BATTLE OF THE PRESS: THE NULLIFICATION CRISIS IN SOUTH CAROLINA, 1828-1833

by

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ABSTRACT

ANDREW CHRISTOPHER PACK. Battle of the press: the nullification crisis in south carolina, 1828-1833. (Under direction of DR. DAN DUPRE)

This study focuses on the role of the press during the Nullification Crisis in South Carolina. It examines how the *Charleston Mercury* and the *Charleston Courier* used ideas centered around economics, states' rights and honor to convince South Carolinians to support their side in the conflict over tariffs. South Carolina was divided between Nullifiers who favored declaring the Tariff of 1828 null and void within the borders of South Carolina and Unionists who opposed nullification and feared the potential for disunion that the radical doctrine possessed. The Unionists represented an older political tradition that sought the greater good of the nation as the best way to ensure a prosperous future, while the Nullifiers advanced strong states' rights doctrines that advocated for South Carolinian interests above all. The strict states' rights beliefs held by the Nullifiers came to be the dominant political view in South Carolina for the rest of the antebellum period. The editors of the *Mercury* and *Courier* played a major role in shaping the internal debate in South Carolina over the tariff and the *Mercury*'s victory firmly established states' rights as the primary political doctrine of antebellum South Carolinians.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

The Nullification Crisis was a tense standoff between the federal government of the United States and the state of South Carolina. In 1828, Congress passed what its opponents called the "Tariff of Abominations," which raised duties on imported manufactured products to the highest rates the country had ever seen. This outraged South Carolinians, who had little industry and worried their economy would not be able to sustain these exorbitant rates. South Carolinians protested for the next four years and the national government passed a new tariff in 1832 that reduced the duties on several articles, however, it was not nearly enough for the majority of South Carolinians. The state called a convention in response to this latest tariff in which they passed the Ordinance of Nullification, which declared the Tariffs of 1828 and 1832 null and void within the state. This outraged Jackson who in turn asked Congress to pass the Force Bill, which authorized him to use the military to enforce the tariffs in South Carolina. The crisis came to an end when Senators Henry Clay of Kentucky and John C. Calhoun of South Carolina developed the Compromise Tariff in 1833 that satisfied enough in the North and South to pass Congress and end the Crisis. This new tariff promised a steady reduction in tariff rates over the next ten years, culminating in a rate of twenty percent that would never be exceeded. While the Compromise Tariff brought an end to the Crisis, tensions still remained over the power of the federal government and the rights reserved to the individual states to resist what they viewed as oppression.

South Carolinians tried to project a united image to the rest of the country throughout the Crisis, however, they were sharply divided internally over the legality and necessity of nullification. There was a significant divide among South Carolinians between Nullifiers and Unionists. Nullifiers advocated the radical doctrine of nullification and believed they had to take a stand immediately if they wanted to be able to prevent the federal government from becoming too powerful and trampling on their rights. On the other hand, the Unionists opposed unilaterally disobeying the federal government and feared if they did not stop the Nullifiers this radical group might destroy the Union their ancestors had fought so hard to create. This divide within South Carolina endured for the entirety of the Nullification Crisis as each side fought to win the hearts and minds of South Carolinians.

The Nullification Crisis was a significant point in the history of the United States that brought up important questions surrounding the power of the federal government and the level of involvement it should have in directing the country's economy. Ever since the Constitutional Convention of 1789 established a central government, Americans argued over how much power they delegated to it versus what had been reserved to the state and local governments. Nationalists advocated for a government with sweeping powers to regulate trade and foster economic development, while groups opposed to centralized power asserted that government should only exist to keep its citizens content and free and not interfere in their daily lives and activities. These opponents of federal power instead emphasized state power as a bulwark to federal tyranny. The divide between these two groups only increased as time went on and came to a major confrontation during the Nullification Crisis.

The competing views of federal power played an important role in the creation of sectionalism based on economic interests, as the North industrialized and grew in population while the South remained agricultural and less populated. Many in the South began to fear that the North would dominate the federal government and work for their own interests while neglecting the needs of the South. The central conflict of the crisis centered around the role of tariffs and how much they should be used to develop industry and regulate commerce. The tariff of 1828 was designed to protect the nation's developing manufacturing industry by greatly increasing the import duties on manufactured products. While this benefitted manufacturers in the Mid-Atlantic and Northern states, it hurt many in the agricultural South that purchased their manufactured goods from England. Under the Tariff of 1828, Southerners would be forced to pay a much higher price for goods from the North compared with what they previously paid England.[1] In addition, they feared that if the tariff made English goods prohibitively expensive, the English factories would stop buying their cotton. Therefore, Southern opponents of the tariff argued that it doubly harmed them by making them pay more for manufactured goods but also taking away the income they had received from selling their cotton in Europe. This conflict over protectionism and the differing economic interests of Northerners and Southerners would result in a showdown over tariff policy during the Nullification Crisis.

While most Southerners opposed the tariff, South Carolinians came out the strongest against the tariff and a government that had the power to enact such openly protectionist policies. South Carolina had a large population of planters and a very small

[1] Charles Sellers, *The Market Revolution: Jacksonian America, 1815-1846* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 75.

number of yeoman farmers compared with most other Southern states. Therefore, the increase in tariff rates more greatly affected South Carolinians and they stood to lose the most.

