⁶⁰ Poor economic conditions in particular created a desire to move on to more pressing issues, especially since Missouri had occupied the whole session. The New York *Columbian* was annoyed that "the important business of the session should be suspended to give place to this unprofitable and angry discussion."⁶¹ The *National Intelligencer* commented, "Among the subjects before Congress, which are likely to be overlaid by the Missouri question we much fear that of the Bankrupt Bill will be one."⁶² The Florida problem, Calhoun told Tait, "slumbers in Congress in the midst of the din of the Missouri question."⁶³ The *Cleveland Herald* was pleased the "distracting question" had been settled.⁶⁴ As John Quincy Adams noted, "The question to the North and in the free states is merely speculative. The people do not feel it in their persons or their purses," unlike tangible economic issues.⁶⁵ The lack of sectional unity on economic and political questions must have made compromising easier. At this stage of the ante-bellum period, voting with the South was not a betrayal which was seen to effect a whole range of issues. In 1820 there was only one truly sectional issue which was slavery. Amongst the doughfaces Samuel Eddy of Rhode Island, James Stevens of Connecticut and Charles Kinsey of New Jersey all took a particular interest in the tariff issue. Fifteen of the doughfaces supported the Baldwin tariff bill, introduced immediately after the passage of the Compromise.⁶⁶ However, the bill was supported by many who continued to advocate restriction, and there is no conclusive evidence to suggest economic issues had a bearing on the doughfaces, except in the case of Baldwin.

⁶⁰. Webster to Baldwin, 15 Feb 1820, in Charles M. Wiltse (ed), *The Papers of Daniel Webster: Correspondence* (Hanover, N.H.: University of New England Press, 1974), vol.I, p.270.

⁶¹. New York *Columbian*, 3 Feb 1820, Moore, p.174.

⁶². *National Intelligencer*, 17 Feb 1820.

⁶³. Calhoun to Tait, 29 Jan 1820, *Calhoun Papers*, IV, pp.617-618.

⁶⁴. *Cleveland Herald*, 21 Mar 1820, *Annals of Cleveland*, III, p.67-68.

⁶⁵. *Adams Memoirs*, IV, p.533.

⁶⁶. Livermore, p.92n.

The doughfaces, with the unlikely exception of those from Maine, could not claim to be reacting to constituency opinion. Of the eighteen doughfaces, only five were reelected to the next Congress: Hill, Holmes, Eddy, Baldwin and Henry Edwards of Connecticut. Edwards' constituents accepted his excuse that he missed the vote because it was held earlier than expected due to the fainting of Charles Fenton Mercer of Virginia; Edwards was out of the chamber eating.⁶⁷ Disapproval of a slave Missouri can be used to explain most of the defeats. Samuel A. Foot of Connecticut informed Monroe, "My name has been erased from the nomination for the next election...the only reason assigned by them was, that my vote on the Missouri Question was unpopular."⁶⁸ But other reasons were current. Fullerton of Pennsylvania and Mason both angered their constituents by their anti-tariff views. It is impossible to know whether Fullerton or Mason ignored their constituents and voted as they thought fit on Missouri knowing that their anti-tariff stance already made their electoral defeat likely. Three of the four doughfaces who did not vote on 2 March, namely Case, Peek and Tompkins, were all defeated in New York. Peek missed so many votes that it is impossible to read anything into his absence on 2 March. In New York, where local issues were dominant in 1820, only six out of twenty-seven members were reelected.⁶⁹ It should be noted that turnover was high throughout the nation in this period. Over 48% of the Fifteenth Congress failed to return to the Sixteenth Congress. Of this latter Congress, 46.5% did not sit in the Seventeenth Congress.⁷⁰ This makes it very difficult to specifically recognise disapproval of the doughfaces vote on Missouri as the cause of defeat.

Eight of the doughfaces had cast votes on the Tallmadge amendment on Missouri and the Taylor amendment on Arkansas in the 1818-1819 session. All except Caleb Tompkins of New York and Charles Kinsey of New Jersey voted against the Tallmadge amendment (Baldwin did not vote on Tallmadge but he voted for the

⁶⁷. Moore, p.214.

⁶⁸. Foot to Monroe, 26 June 1820, *Monroe Papers*.

⁶⁹. Moore, p.214.

⁷⁰. James S. Young, *The Washington Community, 1800-1828* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1966), p.90.

restricted Missouri bill) and only Tompkins supported the restriction on Arkansas.⁷¹ The antislavery side were on strong constitutional ground in trying to prohibit slavery from Arkansas. The Northerners who helped defeat the restriction there, demonstrated that their consciences were partly governed by geography, rather than by a commitment to antislavery. This was an indication of how they would later consider the Taylor amendment on Missouri. In the Sixteenth Congress ten of the doughfaces had voted against the Taylor amendment when it was accepted by the House on 29 February and 1 March.⁷² Therefore it should be less of a surprise to see the doughfaces voting against the restriction on 2 March 1820. Even Joseph Bloomfield, who was the President of the New Jersey Abolition Society and who lived in Burlington where the restrictionist meetings began, consistently voted with the South on the slave issue.⁷³ However, eight of the doughfaces (four of whom were absentees) had supported the Taylor amendment when the House passed it, and then changed sides on 2 March. Two should be dismissed from consideration: Peek the chronic absentee and Edwards who left the chamber due to hunger. Kinsey and Smith claimed to be acutely frightened of disunion. The motives of Case and Tompkins remain shrouded in mystery whilst a desire to move on to economic issues may partly explain the votes of Eddy and Stevens.

The Northern Democratic press welcomed the Compromise with a mixture of indifference and support. Their reaction is rather misleading. Throughout the crisis the Democratic press had been less enthusiastic about the question than the Federalist press. Therefore it is to be expected that they would be more receptive to the Compromise. Again there was a need to present the Compromise to the public as the best available solution. The *Scioto Gazette* reflected an opinion typical of many: "This result, although not altogether equal to our wishes, is, considering the great difference of opinion and interest which existed on the subject, perhaps the most satisfactory that could have been

⁷¹. *Annals*, 15.ii.1214-1215, 1272-1273.

⁷². *Annals*, 16.i.1565, 1567, 1572-1573. On this occasion Rep. M.L.Hill cast votes both for and against the Taylor amendment.

⁷³. Moore, p.212.

expected."⁷⁴ Plumer explained that Adams' acceptance of the Compromise was based on the belief that there was "little hope of saving any thing further south."⁷⁵ However, the underlying view of the Compromise was critical. Amongst the Federalist press, the *New York Advertiser* called it a "mere farce" and the *New Haven Journal* "MOST HORRIBLE AND DISGRACEFUL."⁷⁶ William Plumer, Representative from New Hampshire, wrote, "I for one cannot help regretting that it ended in a compromise."⁷⁷ In Ohio the *Western Herald*, which had enthusiastically supported the restriction, at first backed the Compromise. But evidently public opinion was not convinced and the paper soon began to criticise the deal.⁷⁸ In his diary entry for 3 March Democratic Representative Edward Dowse of Massachusetts wrote, "I feel most awfully mortified and cast down at the result...I consider our nation now as disgraced in the eyes of the civilized nations of the earth."⁷⁹

What is clear is that a majority of Northern opinion was hostile to the Missouri Compromise, essentially a compromise agreed to by only a small minority of Northern Congressmen. There was only one vote on the whole compromise package, which was in the Senate. The unrestricted Maine-Missouri bill passed 24:20 on 17 February 1820 but eighteen Northern Senators stood in opposition. In the House eighty-seven Northerners still favoured the restriction.⁸⁰ Dangerfield raises the question of whether the minority could "get its way without at least a tacit consent on the part of the majority."⁸¹ It is an interesting question but impossible to answer accurately without knowing how each Representative felt on the issue. But surely the North's antislavery

⁷⁴. *Scioto Gazette*, 16 Mar 1820.

⁷⁵. *Plumer Letters*, p.16.

⁷⁶. Moore, p.200.

⁷⁷. *Plumer Letters*, p.14.

⁷⁸. Moore, p.207.

⁷⁹. R.H.Brown, *The Missouri Compromise: Political Statesmanship...*, p.72.

⁸⁰. *Annals*, 16.i.427-428, 1586-1587.

⁸¹. Dangerfield, *Nationalism*, p.124.

commitment is clear. They had consistently opposed a slave Missouri throughout 1819 and 1820 with a determination and indignation which suggests far more than a political point was at stake. On two occasions they were able to secure the passage of a restrictive bill in the House, only for Southern Senators to expunge the antislavery clause, always with the help of Ninian Edwards and Jesse B. Thomas. One of the restrictive bills passed during the conference committee discussions, the period when pressure for compromise was greatest.⁸² Although the Missouri question had been settled, it was "in truth far from being so" conceded John A. King. He thought the question would recur once another slave state requested admission.⁸³

Northern opposition to Missouri's constitution demonstrates an unwillingness to give in to the South on the race issue. The Philadelphia *American Daily Advertiser* claimed the majority of Northerners should not be bound by the vote of the unprincipled doughfaces. Their vote should not alter others' antislavery views because, "Truth is unchangeable."⁸⁴ Although the political motive may have been stronger in 1821, the North were not seeking to repeal the Compromise. Representative Mallery from Vermont introduced an amendment on 12 February 1821 which required gradual emancipation to be enacted in Missouri before admission. The motion was defeated 107:61. The fact that the North split 34:61 prompts Moore to say that by a 2:1 majority the North rejected the Missouri Compromise, a compromise he points out they only grudgingly accepted.⁸⁵ Despite the understandable anger at the provisions of the Missouri constitution, the North were not seeking a repeal in 1820-1821. It is true that a majority of Northerners voted for the Mallery amendment, probably through a principled desire to remain consistent with their position of a year earlier. But thirty-four Northern Representatives voted with the South, far more than had supported an end to restriction a year earlier. If anything the vote on Mallery shows a trend towards

⁸². *Annals*, 15.ii.1214-1215, 16.i.1572.

⁸³. J.A. King to D.D. Tompkins, 27 Mar 1820, *King Correspondence*, VI, pp.322-323.

⁸⁴. Philadelphia *American Daily Advertiser*, in *National Intelligencer*, 16 Aug 1820.

⁸⁵. *Annals*, 16.i.1114. Moore, pp.148-150.

leaving the Compromise alone. The North, explained Plumer, whilst accepting it was unwise to alter the terms of the Compromise, would continue to reject the Missouri constitution until it was presented in an acceptable form.⁸⁶ This was the view taken by Rufus King who took no part in the debates.