The state's leaders asked South Carolinian John C. Calhoun to write an *Exposition and Protest* that detailed the state's grievances against the tariff. In his *Exposition*, Calhoun argued that the tariff was unconstitutional because it favored manufacturing over agriculture, something he contended the Constitution forbid. Additionally, he wrote that individual states had the right to nullify a federal law that they believed was unconstitutional. If a state took that action, the law in question became null and void within the state's borders and its citizens did not have to abide by it. Calhoun also argued against rule by the numerical majority, a concept he contended was an "oppressive tyranny" that allowed majority groups to trample on the rights of minorities and leave them with no say in the actions of the government.[2] He asserted that the North's population was growing at a rapid pace as it industrialized while the South's agricultural character caused it to grow at a much slower rate that would permanently render it a minority in the federal government. In order to repair this inequality, Calhoun developed his own theory of government that he called the "concurrent majority." In this form of government, every class or community was consulted on new laws and legislation and the concurrence of all constituted the "concurrent majority." He argued that this would allow every region of the country to have an equal say in national matters and thus solve the problem of a government dominated by hostile Northerners.[3]

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[2] Lacy K. Ford, Jr. "Inventing the Concurrent Majority: Madison, Calhoun, and the Problem of Majoritarianism in American Political Thought," *The Journal of Southern History* 60 (1994): 46.
[3] Ibid., 47-48.

An important legacy of the Nullification Crisis is that it crystallized strong states' rights ideals within South Carolina that endured for the rest of the antebellum period and still remain a significant part of the state's political culture to this day. Prior to the Nullification Crisis, the state's leaders embraced nationalism in the aftermath of the War of 1812 and sought to build a strong, united country that would not be vulnerable to foreign threats. Old Republicans that supported states' rights like Senator William Smith were marginalized by Calhoun and received little support throughout the state.[4] However, once Calhoun used states' rights to justify nullification and protect South Carolina's economic needs, many in the state shifted to support states' rights as the best means of resisting what they viewed as an unconstitutionally powerful federal government that was dominated by Northerners who opposed their interests. Time and again over the years South Carolinians turned to states' rights to oppose the federal government and push their sectional views on the rest of the country.

Throughout the Nullification Crisis, newspapers played an important role in shaping public opinion in South Carolina concerning the tariff and nullification and whether or not the state should enact the doctrine. During this period, newspapers were explicitly partisan organs that openly advocated for one political party or another. Journalism that told both sides of an issue was a rarity and many editors derived the majority of their support from partisan organizations. This gave them a vested interest in maintaining the party system and avoiding compromise, as that would diminish their

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[4] William W. Freehling, *Prelude to Civil War: The Nullification Controversy in South Carolina, 1916-1836* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 100-101.

usefulness to the party and the integral part they played in attracting readers to their cause.[5]

During the antebellum period, Charleston was the largest city in the state of South Carolina and therefore had the most prominent newspapers with the highest number of readers. The *Charleston Courier*, the most widely circulated paper in the state, was established as a Federalist paper in 1803. Aaron Willington, a native of Massachusetts, worked for the paper from its inception all the way to the beginning of the Civil War. He became the sole proprietor in 1813 and managed the editorial duties until he hired Richard Yeadon to take over the position in 1832. Yeadon, a Charlestonian lawyer, brought an aggressive editorial style to the paper that he maintained over the next twelve years that he served as editor. In the *Courier*'s columns, Yeadon and Willington consistently advocated for the Unionists and staunchly opposed Calhoun's doctrine as dangerous to the integrity of the Union.[6] The *Charleston Mercury* was the *Courier*'s greatest opponent and the most prominent supporter of nullification in the state. Henry Laurens Pinckney served as editor from the paper's inception in 1822 all the way through to the end of the Nullification Crisis in 1833, when he resigned to become a United States senator. He was one of Calhoun's close political allies and the *Mercury* was where South Carolinians looked when they wanted to know Calhoun's view on a particular issue.[7] Pinckney himself was also very active in politics during the debates over nullification, as he served as Speaker of the South Carolina House of Representatives and Mayor of Charleston. Throughout the crisis, he used his newspaper to push the doctrine of

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[5] Jeffrey L. Pasley, *The Tyranny of Printers": Newspaper Politics in the Early American Republic* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2001), 3-4, 364-365.
[6] Carl R. Osthaus, *Partisans of the Southern Press: Editorial Spokesmen of the Nineteenth Century* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1994), 72-73.
[7] Ibid., 77.

nullification and Southern rights to his readers. The *Courier* and the *Mercury* fought a bitter battle over the most important issue of the day, nullification, that would determine the state's political future.

Historians have written about the Nullification Crisis from several different perspectives. Some researchers have looked forward from nullification for clues as to why South Carolina led secession thirty years later while others have looked backwards to find the ideological roots of this theory and the strong states' rights ideals that had developed in the state. Richard Ellis has argued that it was a significant moment on the road to the Civil War as it represented the first instance of a state claiming that it had the power to nullify a federal law that it disagreed with and even leave the Union if the government insisted on continuing to enforce their laws. In this line of thinking, the fact that the ability of a state to nullify a federal law was never resolved allowed these ideas to fester in South Carolina over the next thirty years and made South Carolina the first state to secede from the Union after Lincoln's election.[8]

Another aspect of the crisis historians have looked at is why South Carolina supported nullification alone out of all the Southern states. William Freehling has argued that South Carolinians had become defensive and nervous over both their position in the Union and the bedrock of their way of life, slavery. In the 1820s and 1830s, large numbers of people had migrated from South Carolina to Alabama and Mississippi, where the soil was better, reducing its population and therefore its importance in the national government. Additionally, abolitionists in the North were becoming more and more active as William Lloyd Garrison's *Liberator* appeared in the same year as Nat Turner's

[8] Richard Ellis, *The Union at Risk: Jacksonian Democracy, States' Rights and the Nullification Crisis* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987) 198.

slave rebellion in Virginia. This followed on the heels of Denmark Vesey's slave rebellion in Charleston in 1822 and the Charleston Fire Scare of 1826, where many believed slaves had set fire to wooden buildings throughout the city for six months straight. All of this combined to make South Carolina's leaders feel like they were losing the power and important position they had once held in the federal government and drove them to defend their way of life and their states' rights even more vehemently.[9]

Lacy Ford, Jr. has written about the divide between Unionists and Nullifiers. He has argued that the crisis helped lay the groundwork for the unique political culture of South Carolina that strongly valued states' rights even above the preservation of the Union.[10] He has written that the Unionists also disapproved of tariffs and valued states' rights, however, they valued the Union and the democratic experiment their ancestors had created even more and so opposed nullification. On the other hand, the Nullifiers saw this doctrine as the best way to preserve the Union against majority tyranny, which they saw as the federal government dominated by Northerners. Nullification would allow smaller sections of the country to still have a significant say in issues important to them rather than letting outside parties dictate what they do.

The Nullification Crisis altered the political culture of South Carolina by transforming the way politics worked in the state. Traditionally, the elite had dominated the government of South Carolina. Members of the state legislature, the only popularly elected branch of government, faced a high property requirement. They appointed the governor, state and local officers and presidential electors, which left most South Carolinians with little to no say in the political decisions of the day. Voter turnout rarely

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[9] Freehling, *Prelude to Civil War*, 258.
[10] Lacy K. Ford Jr., *Origins of Southern Radicalism: The South Carolina Upcountry, 1800-1860* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 138.

exceeded fifty percent.[11] However, the Nullification Crisis shook up state politics by giving the voters a choice between two major camps, the Nullifiers and the Unionists, for the first time. In order to amass supporters for their cause during the Nullification Crisis, politicians had to bring in the lower classes and involve them in the debate so the state would choose the course they wanted to take.[12] After the crisis ended, both Nullifiers and Unionists attempted, with little success, to turn South Carolinian politics back to the way it had been before the controversy ripped through the state. Once South Carolinians experienced the effects of the two-party system, they were loath to return to dominance by the elite. Therefore, the Nullification Crisis proved to be a turning point that helped establish political competition in the state.[13]

James Brewer Stewart has studied this transformation in state politics by examining the way the Nullifiers mobilized the population to support their positions by staging grand balls and ceremonies. He also described the strong feeling of personal independence that was an integral part of South Carolinian culture, bonding all white males from the wealthiest planter to the poorest yeoman. Many of the Nullifiers used this attachment to personal independence and aversion to slavery to argue that if South Carolinians submitted to the tariff and the federal government, they would become slaves to Jackson and lose the ability to choose for themselves how they wanted to live.[14]

This thesis will examine the Nullification Crisis by looking at this stark divide within the state between Unionists and Nullifiers that Lacy Ford has discussed.

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[11] Manisha Sinha, *The Counterrevolution of Slavery: Politics and Ideology in Antebellum South Carolina* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 12-13.
[12] James Brewer Stewart, "A Great Talking and Eating Machine": Patriarchy, Mobilization and the Dynamics of Nullification in South Carolina," *Civil War History* 27 (1981): 214.
[13] Ford, *Origins of Southern Radicalism*, 287.
[14] Stewart, "A Great Talking and Eating Machine," 208-209.

Additionally, it will look at how these ideas about personal independence and honor that Stewart has studied intersected with states' rights and economic issues in both the Unionists' and Nullifiers' rhetoric. This will be done by focusing on the language in both the *Charleston Courier* and the *Charleston Mercury* to illustrate how the editors manipulated their readers in order to convince them to support their side in the debate. Jeffrey Pasley has written about the importance of partisanship in newspapers of the time, however no one has extensively studied the rhetoric in the *Mercury* and the *Courier* during the Nulllification Crisis to see what tactics the editors used to convince readers to support their side in the debate or the major themes surrounding the crisis that they viewed as most important.

This thesis will examine how the editors of the *Mercury* and the *Courier* used their platforms to further party politics and exacerbate the divisions among South Carolinians. The editors played a major role in shaping the debate within South Carolina during the Crisis. Yeadon and the *Courier* represented the Unionist position that espoused an older version of South Carolinian politics that had a nationalist view of the Union and believed in the old Federalist principles that had been popular in the state in the years following the Revolution. Pinckney and the *Mercury*, on the other hand, argued for a shift to states' rights doctrine in order to protect South Carolina's quickly disappearing power on the national stage and pushed for a "state first" approach to politics to replace the "greater good" views that had previously dominated. After the end of the Crisis and the Nullifiers' victory in the debate, the Unionists' nationalist views largely disappeared from South Carolinian politics and the new states' rights approach put the state on the path that would ultimately lead to secession and the Civil War.

The articles in the *Courier* and *Mercury* had very different tones that they used to mobilize their readers to support their cause. The Nullifiers at the *Mercury* capitalized on their reader's fears and anxieties to make them believe nullification was necessary if they did not want to become a vassal of a federal government that promoted the interests of other regions while ignoring the needs of South Carolinians. The *Courier*, on the other hand, constantly tried to bring a calm voice to the debate and simply state the facts of the situation to show their readers that it was not as bad as the Nullifiers claimed. This difference in tone was an important part of the strategy for both camps throughout the Nullification Crisis.

Rhetoric in both the *Courier* and the *Mercury* centered around three major themes throughout the Nullification Crisis: economic issues, states' rights and honor. The frequency with which these three themes came up illustrated that they were some of the most important topics not only during the Nullification Crisis, but also in South Carolinian society more broadly. The editors used these sensitive subjects to convince people to support their side in the debate by arguing that what they were doing was in South Carolina's best interest. However, the editors emphasized different aspects of each theme that best supported their argument.

Economic issues were at the heart of the nullification debates over the tariff. The nature of the American economy and whether the government should actively protect the manufacturing industry over agriculture were major questions the Nullifiers and Unionists argued about during the Crisis as they each harbored contrasting viewpoints as to what would be best for the nation and their home state. The Nullifiers argued that nullification would save South Carolina from experiencing further depression by forcing

a reduction in tariff rates, while the Unionists contended that what was good for part of the country would eventually benefit the rest of the nation. They argued that South Carolinians would receive long-term benefits from the "home market" that the tariff would create for their goods in the North and believed nullification was only an attempt to postpone the inevitable industrialization of the Southern economy.