There was no real compromise in 1820. Missouri was admitted as a slave state only because a minority of Northern members voted with the South. Some had always voted with the South on slavery, believing the restriction to be either unwise or unconstitutional. Others were primarily afraid of disunion. Most Northerners were happy that the immediate crisis was over but were not satisfied with how it was resolved.

⁸⁶. *Plumer Letters*, p.32.

CHAPTER FIVE - THE PERCEPTION OF THE WEST

The Missouri Compromise will always be associated with the Thomas amendment which established the line at 36°30' latitude prohibiting the further northwards expansion of slavery. Inevitably it is easy to assume that this was the crucial measure which secured the Compromise. Eighteen Northern Representatives joined the South to support an end to the restriction and may have been swayed to do so by this measure. After all, it gave to the North a fixed boundary against slavery, salving antislavery consciences and implying that south of the line was an evil to be restrained. Representative William Plumer believed, "The restriction on the territories...is a great point gained."¹ The fact that the South divided over the proviso suggests that on this point some sort of concession was made. It was too much for the *Richmond Enquirer* which could "scarcely ever recollect to have tasted of a bitterer cup."² In later years Southerners regretted the concession they had made in 1820. In 1838 Calhoun described the Compromise as a "dangerous measure."³ But the significance of 36°30' lay in the largely unforeseen future; its immediate role in securing the Compromise was minimal and symbolic.

It was hoped the prospect of prohibiting slavery in the territories north of 36°30' would be an incentive for Northerners to give up the restriction. If a bi-partisan agreement could be created in the Senate, it might be an example for the House to follow. Even in the Senate, the Thomas amendment made little impact on Northern opinion. Although it passed at the first time of asking with twenty Northerners joining fourteen Southerners to support it, this should not be seen as a sign of Northern

¹. *Plumer Letters*, p.14.

². *Richmond Enquirer*, 7 Mar 1820, R.H.Brown, *The Missouri Compromise: Political Statesmanship...*, pp.75-76. Moore, p.239. Tyler, pp.325-326.

³. Calhoun to the Senate, 11 Jan 1838, *Calhoun Papers*, XIV, pp.88.

approval. The more important vote was on the Maine-Missouri bill, with Thomas attached, in which only four Northerners voted with the South to pass the bill 24:20.⁴ Edwards and Thomas of Illinois had always voted with the South, and John F. Parrott of New Hampshire, whilst admitting fear of Federalism, had voted with the South twice on slavery in 1819.⁵ So even if Federalist Senator William Hunter from Rhode Island was swayed by the Thomas amendment, which it is not possible to determine, the South would still have secured its victory through influences other than the proviso.

The negligible impact of the Thomas amendment in the Senate is illustrated by reaction to the Roberts amendment. Pennsylvania's Jonathon Roberts proposed to ban the further introduction of slavery into Missouri. The amendment was defeated 27:16 with the help of six Northerners: Edwards, Thomas, Hunter, Parrott, Lanman of Connecticut and Palmer of Vermont.⁶ The vote was on 1 February, before the introduction of the compromising Thomas amendment. So the South was able to draw on Northern support to defeat the restriction without the help of Thomas.

On two occasions the Thomas amendment was overwhelmingly rejected by the House, yet on 2 March it passed with a substantial majority. Support was provided by ninety-five Northern Congressmen.⁷ The reason for approving of the amendment was not found in the merits of 36°30', but rather in the defeat of the restriction and those responsible for it. Of the doughfaces only Charles Kinsey of New Jersey laid stress on the benefits of the Thomas amendment. The North had secured an "irrevocable boundary" against slavery with the South surrendering to freemen "nine-tenths of the country in question." Gaining a free area ten times greater than the one new slave state was to be valued, claimed Kinsey.⁸ John Holmes mentioned the new slave state was

⁴ *Annals*, 16.i.427-428.

⁵ Moore, p.109. Johnson, p.43.

⁶ *Annals*, 16.i.359.

⁷ *Annals*, 16.i.1455-1457, 1552, 1587-1588.

⁸ *Annals*, 16.i.1578-1582.

admitted in return for an "immense territory" free from slavery.⁹ The rest of the doughfaces seemed to have paid the Thomas amendment little attention.¹⁰ In a letter explaining his votes Jonathon Mason of Massachusetts mentioned 36°30' last of all. It appears almost as an afterthought. Mason said voting for it was the right thing to do, but he made absolutely no attempt to sell the idea which one might expect in a letter that he must have known would be published. It is clear from the tone and content of the letter that Mason would have voted against restriction even if the proviso had not been offered.¹¹ Indeed the record of the doughfaces who had sat in the Fifteenth Congress shows that they were willing to allow the expansion of slavery into both new and existing territories at a time when there was little prospect of prohibition in the northern territories.¹²

The reason why the Thomas amendment made such a slight impression at the time must be examined. The way in which 36°30' was viewed in 1820 can only be understood by acknowledging men's conceptions of the geographic limits of the United States at the time. Mentally and physically the West, an area of ever changing definition, was to play an important role in America's future. But in 1820 the United States was orientated to the East and the Atlantic seaboard. This attitude to the West explains the indifference with which the Thomas amendment was viewed and it can be seen in the United States' relations with foreign powers, opinion on the quality of Western lands and federal Indian policy.

The War of 1812 may have secured America's immediate safety but it revealed the United States to be militarily weak and it did not change the fact that the nation was still threatened by European powers. To the north, there was British North America; and Spain controlled much of the continent to the south and southwest, including Florida and Texas. With some success the United States negotiated itself into a stronger

⁹. *Circular Letters*, III, pp.1109-1115.

¹⁰. Fehrenbacher, *The South and Three Sectional Crises*, p.20.

¹¹. Mason to David Sears, *National Intelligencer*, 1 Apr 1820.

¹². *Annals*, 15.ii.1214-1215, 1272-1273.

position. Foreign affairs reveal a diverse range of official thought on exactly what the United States was, which has implications for the meaning of 36°30'. The period exposed what Daniel Boorstin aptly phrased "the peculiar confusion, the peculiar hope, and the peculiar promise of American thinking about the national future."¹³

On 22 February 1819 the Florida Treaty was signed and later approved unanimously by the Senate.¹⁴ The long held American dream of acquiring Florida was secured. No longer would a foreign power menace the nations' artery, the River Mississippi, by threatening New Orleans.¹⁵ Florida would bring "effectual peace and security of our Southern frontier," said Secretary of War Calhoun.¹⁶ For Calhoun, Florida was essential for its strategic location, the question of slavery expansion bore no weight with him. Of secondary importance at the time was the fixing of a western boundary. The Treaty defined it by the Sabine, Red and Arkansas Rivers up to 42° latitude and along that parallel to the Pacific Ocean. The United States now had a claim to substantial territory stretching the whole width of the continent. Although the Western boundary was of greater long-term significance, at the time it was the securing of Florida which was considered the greater triumph. This is even seen in the fact that the Adams-Onis Treaty, as it is sometimes called, was widely known as the Florida Treaty and only later referred to as the Transcontinental Treaty.¹⁷ The Treaty was widely regarded as a triumph; its architect Secretary of State Adams described it as "a great epocha in our history."¹⁸ Caesar A. Rodney reported that the Treaty was warmly greeted with "a perfect unanimity of sentiment."¹⁹ Objections to dropping the claim to

¹³. Daniel J. Boorstin, *The Americans: the National Experience* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1965), p.272.

¹⁴. Samuel F. Bemis, *John Quincy Adams and the Foundations of American Foreign Policy* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1969), p.338. Cresson, p.321.

¹⁵. Bemis, p.302.

¹⁶. Calhoun to Jackson, 8 Sept 1818, *Calhoun Papers*, III, p.110.

¹⁷. Arthur P. Whitaker, *The United States and the Independence of Latin America, 1800-1830* (John Hopkins Press, 1941; reprinted - New York: W.W.Norton, 1964), p.270n.

¹⁸. *Adams Memoirs*, IV, p.275.

¹⁹. Rodney to James Monroe, 20 Mar 1819, *Monroe Papers*.

Texas were minimal; only Thomas Hart Benton, Henry Clay and a few Western papers raised a protest, one which the Senate ignored by solidly approving of the Treaty.²⁰

X The negotiation of the Florida Treaty shows the administration to be more concerned with territorial expansion in the Southeast than in the Trans-Mississippi West. The administration was aware that the West was an unknown quantity which brought the possibility of dangerous sectional problems. There was little doubt that the United States would eventually acquire Florida. Jackson, in pursuit of raiding Indians, had shown in 1818 how easily an American force could march into and control the Spanish possession and the great powers clearly would not help Spain defend the colony.²¹ Britain, especially, was anxious to avoid any break with the United States, a policy fostered by the very able Foreign Secretary Lord Castlereagh. This was best seen in Britain's refusal to censure the United States after Andrew Jackson's rash execution of British subjects Robert Ambrister and Alexander Arbuthnot in Florida on 29 April 1818.²² Spain needed to offer a concession in the hope of securing more than token American neutrality regarding the independence movement in Spain's troubled South American colonies.²³

So the western boundary was negotiable. In January 1818 Adams suggested the Colorado River as the boundary. This would bring half of Texas into the American orbit. The Spanish rejected this line, instead offering the "uti possidetis," a line due north lying between the Sabine and the Mississippi Rivers. The Americans naturally refused to accept a boundary which cut through Louisiana.²⁴ In July, Adams still demanded the Colorado River, as well as access to the Pacific.²⁵ Onis, the Spanish

²⁰. *Adams Memoirs*, IV, p.276. Benton, I, p.15. *National Intelligencer*, 15 May 1819.

²¹. Whitaker, pp.259-260, 268, 269.

²². Bemis, p.315. Bradford Perkins, *Castlereagh and Adams: England and the United States, 1812-1823* (Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1964), pp.285, 291, 293.

²³. Bemis, p.306.

²⁴. Bemis, pp.309-310.