States' rights were an integral part of South Carolinian political thought that first became very popular in the state during the Nullification Crisis. The ideology had existed among specific groups, like small farmers in the Upcountry, previously but it became prominent statewide during the tariff debates as Calhoun made it the central point of his theory of nullification.[15] The Unionists believed in an older form of states' rights that supported the right of secession but staunchly opposed unilateral defiance of federal laws by a state that chose to remain in the Union. They argued that states' rights should be used to save the Union as a means of checking federal power, not to completely destroy it by defying the will of the majority. The Nullifiers, on the other hand, viewed states' rights as the best means to allow the minority South to control the majority and force their views on the rest of the country long after they lost the means to do so through the ballot box.

Finally, honor was an important concept in the antebellum South that played a significant role in how South Carolinians interpreted the events of the Nullification Crisis. It linked all white men together in a common category of respectability due to their skin color and independence.[16] If it was ever challenged, it must be defended at all costs in order to ensure a worthy place in society. The Unionists and Nullifiers both

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[15] Freehling, *Prelude to Civil War*, 101.
[16] Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor: Ethics and Behavior in the Old South* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), 66.

believed in the concept of honor, however, the Nullifiers argued that they had to use nullification to defend their honor and prevent domination by the federal government, while the Unionists contended that nullification was dishonorable and would cast them as traitors and forever bring shame to their family and descendants. The Nullifiers and Unionists both focused on issues of honor, states' rights and economic difficulties but had very differing views of what these topics meant and how they believed South Carolinians should view them. The Nullifiers saw states' rights as a way to defend their honor and personal independence in order to stave off an economic crisis, while the Unionists saw nullification as a dangerous doctrine that threatened to destroy the tradition of states' rights supported by the "Old Republicans" that would leave the state isolated and impoverished.

CHAPTER II: ECONOMIC ARGUMENTS

Economics were at the heart of the nullification crisis, as the tariff had political and social implications but at its core was a monetary issue. Both Pinckney and Yeadon used their newspapers to convince readers that their respective positions were in their best economic interests. Pinckney capitalized on fears of doom and poverty that would result from the tariff and exaggerated many of its effects in his articles in the *Mercury* in order to convince South Carolinians that nullification was necessary. Yeadon, however, focused on calming his readers down by plainly stating the facts so that his readers could see that things were not as bad as Pinckney claimed. Additionally, Yeadon brought a consistent sense of optimism to his articles. He constantly asserted to his readers that things would get better; even if they suffered hardships for a little while they had a prosperous future to look forward to. Pinckney, on the other had, saw the future largely in negative terms and repeatedly described the impending economic disaster the tariff would bring to South Carolina if they did not immediately arrest it. Finally, Pinckney argued that a "natural" economy dominated by free trade in which the government did not regulate commerce was the best climate for South Carolinians to succeed financially. Yeadon, however, believed an "artificial" economy in which the government helped industry develop would benefit South Carolinians in the long term by creating a home market for their products and no longer forcing them to rely on foreign countries for all of

their goods. Pinckney looked to short-term, sectional interests while Yeadon viewed long-term, national interests as the most important.

New England's economy began the process of industrialization in the years leading up to the Nullification Crisis, with the establishment of the nation's first textile factory in 1814 by Francis Cabot Lowell in the town of Waltham, Massachusetts. The expansion of the "Lowell-Waltham" system of factory production across New England and into the Mid-Atlantic states of Pennsylvania and New York led to higher numbers of residents in the cities and a large outmigration from farms and rural areas.[1] These new factories enjoyed large profits during the War of 1812, when Jefferson's embargo on British trade forced Americans to purchase their manufactured products at home from domestic factories. However, once the war came to a close, Britain began to flood the American market with cheap goods that the domestic manufacturers could not compete with, putting these promising factories that had just gotten on their feet out of business. Therefore, representatives from textile areas started to lobby Washington for protective tariffs to maintain this industrial economy.[2]

In 1816, President Madison appointed Congressman John C. Calhoun of South Carolina to the position of Secretary of War. Calhoun had witnessed the devastation caused by the burning of the White House and the Capitol building in 1814 by the British and firmly believed in the need for a strong national government that could provide for the defense of the nation. Additionally, he supported Henry Clay, the young Speaker of the House from Kentucky, in his development of the "American System" that would bind the nation together through the use of internal improvements, tariffs and the Bank of the

[1] Sellers, *The Market Revolution, 28*.
[2] Ibid., 289.

United States.[3] In this line of thinking, the tariffs would help develop the domestic manufacturing industry so the nation would not be dependent on the exports of potentially antagonistic countries like Great Britain or France. The revenue gained from the tariffs would help the government pay for internal improvement projects such as roads and canals that would link the West with the North and the South and ease trade commerce between the various regions of the country. Finally, the Bank would provide a stable currency that businessmen and merchants could trust to have value and not be susceptible to inflation.

Congress passed the Tariff of 1816 with the support of Henry Clay and John C. Calhoun. This new tariff was the first in the history of the nation to provide for the explicit protection of manufacturing interests instead of the traditional purpose of the tariff, which was only to provide necessary revenue to the federal government. Many in the South supported this tariff, even though they realized that it would mainly benefit Northern industry at their expense, because they believed it was in the interest of national defense to have a thriving domestic manufacturing industry.[4] Additionally, the tariff was set to expire after three years, by which time most politicians believed the threat of a renewed war with Great Britain would have subsided. Finally, a majority of Southern states at the time were in the middle of an economic boom due to rising cotton prices and could therefore afford to pay a little more for manufactures in the interest of the greater good of the nation.[5]

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[3] Merrill D. Peterson, *The Great Triumvirate: Webster, Clay and Calhoun* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 89-90.
[4] Freehling, *Prelude to Civil War,* 93.
[5] Norris W. Preyer, "Southern Support of the Tariff of 1816-A Reappraisal," *The Journal of Southern History* 25 (1959): 315.

The Panic of 1819 dramatically changed the opinion of Southerners on the need for protective tariffs. The economy took a startling downturn amid widespread land speculation in the West and a sharp cutback in loans to state banks from the Bank of the United States. The falling prices of crops in the South made many Southerners opposed to any excess or unnecessary spending on tariffs that would support Northern manufacturing while impoverishing them further.[6] On the other hand, manufacturing firms and textile mills in the Northern and Middle States wanted to enshrine protectionism as a national policy. They had seen increasing profits and development over the past three years since the Tariff of 1816 was enacted and had no interest in seeing that all come to an end. Many even claimed the Panic of 1819 hurt their profits and therefore illustrated the need to continue protectionism in order to prevent the certain bankruptcy that would come with the abolition of the tariff. They argued that they were not yet ready to compete with the cheap products with which Britain was now inundating American markets. These differing views over the need for protective tariffs between the North and South would never be reconciled in the antebellum period. They would prove to be a source of conflict for years to come, particularly over the next decade when Congress continued to increase tariff rates as South Carolinians felt more and more uneasy about their role and place in the national union.

The South had also experienced an economic boom during the early 19th century as cotton-growing regions reaped the benefits of Eli Whitney's cotton gin. Thanks to the speed with which cotton could now be processed and the great British demand for the product, the price of cotton reached as high as forty-four cents a pound during the economic prosperity that followed the War of 1812. This led to large profits in the South

[6] Ibid., 102.

Carolina Upcountry, which had previously been a largely subsistence based area that did not take part in the larger market economy. Planters in the Upcountry developed a thriving trade with Britain, selling cotton for their mills and in return buying their manufactured goods.[7] This provided the Upcountry's new cotton planters with a large market for their goods while giving them low prices for manufactures in return. This system started to come to an end with the Panic of 1819 and the corresponding decline in British purchases of cotton. While the Panic caused cotton prices to decrease, the British economy began to recover from the decade long Napoleonic Wars that had increased their dependence on American exports. Additionally, the British government passed a set of tariffs known as the Corn Laws that significantly raised the price on imported agricultural products in order to aid domestic farmers as they recovered from the war.[8] Due to this sudden collapse in economic fortunes, South Carolinians feared any kind of government intervention that had the potential to depress their economy even further.

In order to combat the negative effects of the depression, Mid-Atlantic and some New England politicians allied themselves with the West and Henry Clay's "American System." Clay viewed his system as the best means of developing and industrializing the United States after the War of 1812 so that they would be a strong, independent country. President John Quincy Adams and Henry Clay split from the Democratic-Republican party to form the National Republicans, advancing this view of an activist government that was deeply involved in developing the nation's economy. The Democrats, on the other hand, believed in a limited government that left its citizens alone to pursue their own interest. Clay's "American System" would bind the nation together through the use

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[7] Ibid., 66.

[8] Daniel S. Dupre, "The Panic of 1819 and the Political Economy of Sectionalism," in *The Economy of Early America*, ed. by Cathy Matson (University Park: Penn State University Press, 2011), 272.

of internal improvements, tariffs and the Bank of the United States.[9] In this line of thinking, the tariffs would help develop the domestic manufacturing industry so the nation would not be dependent on the exports of foreign, potentially antagonistic, countries like Great Britain or France. The revenue gained by the government from the tariffs would help pay for internal improvement projects such as roads and canals that would link the West with the North and the South and ease trade commerce between the various regions of the country. Finally, the Bank would provide a stable currency that businessmen and merchants could trust to have value and not be susceptible to inflation.

Many Southerners felt excluded from this "American System" and failed to see any benefits that Clay's nationalist economic ideas would bring them. High tariffs harmed the agricultural region as Southerners had to pay more for goods produced in America than for the British and European goods they had previously imported.[10] Additionally, they believed that it was the individual states' responsibility to pay for roads and canals and argued that the South should not be forced to pay high tariff rates so roads could be built in other states. Instead, their response to the Panic of 1819 was to allow a free trade economy to develop in which they could sell their goods to Europe and be free to purchase European products without the additional tax of the import tariff.[11] These Southerners also tried to use their free trade argument to appeal to New England merchants, who had experienced a severe downturn during the War of 1812 because of the trade embargo and now hoped to return to the prosperous trade they had enjoyed with Britain before the war.

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[9] Peterson, *The Great Triumvirate,* 89-90.
[10] Ibid., 292.
[11] Ibid., 291.

However, the South's economic beliefs were not as united as they appeared at first glance. Many planters actually supported Clay's "American System" because they wanted proper roads to transport their crops to the coast for export and sale. Additionally, they supported a National Bank to stabilize their currency and foster commerce and trade. They also saw benefits in internal improvements that would help increase commerce and allow South Carolinians to better compete with the Southwest and perhaps stem the flow of people out of the state.[12] Yeoman farmers in the Upcountry had not been largely affected by the Panic as they did not participate in the market economy to a great extent. Therefore, they tended to not be as staunchly opposed to tariff increases as those in the cotton growing areas who saw their income plummet with the collapse of cotton and feared higher tariffs would make their dire economic situation much worse.[13] Pro-bank planters and yeoman farmers formed an important bloc within the Unionist camp that opposed nullification.

The next great debate over tariffs occurred in 1820, when Henry Baldwin of Pennsylvania introduced a new tariff that would increase duties from their 1816 levels. This new tariff would particularly raise the duties on woolen and cotton to thirty-three and one-third percent from their 1816 levels of twenty-five percent.[14] Many Southerners adamantly opposed these increases coming so quickly on the heels of the Panic of 1819, when they felt they were no longer necessary in the first place. Senator William Lowndes of South Carolina delivered a stirring speech against the proposal and every delegate from South Carolina voted against it.[15] The Bill passed the House but fell short in the

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[12] Ford, *Origins of Southern Radicalism*, 160-161.
[13] Freehling, *Prelude to Civil War*, 86.
[14] Ibid., 96.
[15] Ibid., 96.