²⁵. Bemis, p.319. Philip C. Brooks, *Diplomacy and the Borderlands*, University of California Publications in History, vol.XXIV (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1939), p.142.

negotiator, replied in November 1818 suggesting the River Missouri as a boundary, depriving the United States of a large part of the Louisiana Purchase.²⁶ Negotiations now reached a stalemate. A change of government in Spain brought new instructions to Onís, although the United States was unaware of their content. If possible Onís should set the boundary at the Sabine River but he could withdraw as far back as the Colorado to secure agreement, as Spain feared stalemate would result in American recognition of the rebel colonies.²⁷ On 11 January 1819 Onís accepted the transcontinental line to the Pacific, whilst dispute continued over the rest of the boundary.²⁸

Adams was keen to secure the boundary in Texas but his Cabinet colleagues sought the territorial limit which was eventually established by the Treaty.²⁹ Calhoun, Crawford and Monroe were certainly unwilling to lose Florida by antagonising Spain into refusing ratification by being too ambitious in the West; but it is quite likely that they realised the danger of being too bold for Northerners by expanding to the Southwest, something Missouri later confirmed.³⁰ These Cabinet members dampened Adams' desire for Texas; at all times they sought a less expansive treaty.³¹ Whilst Adams came to see North America and the United States as synonymous, Monroe feared the far West could never be kept in the Union.³² Adams' continental vision was not yet widely accepted. Even Thomas Hart Benton, a keen expansionist, in 1825

²⁶. Bemis, p.325.

²⁷. Brooks, p.155.

²⁸. Bemis, p.329.

²⁹. Bemis, pp.321, 339-340.

³⁰ "The inclusion of Texas in the treaty might well have kindled the flames of a severe sectional controversy over slavery. Nor, as a matter of fact, would it ever have been possible for Spain to yield on this point." Dexter Perkins, "John Quincy Adams," in Samuel F. Bemis (ed), *The American Secretaries of State and their Diplomacy* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1928), vol. IV, pp.34-35. Although Spain would not have accepted the loss of Texas, Onís' instructions allowed him to give up to half of it away by setting the boundary at the Colorado. The key point is that the U.S. administration, with the exception of Adams, did not even try to press for a greater territorial gain.

³¹. Charles C. Griffin, *The U.S. and the Disruption of the Spanish Empire, 1810-1822: A Study of the Relations of the United States with Spain and with the Rebel Spanish Colonies* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1937), p.185.

³². Boorstin, p.271.

described the continental divide as the "natural and everlasting boundary" of the United States.³³ It is perhaps strange that Adams, as an ardent antislavery supporter, should be so enthusiastic about territorial expansion. His attitude in March 1820 may explain his views: "I had very little attachment to the treaty...I had been the last man in the administration to accept the Sabine for the western boundary, and shall now be ready to abandon the treaty...; but, as an Eastern man, I should be disinclined to have either Texas or Florida without a restriction excluding slavery from them." Adams went on to say that he had been expecting an antislavery amendment to be added to the Treaty in Congress.³⁴

It was only a year later, after the Missouri Compromise, that there were louder calls to revise the Treaty. This was still possible because Spain had not yet ratified it, due to the vain obstinacy of King Ferdinand VII and American wishes for huge land grants to Spaniards in Florida to be annulled.³⁵ Some slave-holders, confined by the Thomas proviso, now wanted to annex Texas for use as slave soil.³⁶ Possession of Texas would increase Southern representation in Congress, nullify the territorial point lost in the Missouri Compromise, but would renew the sectional crisis. Immediately after the settling of the Missouri question Thomas Ritchie wrote in the *Enquirer*, "They owe it to themselves, to keep their eye firmly fixed on Texas - If we are cooped up on the north, we must have elbow room to the west." Ritchie asked, "Shall we yield so vast a disproportion of country north of that line, sweeping off in magnificent dimensions away to the Pacific Ocean, for us to be cooped up, south of it, by the Spanish line on our west?"³⁷ The balancing of the number of states did not affect most issues but it was important as regards the protection of slavery. New slave states could only be realistically foreseen in Arkansas, Florida and Oklahoma. In the long run far more free

³³. Eblen, p.4.

³⁴. *Adams Memoirs*, V, p.54.

³⁵. Cresson, p.322.

³⁶. *Adams Memoirs*, V, p.53.

³⁷. Richmond *Enquirer*, 7 Mar, 10 Feb 1820, R.H.Brown, *The Missouri Compromise: Political Statesmanship...*, pp.75-76, 43-44.

states could be imagined north of 36°30'. During the Missouri constitution debates in 1820-1821 Representative Charles Pinckney of South Carolina complained that the Compromise left room for just two slave states compared to twenty free states.³⁸ Jefferson told Monroe "...to us the province of Texas will be the richest State of our Union...."³⁹ Writing to Oliver Wolcott, Rufus King feared "...the Spanish Province of Texas, will now be demanded of Spain so as there to form a fifth slave state."⁴⁰ Lowndes informed Adams in December 1819 that, in the light of the current crisis, Northerners might oppose the Treaty because Florida was likely to be a slave state.⁴¹ The Treaty was never really in danger of being amended. For this the administration should at least be given some credit. In particular President Monroe should be recognised as taking the safe and diplomatic course, delaying military interposition when Spain failed to ratify, which might have created a precedent for military action in Texas, as some in Louisiana demanded.⁴²

Monroe had helped frame the Treaty without Texas partly to avoid a sectional problem. The Missouri crisis confirmed the good sense of this policy. After the Compromise the President knew the North would oppose further territorial expansion in the Southwest. Writing to influential Southerners, Monroe persuasively used Missouri as his reason for opposing calls for Texas. To Jefferson, to whom Virginians still looked for advice, he indicated, "It is evident that the further acquisition of territory, to the West and South, involves difficulties of an internal nature which menace the Union itself...ought we not to be satisfied, so far at least as to take no step in that direction, which is not approved, by all the members, or at least a majority of those

³⁸. *Annals*, 16.ii.1144.

³⁹. Jefferson to Monroe, 14 May 1820, *Congressional Globe*, 30th Congress, 2nd Session, Appendix, p.64. Hereafter referred to in the format: *Congressional Globe*, 30.ii.app., p.64.

⁴⁰. King to Wolcott, 3 Mar 1820, *King Correspondence*, VI, pp.287-288.

⁴¹. *Adams Memoirs*, IV, p.480. As Spain had not ratified the Treaty within the stipulated period, it would be necessary for Congress to re-ratify.

⁴². Failure to ratify the Treaty led to preparations for war by both countries in late 1819. Neither side was keen to pursue this course. Griffin, pp.218-220.

who accomplished our revolution."⁴³ In even clearer terms he wrote to Andrew Jackson, "The Missouri question, has also excited feelings, and raised difficulties of an internal nature, which did not exist before...I have been decidedly of opinion that we ought to be content with Florida for the present...I mention these circumstances to show you that our difficulties are not with Spain alone, but are likewise internal...." In reply Jackson said that he fully accepted Monroe's argument.⁴⁴

X The Florida Treaty kept the focus on the Southeast rather than on the West. Cuba was the next likely target for American expansion. It was both commercially and strategically important. Americans feared that Spain, whose power was clearly declining, might hand the island over to Britain. Cuban commerce would then be directed to Britain, not the United States. Although Anglo-American relations were presently good, the United States did not want a militarily powerful nation to have a base so close to the Mississippi and to the shortest land routes between the Atlantic and Pacific.⁴⁵ Cuba, Secretary of War Calhoun told Andrew Jackson, was something "No American statesman ought ever to withdraw his eye from...."⁴⁶

Admittedly huge territorial gains were being made in the West, far in advance of American expectations. The acquisitions of the Transcontinental Treaty were made more extensive because the Northern boundary was being redefined. In October 1818 the Anglo American Convention set the Canadian border between the Great Lakes and the Rockies at the forty-ninth parallel. Possession of the Pacific Northwest was still disputed.⁴⁷ Yet the United States had little use for these vast Western lands. The virtue

⁴³. Monroe to Jefferson, - May 1820, in Stanislaus M. Hamilton (ed), *The Writings of James Monroe* (New York & London: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1893-1903), vol. VI, pp. 119-123; & see Monroe to Gallatin, 26 May 1820, *ibid.*, VI, pp. 130-134. Hereafter referred to as *Writings of Monroe*.

⁴⁴. Monroe to Jackson, 23 May 1820, *Monroe Papers. Writings of Monroe*, VI, pp. 126-130. Jackson to Monroe, 20 June 1820, *Jackson Correspondence*, III, p. 28; & see Jackson to Calhoun, 21 Dec 1820, *ibid.*, III, p. 35.

⁴⁵. Ambler, p. 71.

⁴⁶. Calhoun to Jackson, 23 Jan 1820, Robert Mullany to Calhoun, 7 Oct 1819, *Calhoun Papers*, IV, pp. 591-592, 362-326. Jefferson to Monroe, 14 May 1820, *Congressional Globe*, 30.ii.app., p. 64.

⁴⁷. Bemis, p. 330.

of the new lands was that they were not occupied or owned by a foreign power, rather than of being of any intrinsic value themselves.

Glover Moore has criticised the idea that Northerners believed that the territory above 36°30' was worthless.⁴⁸ Quite correctly, he points out that this idea did not appear to be circulating in 1820. It was Major Stephen H. Long's expedition which brought to the public consciousness the concept of the *Great American Desert*, land which was "almost wholly unfit for cultivation."⁴⁹ But Long did not reach the Rockies until July 1820 and his report was not published until 1823.⁵⁰ Moore notes that the doughfaces were not accused of being duped into securing worthless land for free state expansion. Nor was the desert mentioned in Congressional debate. In fact most speakers appeared to value the West as a land of opportunity.

However, criticism has been pushed too far. Zebulon Pike explored the central plains in 1806-07 and came to the conclusion with which Long later agreed. In his "Dissertation on Louisiana" Pike wrote, "In that vast country of which we speak, we find the soil generally dry and sandy, with gravel, and discover that the moment we approach a stream, the land becomes more humid with small timber....These vast plains of the western hemisphere, may become in time equally celebrated as the sandy deserts of Africa; for I saw on my route, in various places, tracts of many leagues, where the wind had thrown up sand, in all the fanciful forms of the ocean's wave, and on which not a speck of vegetable matter existed."⁵¹ Pike's report did not have the public impact of Long's but it should not be neglected as a contemporary source of opinion, especially in Congressional circles. The West was often described as valuable, but this paradox is a confusion of terminology. When referring to the West, contemporaries often meant Missouri or Arkansas rather than the largely unsettled, unorganized further or far West.

⁴⁸. Moore, pp.114-118.

⁴⁹. Boorstin, p.229.

⁵⁰. Maxine Benson (ed), *From Pittsburgh to the Rocky Mountains: Major Stephen Long's Expedition, 1819-1820* (Golden, Colorado: Fulcrum, 1988), pp.v-x.

⁵¹. Donald Jackson (ed), *The Journals of Zebulon Pike* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1966), vol.I, p.27.