Senate by one vote, giving the anti-tariff congressmen a victory in the short term. However, their success did not last long as the Northern and Western states united in 1824 to pass a new protective tariff that achieved what the Baldwin Tariff had been unable to do, greatly angering many South Carolinian politicians.

The Tariff of 1824, which raised woolen and cotton duties to just over thirty-three percent, was the last straw for many South Carolinians who now believed the government had crossed the line from protecting infant industry to blatantly favoring manufacturing over agriculture.[16] However, it protected certain products, like sugar, which helped to secure the support of many Louisiana planters. William Freehling has argued that this tariff violated South Carolinians' sense of nationalism, as many South Carolinians believed that the manufactures had been protected for long enough and now needed to either succeed or fail on their own, without the help of the government. They supported Adam Smith's view of the economy that stated that when individuals were allowed to pursue their own self-interest, the general interest of the nation would be secured, as they would invest in businesses that were most profitable to them and beneficial to the economy at large.[17] However, when government intervened to save manufacturing industries that were destined to fail, they hurt the economic growth of the nation and took money away from planters that could otherwise be used for more beneficial purposes. This line of thinking went back to the Nullifier belief in a "natural" economy that eschewed protectionism and allowed industries to fail on their own instead of the government "artificially" intervening to prop them up.

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[16] Ibid., 106.
[17] Ibid., 107.

Another concern of many South Carolinians at this time was the steady growth in population in the North that took place as South Carolina's decreased. Many South Carolinians had become more sensitive over the issue of slavery after the Missouri Compromise of 1820 and Denmark Vesey's slave rebellion in 1822 and feared the power of a government dominated by a Northern majority that was potentially hostile to their slaveholding interests.[18] Finally, they feared that foreign nations, particularly Britain and France, would retaliate by refusing to buy their cotton and rice and instead take their business to other countries like Brazil and Egypt.[19] These economic beliefs and fears of domination, combined with the depression they were currently facing, forced South Carolinians to take a very strong stance against a policy they believed was destroying the nationalism that had prevailed in the nation since the War of 1812 and turned the government into an institution dominated by the interests of particular regions.

The Tariff of 1828, often called the "Tariff of Abominations" in many parts of the South, passed Congress on May 19, 1828. This tariff raised import duties on certain manufactured products to as much as fifty percent of their total value.[20] Most of the South, with the exception of Louisiana, was outraged at these new rates and sought means to protest and gain reductions of them from the government. They argued that it was completely unjust and forced large portions of their income to go towards paying for manufactured products when they could otherwise get them much cheaper from England. This tariff was the catalyst that led some South Carolinians to embrace the doctrine of nullification as a means to stave off the economic damages they believed the high rates would bring.

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[18] Ellis, *The Union at Risk,* 194.
[19] Freehling, *Prelude to Civil War*, 107.
[20] Ibid., 138.

The idea that the tariff would not only diminish their income and economic viability, but also threaten the institution of slavery manifested itself in an article from the *Columbia Telescope* that the *Mercury* published on August 13, 1828 entitled, "Anti-Tariff Meeting." The editor began by arguing that the tariff was designed to select articles that would specifically harm the South, "articles that are imported for the laboring class of the South and produced by household manufactures for the laboring sections of the Union." He then went on to write that the clothing of their slaves was "plains" and contended that the duty on that article of clothing was a good example of the effects of the tariff. The editor asserted that the tariff supporters claimed that the duty was only forty percent of the cost, however, by the arrangement of the minimums upon every yard costing less than fifty cents, it was a duty of forty percent on fifty cents. In other words, the duty was double what its supporters claimed it was. This was a staggeringly high rate for clothing as cheap as "plains" and made what should have been one of the planters' least expenses significantly more costly. The author ended his article by asserting that if one included blankets, hats, shoes and other items the slaves used, the total tax for all of the slaves in South Carolina was little short of half a million dollars.[21]

This article was completely designed to appeal to Southern sectional interests while exploiting planters' fears about the safety of the institution of slavery. He asserted that the Tariff of 1828 specifically targeted "plains" clothing worn by slaves and therefore sought to make slave labor less profitable. While the increase in duties for "plains" clothes was not nearly high enough to make the institution of slavery unprofitable, the editor capitalized on South Carolinians' fears and argued that this slight increase was a conspiracy to destroy the basis of their entire economy. Here Pinckney

[21] "Anti-Tariff Meeting," *The Charleston Mercury*, August 13, 1828.

used the Nullifier strategy of exaggerating the effects of the tariff and played off of the idea that the North was becoming hostile to Southern interests, including slavery. Nullifiers argued that Northerners now had control of the government due to their rising population and if nothing was done to stop them, they would exploit the South economically and not stop until they had succeeded in ridding the nation of slavery.[22] These were very sensitive themes for South Carolinians and the Nullifiers attempted to rally supporters to their cause by taking advantage of the fears they knew many in the state had in order to convince them that nullification was the only way to save their society from ruin and collapse.

In a letter to the editor of the *Courier* published on August 2, 1828, a reader who called himself "Country Rustic," contended that the economic complaints that many people opposed to the tariff put forward were not valid. He began his letter by asserting that it was unwise to assume that Congress sought to oppress the South when it enacted the tariff because the price of articles in both the North and the South would increase due to the new law. Additionally, since the South had no shipping, they would not be affected by the commercial implications of the tariff; that burden would instead fall on the merchants of Massachusetts. The reader then wrote "it was asserted by the anti-tariffites in 1824, that we should not have a square rigged vessel in the port; and that our crops would rot in our barns, if the law should be passed. Instead of which, rice is above $3, a very high price—and long staple cotton, when they will take proper pains in preparing it…is higher than ever it was."[23]

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[22] Freehling, *Prelude to Civil War*, 142-143.
[23] "Country Rustic," "Letter to the Editor," *The Charleston Courier*, August 2, 1828.

After establishing that the tariff had not had the negative economic effect those opposed to it predicted, “Country Rustic” then moved to the thrust of his argument. He wanted to destroy the myth that Great Britain would no longer buy cotton and rice from the South, if the South did not purchase any more imported goods from them. He contended that everything Great Britain did was evidence to the contrary of that argument. The reader described how Great Britain had been encouraging the cultivation of cotton in every part of the world in an attempt to seek a means by which they would no longer have to be dependent on the United States for their cotton. The government of Britain had tried to introduce cotton to East India and had failed, therefore, they had no choice but to purchase cotton from the American South. “Country Rustic” argued that it was obvious that Britain did not buy from the South because the South bought from her, she bought the South’s goods because she had no other choice.

The cotton manufactories in Britain, which were the great source of her wealth, could not exist without cotton from the South. In addition, the manufacturers and their families would be thrown out on the street and into Britain’s already overburdened charity institutions if the government ceased to purchase from America. For all of these reasons, “Country Rustic” believed that Britain could not live without the South’s products. However, as soon as the government could find a way to get these products elsewhere, it would. Therefore, South Carolinians needed to stop relying on the British to buy their goods and instead create a domestic market if they were going to survive in the long term. He finished his letter by writing that many of the Founding Fathers, such as James Madison, George Washington and Benjamin Franklin, had all spoken in favor of manufactures. Additionally, Great Britain’s economic success across the globe

demonstrated the need for domestic manufactures that propelled the home economy. He wrote that even if everything those opposed to the tariff claimed was true and it was economically ruinous, disunion was not the answer. The state government was opposed to such action and it could only be accomplished by an unruly mob, which would quickly be put down by the "good sense of the community."[24]

In this letter, "Country Rustic" took an interesting approach that differed from the way the majority of Unionists viewed the tariff and industrialization. Instead of arguing that the tariffs would create a home market for their goods in the North, as many Unionists asserted, "Country Rustic" insisted that South Carolinians themselves needed to industrialize and their infant industry would therefore receive benefits from the protectionist tariffs. "Country Rustic" seemed to be arguing for an independent South Carolinian economy that had both agriculture and manufacturing, which put him at odds with the "American System" that envisioned an interdependent national economy among the different regions. This sectional argument may have been an attempt to appeal to the Nullifiers, as they tended to be much more focused on sectional interests and benefits. If "Country Rustic" could convince them that the tariff actually had the potential to benefit their own state, perhaps they would not be so staunchly opposed to it and turn from the threat of nullification.

He was correct in arguing that Britain was dependent on Southern cotton and would be forced to purchase it whether South Carolina bought goods from them or not. Sven Beckert has shown that the Haitian Revolution in 1791 cut off a quarter of British cotton imports and forced the British to turn away from the Caribbean and look to the American South for their cotton goods for the entire first half of the nineteenth century,

[24] Ibid.

which greatly benefited South Carolina's economy. The Revolution combined with the invention of the cotton gin in 1793 allowed the American South to become the largest exporter of cotton to Great Britain, as their exports to the country since the Haitian Revolution had increased by ninety-three times by 1802.[25]

"Country Rustic" displayed the characteristic optimism of the Unionists in his article by arguing that Britain could not possibly buy their cotton elsewhere as they had already tried and failed. He ensured his fellow South Carolinians that there was no need to fear a British economic retaliation if South Carolinians stopped buying British manufactures. He convincingly illustrated that Britain had no other option but to look to the American South for the cotton and rice that it required. The Nullifiers thrived on pessimism and fear to convince South Carolinians that the tariff would cause the British to no longer buy South Carolinian products and therefore nullification was necessary to protect their economic interests. The Unionists, however, had a much brighter view of the future and believed the tariff would only bring benefits to the state in the long-term and they had nothing to fear from a diverse, interdependent economy.

On April 26, 1830, George McDuffie, one of South Carolina's members of the House of Representatives, made a speech that he believed illustrated the devastating economic impacts of the tariff on the South's economy. In this speech, McDuffie developed his "forty-bale theory" in which he argued that the tariff only affected American consumers and did not hurt the British at all. McDuffie asserted that a forty percent tariff on imported cotton goods resulted in a forty percent increase for consumers. This would then cause a forty percent decrease in American sales of cotton, which

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[25] Sven Beckert, *Empire of Cotton: A Global History* (New York: Vintage, 2014), 104.

resulted in a forty percent decrease in income for planters. In other words, McDuffie contended that for every 100 bales of cotton a planter produced, the tariff took forty of them to help pay for Northern manufacturing.[26] This illustration ignored the many other economic factors at play in South Carolina's depressed economy of the 1820s, like mass outmigration to fertile Southwestern lands and diminished cotton prices. Despite these oversights, South Carolinians accepted this theory as a valid explanation of the negative effects of the tariff and blamed the high duties for all of their economic difficulties. This "forty bale theory" proved to be a simple way for South Carolinians to illustrate the unfairness of the tariff to agricultural interests and the Southern way of life.[27]

McDuffie's theory was a blatant appeal to sectionalism as he attempted to simplify all of the complex economic factors at work and simply argue that the tariff was pushed by Northerners to impoverish the South. His theory focused on planters and illustrated that the tariff openly robbed South Carolinian farmers of their hard-earned profits. He pitted Southern agricultural interests against Northern manufacturing and argued that the Northern dominated government passed the tariff so that Southern farmers could subsidize the North's economy and build up their industry. The entire burden of the tariff fell on Southern farmers while the North received all of the benefit. This argument did not accurately portray the economic effects of the tariff because Americans still had to buy cotton finished goods like clothing even with the higher prices brought by the tariff. Therefore, the tariff would not result in a forty percent decrease in the sale of

[26] Daniel Walker Howe, *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815-1848* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 396.
[27] Ibid.

cotton and a corresponding decrease in planters' income.[28] Nevertheless, it appealed to hurting farmers that sought someone to blame for their troubles. The North and its conflicting economic interests proved to be an easy scapegoat and allowed Southerners to blame that region for their troubles, while arguing that the two sections had completely diverging interests that could not be reconciled.