The character of the West was not a topic of debate in Congress because 36°30' was barely discussed at all. Between its introduction and passage the Senate postponed consideration of the Thomas amendment nearly every day.⁵² Northerners concentrated on defending the restriction rather than attacking an amendment which they felt with good reason would never pass. The House rejected the proviso with minimal debate, and when the amendment passed it was after the defeat of restriction when Northerners had to grasp the best available consolation. The doughfaces were not attacked on the merits of the Thomas amendment because Northern Congressmen had to convince their constituents that they had gained a valuable concession from the South. Pessimism as to the value of the land was not confined to the North, both sections knew what was being given away. The free soil lands in the north were described by Representative Charles Pinckney of South Carolina in 1820 as "a vast tract, inhabited only by savages and wild beasts...; and in which, according to the ideas prevalent, no land office will be open for a great length of time."⁵³ Rufus King feared the South would create five new slave states whereas only one state was possible in the barren northern lands, a sentiment echoed by the *New York American*.⁵⁴ Judge Daniel Cony of Maine talked of, "the tractless regions, the dreary wastes, the sable tribes of the Missouri beyond the Mississippi."⁵⁵ Henry St. George Tucker of Virginia described the future slave territories as "a narrow strip intersected with mountains in one direction, destroyed by Earthquakes in another, and interspersed in a third with swamps and bayous, and infested with mosquitoes, and bilious diseases."⁵⁶

Another factor which suggests that both sections were not as interested in the far West as at first may be believed will explain the element of indifference with which 36°30' was greeted. In explaining their support for Taylor's restriction, Representatives

⁵². Between 3 Feb and 16 Feb consideration of the proviso in the Senate was minimal or more often delayed to a few days later. Woodburn, pp.289-290.

⁵³. Pinckney to editor of *Charleston City Gazette*, 2 Mar 1820, quoted in *Zanesville Express*, 5 Apr 1820.

⁵⁴. King to O. Wolcott, 3 Mar 1820, *King Correspondence*, VI, pp.287-288. Moore, p.200.

⁵⁵. Moore, p.274.

⁵⁶. Tucker to James Barbour, 11 Feb 1820, *Letters to Barbour*, pp.10-11.

Cushman, Lincoln, Kinsley and Whitman of Maine pointed out that the lands north and west of 36°30' were "not yet purchased from the Indians, and which, it may be intended, we never shall purchase." In order to extinguish the Indian title a treaty would be required needing a two-thirds majority in the Senate. The Maine Representatives feared the South would block any such Senate treaty.⁵⁷ Judge Tait remarked to Senator Walker of Alabama, "Take care for the future how Treaties are formed with the Indian tribes west /&/-north of the proposed state of Missouri." Tait hoped "the point in the compromise surrendered by the South may become mostly nominal."⁵⁸

The federal governments' Indian policy during the period demonstrated a willingness to cede Western lands to the Indians in order to secure tracts for whites in the East. The indigenous Indian tribes occupied vast areas of land, disproportionate to their numbers, throughout the United States. As the white population grew, there was a demand to cultivate the Indian lands. Calhoun's "Special Report to Congress," presented on 8 December 1818, suggested the Indians give up considering their land as owned by the whole nation or tribe. Instead Indians should own individual plots of land, in the same manner as whites. These individual tracts could be grouped in the same place to preserve the concept of a tribal area. To save the Indians from extinction caused by white expansion it was recommended that the tribes move to west of the Mississippi River.⁵⁹ It is worth noting that Calhoun accepted that the Indians would refuse to move beyond the present political borders of the United States.⁶⁰ In the North, titles were extinguished rapidly, due to the nomadic lifestyle of the local Indians (making the idea of removal less radical), their disunity (it was easier to negotiate with smaller, divided tribes) and through bribery.⁶¹ The Delawares of Indiana agreed to move to a tract in

⁵⁷. "An Address to the People of Maine," 7 Mar 1820, Banks, app.XVIII, pp.348-353.

⁵⁸. Tait to Walker, 23 Mar, 20 May 1820, Bailey, p.131.

⁵⁹. Arthur H. De Rosier, *The Removal of the Choctaw Indians* (University of Tennessee Press, 1970), p.41.

⁶⁰. Calhoun to David A.Ogden, 14 May 1818, *Calhoun Papers*, II, p.293.

⁶¹. Ammon, p.538. Annie H.Abel, "The History of Events Resulting in Indian Consolidation West of the Mississippi River," *Annual Report of the American Historical Association for 1906* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1908), vol.I, p.288.

southern Missouri, as did the Kickapoos of Illinois. By 1820 Indiana, Illinois and Ohio had largely secured removal of all their Indians.⁶² The federal government were keen to remove to Arkansas territory Indians occupying valuable lands in New York. But the Six Nations were reluctant to move.⁶³ In response Reverend Jedidiah Morse was commissioned in 1819 to look at a possible solution in the Northwest. In 1822 his report recommended creating a large Indian territory, and eventually a state, in present-day Wisconsin and the upper Michigan peninsula. Due to local white opposition the scheme failed, despite government enthusiasm.⁶⁴ In the South, the most significant removal was that of the Choctaw Indians from southern Mississippi. In the Treaty of Doak's Stand of 18 October 1820, negotiated by Andrew Jackson, the Choctaws reluctantly exchanged five million acres in Mississippi for thirteen million acres in Arkansas. The Choctaws accepted removal because they realised that the Treaty was necessary for their survival. It is interesting to note that Choctaw opposition to removal had been based for a long time on criticism of the quality of Western lands. At the time of the Treaty, Pushmataha, the Choctaw chief knew, "a vast amount of it is exceedingly poor and sterile, tractless, sandy, deserts, nude of vegetation of any kind."⁶⁵

The 1824-1825 removal plan confirms the disinterest in the Trans-Mississippi West which was apparent before the Missouri crisis and it should not be seen as a consequence of the Compromise. In his 1824 annual message, Monroe requested money to extinguish Indian titles and he suggested Indians settle on lands east of the Rockies and the desert. A bill was passed by the Senate but it was delayed in the House.⁶⁶ Abolitionists were to claim Calhoun wished to establish the Indians west of the

⁶². The Delaware's signed their Treaty on 3 Oct 1818, the Kickapoos signed the Treaty of Edwardsville on 30 June 1819. Abel, "Indian Consolidation," pp.290-292, 295.

⁶³. Chiefs of the Six Nations to John C. Calhoun, 1 Jan 1818, *Calhoun Papers*, II, p.50. Calhoun to David A. Ogden, 19 Aug 1818, *ibid.*, III, p.56.

⁶⁴. Abel, "Indian Consolidation," pp.304-321. Annie H. Abel, "Proposals for an Indian State, 1778-1878," *Annual Report of the American Historical Association for 1907* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1908), vol.I, pp.91-92. Boorstin, p.261.

⁶⁵. Abel, "Indian Consolidation," pp.66-67.

⁶⁶. Abel, "Indian Consolidation," pp.341-342. Billington, p.396.

Mississippi and west of Lake Michigan in order to block free state expansion north of 36°30'. But the 1824-1825 policy merely embodied ideas current for ten years. Removal west of the Mississippi had been considered since 1815, well before the Missouri Compromise or the findings of Stephen Long.⁶⁷ The Indian policy of the federal government between 1815 and 1825 reveals an understanding of the far West as unfit for white settlement. The willingness with which Western lands in Arkansas and southern Missouri were ceded, and in the Northwest contemplated to be ceded, to the Indians, casts considerable doubt on the view that North and South were concerned about territorial expansion beyond Missouri. William Clark, writing to Calhoun, even claimed land ceded to Indians in Arkansas and Missouri was unsuitable for white settlement because it was mountainous.⁶⁸ The Treaty of Doak's Stand gave to the Choctaws land already organized into counties and occupied by a third of Arkansas' population.⁶⁹ It was not until January 1823 that Calhoun decided a boundary would have to be renegotiated in Arkansas to appease the whites.⁷⁰ The fact that Calhoun, Jackson and the Senate, which ratified the treaties, overlooked white rights in Arkansas suggests a greater concern for the East than the West.

With this background knowledge of men's concepts of the geographical limits of the United States, it is easier to understand reactions to the Thomas proviso. The line at 36°30' recognised the conceivable limits of slavery expansion on a major scale due to the unsuitability of the Northern soils and climate to cotton culture. Although this factor would not stop slavery (as it had not in Missouri), the institution would not be given the opportunity to establish itself because of Northern antislavery sentiment in both Congress and the wider public sphere. Kansas, in the same latitude as Missouri, was no great loss to the South. It was not yet a territory and was considered to be of little value. Indeed the "desert" started in Missouri. The *St. Louis Enquirer* claimed "the inhabitable

⁶⁷. Abel, "Indian Consolidation," pp.342-343.

⁶⁸. Clark to Calhoun, 10 Nov 1819, *Calhoun Papers*, IV, p.401.

⁶⁹. James Woodson Bates to Calhoun, 28 Nov 1820, *Calhoun Papers*, V, pp.455-456.

⁷⁰. De Rosier, p.82.

land gives out, and the naked plains set in," six miles west of Mine a Burton, Missouri. A similar description was given of the lands lying to the north and northwest of the proposed state.⁷¹ The Thomas proviso did stop the territories in the northwest from having a Southern outlook by preventing small-scale slaveholding. But even if the Thomas amendment had not become law, surely the South could not now expect slavery to expand further north than Missouri. Northern opposition to slavery was obvious. The remaining pro-slavery sentiment in the North was waning and was overcome, albeit narrowly, by 1824 when Illinois rejected a referendum on holding a constitutional convention at which slavery would be the issue. Expansion north of Missouri would be unacceptable, being in the same latitude as the free states. Furthermore, constitutional objections to barring slavery in the lands above 36°30' would be no obstacle as all the lands were as yet unorganized.

Once the South was able to defeat the restriction on Missouri, with the help of the doughfaces, Northern support to pass the Thomas amendment in the House became inevitable. Having narrowly lost the war (the pro-slavery majority in the House was three) the North had to be content with winning a battle, at that a hollow victory donated by the South. If Northern Congressmen voted against the Thomas amendment they were faced with the prospect of having nothing to show their constituents after two sessions of heated debate. If the Thomas amendment had failed on 2 March Missouri would still have entered the Union with no restrictions upon slavery and the North would have been thoroughly defeated.⁷²

Some Southerners certainly regarded the Thomas amendment as a guarantee of their present position and of their right to spread slavery into the territories of the Southwest, free from Congressional interference. As Senator Montford Stokes of North Carolina explained, "All that we from the slave holding states can do at present is to

⁷¹. *St.Louis Enquirer*, 1 Dec 1819, Moore, p.117. Although the *St.Louis Gazette* disagreed with this view, it is clear there was confusion as to the worth of the West.

⁷². On 21 Feb 1821 William Brown of Kentucky introduced a resolution to repeal 36°30' because, in his opinion, the North was violating the Compromise by not admitting Missouri. The House refused to consider the motion in a vote of 79:43. No roll call was taken. It would be interesting to discover which way the sections voted on this occasion. *Annals*, 16.ii.1195-1209.

rescue from the rapacious grasp of these consciencious fanatics a considerable portion of Louisiana, including all the settled parts of that extensive country. I can see no means either now or hereafter of accomplishing this object but by consenting that slavery may be prohibited in the northern portion of the Louisiana Purchase."⁷³ Another Southerner suggested "By the compromise you would give up nothing which you can retain;...there being a large majority in the House of Representatives in favor of restricting the States as well as the territories. You have nothing to hope from that quarter, and I can assure you that there is a very decided majority in the Senate in favor of excluding slavery from all unsettled territories north of 36 degrees north latitude, and I believe, if a compromise does not take place, the exclusion will be general. If it should not happen this year...it must eventually succeed."⁷⁴

Furthermore, as has been seen Southerners experienced the same sort of pressures to which the doughfaces were subject: fear of disunion, concern to stop a Federalist plot and the desire to move on to pressing economic issues.

Despite these factors, there was considerable Southern opposition to the Thomas amendment. On two occasions Northern and Southern Representatives united in rejecting the amendment by substantial margins. On 23 February 1820 only nineteen Representatives voted in favour of the Thomas amendment.⁷⁵ Five days later the restriction above 36°30' lost by a margin of 146 votes.⁷⁶ If the Thomas amendment merely recognised an existing or foreseeable situation, why was there so much resistance to it, particularly in the South?⁷⁷ Throughout the Missouri debates the South had defended the principle of federal non-intervention with slavery. The principle was

⁷³. Senator Montford Stokes to Governor John Branch, 27 Feb 1820, *Plumer Letters*, p.15n. Major L.Wilson, *Space, Time and Freedom: the Quest for Nationality and the Irrepressible Conflict, 1815-1861* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1974), p.45.

⁷⁴. "A letter from a gentleman in Washington to his friend in Richmond," written anonymously by President Monroe & Senator Barbour, *Congressional Globe*, 30.ii.app., p.66. *Zanesville Express*, 15 Mar 1820.

⁷⁵. *Annals*, 16.i.1455-1457.

⁷⁶. *Annals*, 16.i.1552.

⁷⁷. Eventually Southern Representatives split 39:37 in favour and the Senators 14:8. *Annals*, 16.i.427-428, 1587-1588.

upheld by Missouri's entry as a slave state. But the Thomas amendment effectively sanctioned a national decision on the future of slavery. Many Southerners were willing to concede that Congress could legitimately interfere with slavery in a territory and so they accepted the prohibition above 36°30'. Conservatives would not admit this power, refusing to sanction any federal decision on slave matters. The conservatives were concentrated in areas where slavery was of great importance and slave numbers were highest. Most opposition to the Thomas proviso came from Virginia where eighteen Representatives out of twenty-two voted against it, Georgia was against 4:2, the North Carolina delegation split 6:6 and South Carolina narrowly supported it 5:4.⁷⁸ In Virginia Henry St. George Tucker wrote to Senator James Barbour, "for God's sake let me urge you, for our sakes, and for your sakes, make no such Compromise!"⁷⁹ "Almost united disapprobation" met the Compromise in Virginia, claimed William F. Gordon.⁸⁰ The South Atlantic states were particularly sensitive to the slave issue becoming involved in politics. They sought protection in the Constitution and the Old Republicanism of the Richmond Junto.⁸¹ They viewed the Thomas amendment as the entering wedge for further national decisions on slavery. W.F. Gordon feared the Compromise would, "lead only to farther and more daring and vital usurpations" of the Constitution.⁸² Virginia "will never suffer others to violate the constitution in silence," said the Richmond *Enquirer*. In an editorial Ritchie warned, "If we yield now beware. - They will ride us forever."⁸³

Whereas the South Atlantic states assessed the Thomas amendment as a matter of principle, the rest of the South were moved by more pragmatic considerations.

⁷⁸. *Annals*, 16.i.1587-1588. There was a similar pattern in the Senate when voting solely on the Thomas amendment. All the Senators from Georgia, South Carolina and Virginia voted against the amendment together with one Senator each from Mississippi and North Carolina. *Annals*, 16.i.427-428.

⁷⁹. Tucker to Barbour, 11 Feb 1820, *Letters to Barbour*, pp.10-11.

⁸⁰. Gordon to Barbour, 18 Feb 1820, *Letters to Barbour*, pp.18-19.

⁸¹. R.H. Brown, "The Missouri Crisis: Slavery....," pp.60-61.

⁸². Gordon to Barbour, 18 Feb 1820, *Letters to Barbour*, pp.18-19.

⁸³. Richmond *Enquirer*, quoted in *Zanesville Express*, 15 Mar 1820. Risjord, p.218.

Before the final vote on 36°30', Senator William Trimble of Ohio introduced a resolution to prohibit slavery in all lands west of the River Mississippi excluding Arkansas, Louisiana and Missouri.⁸⁴ A solid South opposed the motion, yet on the Thomas amendment fourteen Senators mainly from the Mid-Atlantic and Southwestern states voted with the North to approve the amendment. The fourteen Senators evidently considered a line at 36°30' as compatible for their needs. In the House Kentucky supported the proviso 7:1, Tennessee 4:2 and Maryland 8:1, only Louisiana was the exception to the rule.⁸⁵ John Eaton of Tennessee typified the view of many who were glad to see an end to the crisis: "Of this the Southern people are complaining, but they ought not, for it has preserved peace[,] dissipated angry feelings, and dispelled appearances which seemed dark and hostile and threat[en]ing." Eaton continued, "The constitution has not been surrendered by this peace offering."⁸⁶ Joseph Desha, Representative from Kentucky, told Calhoun, "I rejoice that the Missouri question is settled. I was sincerely apprehensive that serious difficulties would grow...."⁸⁷ Kentucky's leading politician, Henry Clay, believed "the arrangement which has been made a very good one," though he realised "there are some persons on each side of the question extremely dissatisfied with it."⁸⁸ Alabama, Delaware and Mississippi all had one Representative each, and so it is harder to determine the commitment to Thomas. Delaware was the Southern state least attached to slavery. The Federalist state legislature had passed a resolution supporting restriction in all new states.⁸⁹ Senator Walker of Alabama talked of the Compromise as "a wild and necessary occasion and [it] has saved the Republic." His correspondent, Judge Tait, predicted, "Future

⁸⁴. *Annals*, 16.i.427.

⁸⁵. *Annals*, 16.i.1587-88.

⁸⁶. Eaton to Andrew Jackson, 11 Mar 1820, *Jackson Correspondence*, III, pp.15-18.

⁸⁷. Desha to Calhoun, 6 Mar 1820, *Calhoun Papers*, IV, p.705.

⁸⁸. Clay to Henry M.Brackenbridge, 7 Mar 1820, *Clay Papers*, II, p.789.

⁸⁹. Moore, pp.222-223.

generations will rise up and call it *blessed*."⁹⁰ These states favouring the Thomas proviso were the least committed to the slave economy and therefore were not as circumspect regarding national decisions on slavery. In contrast to the conservatives or state rightists they were conspicuous in their continued support for the postwar nationalism.⁹¹

Even in the states where opposition was greatest there was a realisation that a Compromise had to be reached to avoid any consideration of disunion. Senator Barbour voted against Thomas yet he worked for the Compromise, his justification being "if either party completely triumphs, it is much to be feared that the other will not submit."⁹² Charles Yancey described the Virginian mood as being calmer once the difficulties of the situation had been assessed. Yancey accepted Barbour was "surrounded on all sides by difficulties that would have embarrassed Wisdom itself in making a choice, when the result must of necessity be in opposition to the will and the judgment."⁹³ The *Richmond Enquirer* admitted "We bow to it..." because "The Union is too dear to us all to be torn asunder," whilst James Madison refused to criticise "those acquiescing in a conciliatory course."⁹⁴

Although the South was divided over the extent of the concession made in the Thomas proviso, it was agreed that at most Congress could only act against slavery in a new territory, and not in a new state. James Madison pointed out that the word "forever" in the Thomas amendment meant slavery could only be barred "forever" from a territory.⁹⁵ To concede that it should be prohibited from a state would only reopen the Missouri debate. The proviso was palatable to the North because it was thought a

⁹⁰. Walker to Tait, 17 Apr 1820, Tait to Walker, 23 Mar, 20 May 1820, Bailey, p.130

⁹¹. R.H.Brown, "The Missouri Crisis: Slavery...", pp.60-61.

⁹². "A letter from a gentleman in Washington to his friend in Richmond," *Congressional Globe*, 30.ii.app., p.66. *Zanesville Express*, 15 Mar 1820. Lowery, p.118.

⁹³. Yancey to Barbour, 17 Feb 1820, *Letters to Barbour*, p.16; & see J.W.Eppes to Barbour, 3 May 1820, *ibid.*, pp.22-24.

⁹⁴. Madison to Monroe, 23 Feb 1820, *Monroe Papers*. Robert R.Russel, "Constitutional Doctrines with Regard to Slavery in the Territories," *Journal of Southern History*, XXXII (1966), p.468. *Richmond Enquirer*, 7 Mar 1820, Lowery, p.122.

⁹⁵. Madison to Monroe, 23 Feb 1820, *Monroe Papers*. Russel, p.468.

greater concession had been made. Northerners certainly thought the bar applied to both territories and states.⁹⁶ Such an interpretation was feared by President Monroe: "By the terms applied to the restriction "forever" it is inferr'd that it is intended, that the restraint should apply to territories, after they become States, as well as before."⁹⁷ Sectional reading of the Compromise is best evident in the Cabinet discussions. Monroe asked his Cabinet, first, did Congress have the power to ban slavery from a territory? Second, was slavery forever banned from states formed from the territories? All the Cabinet were agreed that Congress could impose a territorial ban although Calhoun, Crawford and Wirt could find no explicit power in the Constitution. Only Adams thought that slavery could be banned from future states. In order to come to an unanimous decision on the constitutionality of the Compromise, Monroe rephrased his second question, at Calhoun's suggestion. All could agree that the "forever" clause was constitutional whilst each Cabinet member could interpret it as he thought fit.⁹⁸ In this way the Cabinet helped to secure a consolation prize for the North which might reconcile it to its defeat over slavery in Missouri.

⁹⁶. *Adams Memoirs*, V, pp.6-9.

⁹⁷. Monroe to Jefferson, 19 Feb 1820, *Writings of Monroe*, VI, pp.115-116.

⁹⁸. *Adams Memoirs*, V, pp.4-9, 14-15.

CHAPTER SIX - THE ROLE OF THE EXECUTIVE

The Missouri Compromise was almost wholly a Congressional measure. It was on the Capitol that the Compromise was created, debated and agreed upon. The leading players in the crisis have all earned their reputations from action taken within the halls of Congress. Henry Clay has been portrayed as the leading figure of the Sixteenth Congress.¹ It was Speaker Clay who suggested the uniting of the Maine and Missouri bills and he has been credited with appointing to the conference committee men capable of producing a solution.² Clay avoided John Randolph's motion to reconsider the vote of 2 March by secretly and illicitly sending the Missouri bill to the Senate.³ But it was really in the second session of the Sixteenth Congress that Clay secured a compromise on Missouri, over its constitution. House and Senate committees, whose membership he had a strong hand in devising, were persuaded to accept a proviso suggested by Clay which became the final Congressional compromise.⁴ In the crisis of 1819-1820 his influence was not as great. He was not altogether happy with uniting the Maine and Missouri bills and it would probably have happened without his hint.⁵ By ignoring Randolph's motion, Clay did not save the Missouri bill but, rather, just halted further delay.⁶ Similarly John Holmes, his fellow doughfaces and Senator James Barbour have been assigned key roles in securing the Compromise. Barbour worked for a solution he disliked in order to quell sectionalism. He adopted this role on the conference

¹. Moore, p.94. Van Deusen, pp.141-148.

². *Annals*, 16.i.834. Dangerfield, *Nationalism*, p.123.

³. *Annals*, 16.i.1588-1590.

⁴. *Annals*, 16.ii.381-382, 390, 1223, 1239-1240. Henry Clay to W.S.Woods, 16 July 1835, *Clay Papers*, VIII, p.787. T.H.Benton, I, p.10. Moore, p.154.

⁵. Lightfoot, p.152.

⁶. Merrill D.Peterson, *The Great Triumvirate: Webster, Clay and Calhoun* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), p.62.

committee and he may have been responsible for finally dividing the Maine-Missouri bills.⁷ It is right to concentrate on the Congressional side of the dispute but this should not mean the Executive be totally ignored. Although the Executive's role in creating the Compromise was small, the administration should not be ignored as a force for conciliation.

President James Monroe has been criticised for a lack of leadership during the Missouri crisis. J.S.Young states, "On domestic policy the record is barren of any evidence of presidential leadership...The Missouri compromise of 1820...bear[s] not the slightest trace of presidential influence."⁸ Moore says, "Monroe's course of action throughout the entire dispute over Missouri was cautious and vacillating."⁹ Monroe "had not the slightest influence on Congress. His career was considered as closed...henceforth there was and would not be a man in the United States possessing less personal influence over them than the President," Clay told Adams.¹⁰ Such judgments ignore both Monroe's conception of his role and the position of Congress during this period.

Modern, or even Jacksonian, concepts of the presidency should not be used to judge Monroe. In peacetime the President's constitutional role was limited; only in foreign and Indian affairs could any real lead be given. Monroe was willing for Congress to adopt a central role on most issues. The President was there to approve and carry out Congressional decisions, or to occasionally veto them. The President was viewed as a steward, not a leader. Such an interpretation of the Presidential role was ideally suited to a party system in which the President knew his party could guide Congress in the required direction. Unfortunately Monroe forsook the party system during the Era of Good Feelings. Once major and divisive issues arose Congress

⁷. Lowery, pp.110-126.

⁸. Young, p.187.

⁹. Moore, p.235; & see pp.95, 196. See also Charles M.Wiltse, *John C.Calhoun - Nationalist, 1782-1828* (Indianapolis, 1944; reprinted - New York: Russell & Russell, 1968), pp.146, 148.

¹⁰. *Adams Memoirs*, V, p.324.

became a factional battleground on which Monroe looked apparently helplessly, constitutional propriety stopping him from interfering.¹¹

The attitude of Congress towards the Presidency makes Monroe's position more understandable. Even if he had wanted to control Congress, Congressmen had no wish to be led. In December 1816 six new standing committees on public expenditure were formed in the hope that Congress would check departmental efficiency.¹² Adams was later provoked to comment, "What I am witnessing everyday is a perpetual struggle in both Houses of Congress to control the Executive - to make it dependent upon and subservient to them."¹³ Congressmen wanted to be seen as independent men battling for their constituents. They did not want to be accused of being spokesmen for the administration.¹⁴ Individualism was seen as a virtue whereas adopting the lead of others was criticised as weak and ingratiating.¹⁵ This made it very difficult for Monroe to create a group of Congressmen on whom he could rely for support. In fact friends of the President had a habit of voting against his measures to demonstrate their independence from the White House line.¹⁶

Young argues that the residential habits of Congressmen made creating a consensus more difficult. Members tended to reside in boarding houses with friends from the same state or region, representing the same type of interest. The Executive could lobby a number of boarding houses to secure support for a measure. Such lobbying became far more difficult when the number of houses grew leaving fewer members in each house, whilst the number of Congressmen increased with the entry of

11. Dangerfield, *Nationalism*, p.22. Ammon, p.382.

12. Ammon, p.383.

13. *Adams Memoirs*, IV, p.497.

14. Ammon, p.384.

15. Young, p.95.

16. Ammon, p.384.

new states.¹⁷ Young's study is persuasive and interesting but he ignores the effect of divisive issues. It was the issues which made majority-building difficult.

But Monroe was not totally devoid of influence in Congress. In his annual messages he suggested subjects which Congress ought to investigate. Usually Congress would appoint a committee to deal with a particular area of the message, for example, on the slave trade or Indian relations. The President successfully gave a lead on remaining neutral over the matter of the independence movement in South America, despite the influential Clay's opposition. Crawford believed Monroe's intervention prevented a censure motion being passed by the House on Andrew Jackson after the Seminole War.¹⁸ When Crawford made the approval of Georgian claims a condition for his becoming Treasury Secretary, Monroe urged passage of the claims. "Intimate this to Mr Macon & other friends," Monroe told Barbour.¹⁹

It is with this background that Monroe's role in the Missouri crisis should be investigated. Monroe's reputation has suffered because he was not seen to take part in the Congressional creation of the Compromise. It is quite wrong to think that Monroe's involvement with the crisis began when the Cabinet discussed the bill. Throughout the controversy Monroe took an active interest and worked for conciliation. Writing to Jackson, John Eaton contradicted the view that Monroe sat idly by: "He desired me to say to you, that he had been so taken up with the deep agitations here the (missouri bill), that he did not [have] time but he would shortly write to you."²⁰ In his subtle way Monroe became involved in the dispute in the summer of 1819. On 30 March the President left Washington to begin a four-month tour that traversed five thousand miles of the South. At a time when the South feared its influence was waning in national affairs, the Virginian President returned to his people.²¹ Monroe's biographer says the

¹⁷. Young, pp.198-202.

¹⁸. Ammon, pp.382-383.

¹⁹. Mooney, p.173.

²⁰. Eaton to Jackson, 11 Mar 1820, *Jackson Correspondence*, III, pp.15-18.

²¹. Cresson, pp.334-337. Ammon, p.438. Robert V. Remini, *Andrew Jackson and the Course of American Empire, 1767-1821* (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), p.387.

trip was "for the purpose of allaying sectional jealousy."²² The same motive had lain behind his determination not to acquire more Southwestern territory from Spain in the recent negotiations.

In 1820 Presidential involvement with the Compromise itself was far greater than might be expected. In December 1819, under the pseudonym "An American", Monroe wrote articles for the Richmond *Enquirer* critical of the proposed restriction on the grounds of constitutionalism and expediency.²³ But once it was clear that deadlock would remain, Monroe embraced the idea of compromise. A month before Thomas introduced his amendment, Monroe wrote to his son-in-law George Hay saying a westward extension of Missouri's northern boundary could be used as a limit for slave soil.²⁴ On 8 January Adams spoke to Monroe in gloomy terms of the country's prospects. Adams was particularly surprised "...that, as to the Missouri question, he [Monroe] apprehended no great danger from that. He believed a compromise would be found and agreed to, which would be satisfactory to all parties." Either the President was ignorant to the seriousness of the crisis, or naively calm, or there was an "underplot" in operation, Adams speculated.²⁵ General Abner Lacock, former Senator from Pennsylvania, wrote a confidential letter to Monroe on 30 January 1820. "My principle object in writing this letter was to respectfully suggest to you the propriety (if you think with one on the subject) of recommending to your confidential friends *this compromise*," stated Lacock, before Thomas had introduced his amendment to the Senate.²⁶ It appears that by February 1820 Monroe was fully aware of how the Compromise might take shape. Therefore when on 2 February the President and Senator James Barbour met to discuss Missouri, Monroe could advise against the uniting of the Maine and Missouri bills, knowing one crude bargaining tool would be replaced with

²². Cresson, p.334.

²³. Hay to Monroe, 24 Dec 1819, *Congressional Globe*, 30.ii.app., pp.63-64.

²⁴. Monroe to Hay, 10 Jan 1820, Ammon, p.452.

²⁵. *Adams Memoirs*, IV, pp.498-499.

²⁶. Lacock to Monroe, 30 Jan 1820, *Monroe Papers*.

one slightly more acceptable. Although the bills were united on 16 February, this action may be seen as a delaying tactic whilst support was encouraged for the proviso. Although the Thomas amendment was ultimately unnecessary to secure the Compromise, Southerners thought that some token would be required. Monroe argued the admission of Maine would appease the North, "put the Southern members on high ground," and "secure a better result in the final arrangement of the business." For one who always *appeared* to avoid directing the affairs of Congress it is even more remarkable that Monroe should tell Barbour, "...you ought to have immediately a meeting of the Southern members and act promptly." It should be noted that Barbour may have persuaded the conference committee to divide the joint bill to effect a compromise.²⁷

There was a considerable gap between the introduction of the Thomas amendment and a full discussion of its merits as the proviso was withdrawn for "revision" soon after its introduction. The real reason for delaying debate on the amendment was so that support for it could be whipped up. In this period Monroe worked hard to promote the Compromise, through personal contact and correspondence.²⁸

The President met politicians at social functions. Monroe's White House entertaining has been criticised in comparison to that of his predecessors. Jefferson brought political friends together whereas Monroe's Friday dinners have been thought "tactless" in their choice of guests. Mrs Monroe was seen as too cold and formal when compared to Dolly Madison.²⁹ Monroe's dinners may have been more formal than in the past but they should not be ignored as an arena for Presidential influence. Bringing political enemies together might have been tactless but it created discussion and possibly a greater understanding of others' position, something one would not admit in public. Monroe was at his best in small groups. Federalist Harrison Gray Otis testified

²⁷. Monroe to Barbour, 3 Feb 1820, *Letters to Barbour*, p.9. Lowery, p.126.

²⁸. Ammon, p.453.

²⁹. Wiltse, *Calhoun: Nationalist*, p.148.

to being put at his ease by Monroe at a dinner dominated by leading Republicans.³⁰ It is inconceivable that Monroe's conciliatory desires were not conveyed to Congressmen at such dinners during the crisis.

A number of Northern Republican Congressmen met Monroe on 9 February. Doughface Mark Langdon Hill reported, "We have induced the President to *think*, and advise his Southern friends to be cautious."³¹ Hill was mistaken if he thought the President had been influenced; really Monroe had just confirmed his moderate course to these members. That the President had already decided on his course has been made clear and is shown in a letter written to Jefferson two days before the meeting with Hill. Whilst not mentioning the Thomas proviso, Monroe advised that the South would require "great moderation, firmness, & wisdom...to secure a just result."³²

Monroe's most important correspondence was with Virginia. The state's hostility to any concession was manifest. As early as December 1819 George Hay told Monroe, "*I see not how a compromise can be made, I am very confident that none ought to be made.*"³³ James Monroe has been accused of being too deferential to the Virginia legislature and to opinion in Richmond. Monroe went as far as inviting Virginians to Washington to solve the crisis.³⁴ But Monroe would have been stupid to ignore the opinion of the leading and most influential Southern state. Surely by inviting the critics of compromise to the capital he was trying to find a solution to the dispute, and show the Virginian hot-heads the extent of the dilemma.

In the midst of the controversy lay the business of renominating Monroe for the 1820 Presidential election. Once the Virginia legislature had heard a rumour that the Cabinet actively favoured the Compromise they refused to proceed with their caucus to

³⁰. Ammon, pp.402-403.

³¹. Hill to W.King, 9 Feb 1820, R.H.Brown, *The Missouri Compromise: Political Statesmanship...*, p.56. Moore, p.235.

³². Monroe to Jefferson, 7 Feb 1820, *Writings of Monroe*, VI, pp.113-115.

³³. Hay to Monroe, 24 Dec 1819, *Congressional Globe*, 30.ii.app., pp.63-64.

³⁴. Moore, pp.234-238.

choose Presidential electors.³⁵ Virginians hoped Monroe would take a firmer stance against the Compromise to secure his renomination. Instead of capitulating to the narrow-mindedness of the Richmond Junto, Monroe adopted a surprisingly surreptitious line. First, he and probably James Barbour wrote an extremely persuasive and anonymous letter supporting the Compromise which was printed in the *Richmond Enquirer* on 17 February, the day of the second caucus. The letter exploited the danger of Rufus King and Federalism to the full. Monroe claimed, "If he [King] can be made President - which is probably his first object - he may be willing to preserve the Union." An uncompromising stance on the part of the South merely played into the hands of the disunionist Federalists, stated the letter. Only by accepting the Compromise would the danger of secession be avoided.³⁶ George Hay expected the letter to make "a strong impression."³⁷ Secondly, the President was deliberately vague on whether or not he would veto the Compromise. He could not say he would veto the Compromise because this would automatically ruin any chance of Northerners risking their political future by voting with the South. But to Virginia he had to appear as though he would use his veto on the Thomas amendment. It was quite a dilemma which left Monroe appearing indecisive. Hay and the Virginia caucus were under the impression Monroe would put his "veto on this infamous cabal and intrigue." Hay deliberately did not deliver a letter from Monroe to Judge Roane because the President appeared unsure about using the veto. Hay felt any hesitation on Monroe's part would be "fatal" to his reelection chances.³⁸ On 17 February the caucus in Richmond renominated Monroe for the Presidency.³⁹

³⁵. Charles Yancey to James Barbour, 10 Feb 1820, *Letters to Barbour*, p.10.

³⁶. "A letter from a gentleman in Washington to his friend in Richmond," 12 Feb 1820, *Congressional Globe*, 30.ii.app., p.66. *Zanesville Express*, 15 Mar 1820. R.H.Brown, *The Missouri Compromise: Political Statesmanship...*, pp.49-53.

³⁷. Hay to Monroe, 16 Feb 1820, *Monroe Papers*. This letter confirms Monroe to be the gentleman in Washington.

³⁸. Hay to Monroe, 17 Feb 1820, *Monroe Papers*. Monroe to Roane, 16 Feb 1820, *Congressional Globe*, 30.ii.app., p.67.

³⁹. Lowery, p.121.

The President may have wished to avoid slavery becoming an issue against him in the 1820 contest, and of course the Virginian nomination was important on prestige grounds. Although these motives may have been present, it has already been shown that through both domestic and foreign affairs, Monroe had long been concerned to counter sectionalism and seek compromise. The inaction of the first caucus was a result of Monroe's pro-compromise stand. Therefore it was important for the backers of the Compromise that Virginia be seen to endorse the President. By renominating Monroe, who was now associated with the Compromise, Virginia reluctantly gave a signal to the South that the deal might be acceptable. Although Virginia's hostility to the Compromise was great, as seen by her votes in Congress, this is not to say Monroe failed in his role. By promoting conciliation, Monroe made it more likely that Virginia would accept the Compromise once it had passed. The fact that the Richmond *Enquirer* accepted the Compromise with the Thomas amendment, albeit reluctantly, is testimony to the conciliatory spirit which the President encouraged.⁴⁰ James Barbour, Monroe's Virginian ally, reflected an opinion widely held in the Dominion state. He voted against the Thomas amendment, but he voted for the whole Compromise bill which included the proviso. With enough Southerners willing to support the Thomas amendment, Virginians could oppose it knowing the Compromise was not in danger.

After signing the Missouri bill on 6 March, Monroe continued in his efforts to ensure the Compromise was accepted as legitimate in Virginia. Monroe's position is summarised in a letter to Jefferson in which he explained why a compromise was essential: "I am satisfied that the arrangement made, was most auspicious for the Union, since had the conflict been pursued, there is reason to believe that the worst consequences would have followed. The excitement would have been kept up, during which it seemed probable, that the slave holding States would have lost ground daily....Such too was the nature of the controversy, that it seem'd to be hazardous, for either party to gain a complete triumph."⁴¹ It is likely that Monroe's promotion of

⁴⁰ Richmond *Enquirer*, 7 Mar 1820, Lowery, p.122.

⁴¹ Monroe to Jefferson, - May 1820, *Writings of Monroe*, VI, pp.119-123.

conciliation made an impact in the Mid-Atlantic and Southwestern states, the areas in which he had been most welcome on his 1819 tour.

James Monroe was inspired by a deep desire to preserve the Union. Unlike some of the ultra conservatives in Richmond he was willing to suspend his doubts over the constitutionality of the Thomas proviso for the greater good of the nation. So despite drafting a veto message he refused to kill the Compromise.⁴² As a Senator said in a later Congress, "He gave up his convictions on the abstract question of Congressional power reluctantly...It was to save the Constitution, and to save the country from the impending peril, that he yielded."⁴³

There was little contemporary criticism of Monroe's role which was accepted as constitutionally proper. He was reelected unopposed in 1820 with only one member of the electoral college dissenting. The only noticeable opposition to his candidature was in Virginia, which he quickly overcame, in Ohio and in Philadelphia. In the latter both the *Aurora* and the *Union* called for a rival candidate. This was opposed by the *Philadelphia Democratic Press*.⁴⁴ Monroe was criticised for being a Virginian slave-holder who approved the Compromise rather than because of his perceived inaction over Missouri. In fact there was little alternative to Monroe. The main candidates were in the Cabinet: running against Monroe would be disloyal and would ruin the chance of a new Cabinet seat if the rival lost. All contemporary evidence points to candidates looking to 1824 for their chance. A contested election in 1820 would certainly involve the divisive slave issue. Prospective Southern candidates hoped this issue, which threatened their electoral chances in the North, would recede in importance by 1824.

Monroe's re-election also produces evidence that the Executive wielded influence outside Congress. John Sloane wrote: "You may think it strange that an

⁴². In the draft veto message Monroe said prohibition of slavery in the territories "if not in direct violation of the Constitution, is repugnant to its principles," *Congressional Globe*, 30.ii.app., p.67. R.H.Brown, *The Missouri Compromise: Political Statesmanship...*, pp.57-59. Cresson, p.348. Mooney, p.238.

⁴³. Senator Westcott of Florida to Congress, 25 July 1848, on whether or not the Thomas amendment was a precedent for further prohibiting slavery in the territories. *Congressional Globe*, 30.ii.app., pp.45-61, esp pp.57-58.

⁴⁴. *National Intelligencer*, 25 Jan 1820.

administration which cannot command influence to what it pleases should still be able to ride in at another election without opposition but such is the fact the management of electioneering is so well understood that all popular men are broken down in the northern states...." Sloane continued, that "certain eastern democrats who have grown up under the care of Madison's and Monroe's administration" had become "too much the creatures of courtly power to be depended on."⁴⁵ Although more evidence is needed, such an opinion raises the possibility that some of the doughfaces may have voted for the Compromise package in the hope of future patronage from the administration for themselves or their friends.

Although the evidence is thin, it is likely that the Cabinet actively urged a compromising course. The leading members - Adams, Calhoun and Crawford - all had followings in Congress who to some extent could be guided.⁴⁶ William Crawford had by far the largest group of Congressional supporters. Keen to withdraw the divisive slave issue from national politics, Crawfordites like John Holmes and Jesse B. Thomas were particularly prominent in compromising roles.

During this period John Calhoun was a fervent nationalist, conspicuous by his national rather than sectional outlook. In the summer of 1820 Calhoun took a holiday in the Northern states. The trip confirmed his belief that the Southern idea that, "between the North and South a premeditated struggle for superiority" had begun "is not correct." The South should not develop a persecution complex because, "If we, from such a belief, systematically oppose the North, they must from necessity resort to a similar opposition to us. Our true system is to look to the country; and to support such measures and such men, without regard to sections, as are best calculated to advance the general interest."⁴⁷ Calhoun's broad-mindedness was evident in the Cabinet discussions on Missouri. It was he who suggested a rephrasing of Monroe's second question, on the

⁴⁵ Sloane to B. Tappan, 29 Mar 1820, Benjamin Tappan Papers (Ratcliffe Collection).

⁴⁶ Ammon, p.384.

⁴⁷ Calhoun to Judge Tait, 26 Oct 1820, *Calhoun Papers*, V, pp.412-414.

constitutionality of the "forever" clause, allowing the Cabinet to unanimously approve the Compromise.⁴⁸

John Quincy Adams was greatly disturbed by the Missouri controversy, believing it to be "a title page to a great tragic volume."⁴⁹ He thought the restriction on Missouri was "impracticable" but he was sincerely opposed to the extension of slavery. Adams supported the Compromise because, "excluding the introduction of slaves from future Territories,...will be a great and important point secured."⁵⁰

Just as the President found it difficult to rally support in Congress, so did the Cabinet, making it difficult to gauge their influence on the Missouri Compromise. Even the popular Crawford found it difficult to sell his retrenchment policy. Describing Congress, his biographer says, "the troops united under subalterns, skirmished, fell back, regrouped, deserted, went awol, [and] were cashiered by their constituents."⁵¹ Calhoun's closest friend was Representative William Lowndes of South Carolina. Calhoun's influence did not sway Lowndes who turned from nationalism to strict constructionism because of the Missouri dispute.⁵² Adams was always rather aloof from touting for Congressional support. Neither was he successful: Representatives Livermore and Plumer of New Hampshire refused to accept his justification for accepting the Compromise.⁵³ His commitment to the Compromise must have appeared a little tenuous. He privately recorded, "I have favored this Missouri compromise...from extreme unwillingness to put the Union at hazard. But perhaps it would have been a wiser as well as a bolder course to have persisted in the restriction upon Missouri, till it should have terminated in a convention of the States to revise and amend the Constitution. This would have produced a new Union of thirteen or fourteen States

⁴⁸. *Adams Memoirs*, V, p.9.

⁴⁹. *Adams Memoirs*, IV, p.502.

⁵⁰. *Adams Memoirs*, IV, p.530.

⁵¹. Mooney, p.156.

⁵². Dangerfield, *Nationalism*, p.133. Ammon, p.464.

⁵³. *Adams Memoirs*, IV, pp.529-530. *Plumer Letters*, pp.16-17.

unpolluted with slavery....If the Union must be dissolved, slavery is precisely the question upon which it ought to break."⁵⁴

The role of the administration during the Missouri crisis must be reviewed. It is true that their role in creating the Compromise was small but this was a result of a particular conception of the extent of the powers of both Congress and Executive. The administration worked for the passage of the Compromise, and encouraged its acceptance once it had passed. It should be remembered that in negotiating the Florida Treaty the Executive, with the exception of Adams, sought a treaty without Texas, which if included would have provoked a new crisis over slavery. After the Compromise, Monroe firmly dismissed calls for Texas on the grounds that sectionalism must be avoided. So, far from being weak and isolated, the Executive and Monroe especially were vigilant observers and active conciliators during the crisis. They showed a rare quality of promoting the national interest and resisting sectional calls.

⁵⁴. *Adams Memoirs*, V, p.12.

CHAPTER SEVEN - CONCLUSION

Although the Missouri debates concentrated upon constitutional questions, the issue at the heart of the matter was a moral one. Quite simply the crisis could not have occurred without slavery, as it was the only issue which could internally unite North and South against each other. Northerners were united in a belief that slavery was incompatible with a republican society and could see no justification for extending a system of evil. At this stage Northern antislavery was very moderate. Most Northerners would not dare challenge slavery in states where it existed, and it should be remembered that the Taylor amendment was mild in its aims. Combined with a widespread and sincere moral hatred of slavery was a belief in free soil ideas. Slavery, whilst degrading to the black man, was principally seen as a threat to the virtue of the white yeoman farmer. Republican virtue was embodied in such whites. Slaves and free Negroes threatened to undermine the backbone of the Republic by their mere presence.

Northern jealousy of Southern political power was not the key factor in provoking the dispute. The balance of power had not produced a crisis in the past and was the concern of a small group of Northerners, predominantly Federalists. The Federalist plot was a myth. The Federalists merely responded to an issue which had grabbed the public imagination and which was naturally suited to the party's ideology. They hoped to gain by the crisis but they did not foster it. Furthermore, political power was only of use if it could be utilized; the North were far too divided on economic matters to agree upon any sectional policy. The whole idea of sectionalism, on issues other than slavery before the Missouri crisis has been exaggerated. On major economic and political concerns no consistent pattern of sectional voting emerges. If differences were greatest in the political arena then it is strange to note the friendly correspondence between Thomas Jefferson and John Adams; and the tone of the letters passed between

Rufus King and John Randolph dismisses the notion that King had a phobia about the South.¹

John C. Calhoun can be seen as a typical Southerner then and later. He was a nationalist as regards the economy and the role of government. But he was a sectionalist committed to strict construction on the subject of slavery. He thought slavery to be an evil but could see no viable way of ending the practise without damaging the whole Southern economic and social system which was pervaded by slavery at all levels.² Southerners sought to defend strict construction during the Missouri crisis. It was a pragmatic not an ideological battle as a strict reading of the constitution provided the best defence of slavery, the only issue on which the South could unite. On other matters the South pragmatically applied strict construction if it was deemed useful.

The crisis ended because a minority of Northern members who had consistently opposed the restriction were joined by a few others who were predominantly frightened of disunion. Although disunion was unlikely it must have appeared as a real threat in the heat of the moment given the repeated threats of the Southern ultras. The myth of a Federalist plot was of little importance to Northern compromisers who included Federalists in their ranks. The Thomas proviso had no visible effect on Northern opinion. It was only accepted in the moment of defeat as a symbol of at least doing something positive against slavery. Although some Northerners like John Quincy Adams thought 36°30' to be a valuable measure against slavery, it is difficult to disguise the undercurrent of disappointment felt in the North. Indeed Adams felt so strongly about the crisis that he privately advocated the dissolution of the Union.³ Rufus King considered the North to have been thoroughly "conquered."⁴ Unwillingness to give in to the South on the race issue is evident in the 1821 dispute. The slave issue continued to

¹. Egerton, p.217n. Randolph to King, 25 Feb 1825, *King Correspondence*, VI, p.595. Lester J. Cappon (ed), *The Adams-Jefferson Letters* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1959), vol.II. For the opposite view see Moore, p.56 & Bailey, p.121.

². Wiltse, *Calhoun: Nullifier*, p.117. Also see John Niven, *John C. Calhoun and the Price of Union* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1988).

³. *Adams Memoirs*, V, p.12.

⁴. R. King to J.A. King, 4 Mar 1820, *King Correspondence*, VI, pp.288-290.

influence Northern politics. In late 1822 John Sloane reported Henry Clay to be popular in Ohio although "were it not for the recollection of the Missouri question, there would scarcely be a dissenting voice."⁵ New York politics may have concentrated on state issues but the fact that the Bucktails became known as the "slave ticket" is revealing.

In North and South it was appreciated that 36°30' only recognised an existing situation. The evidence regarding the early 1820s points to the United States being territorially static for the future. Excess land in the West was, in the official mind at least, considered worthless and fit only for Indian removal. Given these constraints, room for free and slave state expansion was limited. Growing antislavery in the North made even the possibility of small-scale slave-holding north and west of Missouri slight. Large-scale slavery, used to produce major cash crops, was rendered near-impossible due to the soils and climate of the region.

The Compromise was a substantial victory for the South. As demanded, Missouri entered as an unrestricted slave state. Contrary to the belief of Donald Robinson, acceptance of the Thomas amendment did not make the South doughfaced.⁶ Conservatives considered the proviso to be a violation of the Constitution because it was a national decision on slavery.⁷ However, more liberal Southerners, who were in the majority but not as influential, accepted that Congress could constitutionally interfere with slavery in a new territory. As far as the South was concerned slavery was only prohibited from the territories north of 36°30', not the future states. Although this certainly meant that the territories would become free states, the South had successfully defended the constitutional point of barring Congress from touching slavery in the states. Northerners disagreed with such an interpretation but there is little doubt that the South was on stronger constitutional ground regarding the meaning of the restriction above 36°30'.⁸

5. John Sloane to Henry Clay, 16 Nov 1822, *Clay Papers*, III, pp.294-295.

6. D.L.Robinson, p.417.

7. Richmond *Enquirer*, 19 Feb 1820, *Congressional Globe*, 30.ii.app., p.66.

8. Wilson, p.44.

That the Compromise safeguarded what the South already had, or expected to get, was one reason for accepting Thomas's line. The South was also gratified to know that slave state expansion was still in theory possible above 36°30'. The Compromise was not recognised as a compact. It was an ordinary piece of legislation which could be repealed at any time, Congress permitting. Indeed President Monroe made this point.⁹ Rufus King realised the Compromise could be revoked making it of "no value."¹⁰

Was the Compromise seen as a long or short-term solution to the slavery problem? John Quincy Adams believed the issue was "asleep" only "for the present."¹¹ As the Compromise left both sections with grievances and was essentially a political answer to a moral problem, it can be seen as a short-term measure. But the success of the Compromise marks it out as a long-term solution. It lasted thirty-four years, a period in which many new states joined the Union, antislavery and abolitionism reached a wider audience and sectional tempers rose significantly.¹² In 1820, the Compromise was just about acceptable because the sectional status quo regarding slavery was not significantly altered. The Thomas amendment could only survive in the North if it restricted slavery to its present limits. For Southerners it recognised their right to expand south of the line. The Compromise failed to keep the peace when the great migration westwards, which could not be foreseen in 1820, and the territorial annexations of 1845-1848 challenged the sectional notions as to what 36°30' really meant. So the Compromise can only be seen as a long term solution if it is viewed in the context of America's geographical limits of 1820.

⁹. "A letter from a gentleman in Washington to his friend in Richmond," (second letter), *Richmond Enquirer*, 17 Feb 1820, quoted in *Zanesville Express*, 15 Mar 1820. Ambler, p.79.

¹⁰. King to Oliver Wolcott, 3 Mar 1820, *King Correspondence*, VI, pp.287-288.

¹¹. *Adams Memoirs*, V, p.12.

¹². The Thomas amendment was repealed in 1854 only as it applied to Kansas and Nebraska. The Compromise survived as the admission of a state could not be repealed. Fehrenbacher, *Dred Scott*, p.108.

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