In 1830, the Nullifiers tried to allay the fears many domestic manufacturers had that Britain would flood the market with their goods and drive the American factories out of business if the government repealed the tariff. In an article in the *Mercury* on August 21, 1830, entitled "From the Banner of the Constitution," Pinckney listed all of the articles that had duties imposed on them that exceeded thirty percent. He wrote that he only included those articles because it was "mainly against the exorbitant rates that the indignation of the taxpayer is leveled." Pinckney argued that the Nullifiers were not inclined to compromise since they preferred a system of complete openness and free trade. However, if the supporters of the tariff proposed to reduce the duties to a maximum of fifteen percent of the total cost of the article, the people of the South would accept it. He conceded that some might argue that such a rate would be ruinous to manufactures because every article that was now upheld by a protective duty would be imported. Pinckney disagreed with this assertion and claimed that it was proven to be untrue even by the reasoning of the tariff supporters themselves. He wrote that manufacturers had always argued that foreigners would not buy their products, therefore, they contended that the high tariff was necessary in order to force a captive domestic market to purchase their goods. If that claim had any force, it was very clear that the United States could not

[28] William Freehling, *The Road to Disunion, Volume I: Secessionists at Bay* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 256.

then buy goods from foreigners since the distance from Europe was too large an obstacle, so there was no need to fear that the British would overstock American markets.[29]

Pinckney contended that the great mass of commodities that were consumed in a country must be produced in that country based solely on the nature of things. He asserted that this had always been the case and must continue to be so in the future. There were many reasons for this but Pinckney specifically focused on transportation and argued that "the mere expenses of transportation upon very bulky articles; constitute an insuperable barrier to commerce, and whether the bulk be on one side or the other; the result is the same." He claimed that if the duties on manufactures were reduced to fifteen percent, "one of two things would inevitably happen: the foreigners would supply us or they would not." If they supplied Americans with their goods, it would encourage agriculture and enable the farmers to get more for their crops than they were able to get from the domestic manufacturers. If the foreign manufacturers did not supply the American markets, the domestic manufacturer had nothing to fear, "having his business protected by the best of all possible protection, the nature of things."[30] Here Pinckney argued for a natural market centered on free trade rather than an artificial one in which the government intervened to prop up particular industries or regions.

This conflict between an artificial and a natural market was an important part of the economic arguments the Nullifiers and Unionists made. The Nullifiers believed a natural market best served their interests as they felt they had a significant share of world cotton production and a captive market in England that desperately needed their goods. The Unionists, on the other hand, knew that Europe had a much more advanced

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[29] Henry Pinckney, "From the Banner of the Constitution," *The Charleston Mercury*, August 21, 1830.
[30] Ibid.

manufacturing system and no region of the United States could compete with it. While the Unionists argued that the tariff was too high and should be more of a gradual increase, they knew the value of industry not only for the nation at large but for the state of South Carolina as well. They contended that a tariff was necessary in order for this industry to develop and it would help make the American economy independent and able to compete with the rest of the world. The nation's economy would not only excel in agriculture, but diversify and profit from other products as well. The Nullifiers focused on sectional and short-term interests while the Unionists concentrated on national interests and long-term gains.

Pinckney's article on exorbitant tariff rates seemed to have been directed more to the manufacturers in the Northern and Middle states rather than his usual domestic audience of farmers and planters in South Carolina. His goal was not to completely abolish the tariff, as many of the Nullifiers advocated, but instead to seek a reduction that Southern farmers would be able to live with, while still supporting domestic manufacturers. He believed the rate of fifteen percent would be more than enough to protect American products from cheap British imports. Pinckney used the protectionists' own logic for establishing high tariff rates in the first place to illustrate that they were not vulnerable to the British. If they needed high tariffs to force domestic farmers to purchase their goods because foreign countries would not buy their products, then the same principle would apply to domestic farmers who tried to sell their goods abroad.

Pinckney wanted to show that if foreigners were not buying American products, then they would have to sell and buy from each other anyway and the exorbitant duties over thirty percent were completely unnecessary. However, he seemed to have ignored

the fact that the British imports were cheaper than American products, so it was highly unlikely that the British would pay more for manufactured products imported from America. On the other hand, as "Country Rustic" stated in the *Courier* in 1828, the British had no means of producing tobacco and cotton on the level the South grew them, despite numerous attempts.[31] Therefore, they were highly inclined to buy Southern products as they had no other choice, but were predisposed to avoid American manufacturing because they already had a highly developed industry in their own country. Pinckney hoped to convince manufacturers to see the situation from the South's point of view and make them realize that they did not need high protective duties. However, his argument ignored key facts of the global economic climate that significantly affected American manufacturing.

The *Courier* opposed the assertions the Nullifiers had made of extravagant duties and published an article from The *Camden Journal* on August 20, 1830 in which the author calmly detailed the facts to his readers to combat Pinckney's fear mongering. In the article, entitled "To The People," the author, who called himself "Jefferson," gave a list of points that refuted the exact claims of high duties Pinckney made in the *Mercury*. He argued that under any view, the average duties on imports since 1820 were less than thirty-one percent. The editor then claimed that "under the only proper measure of the value of exports (the return in imports) the only true average duty is less than twenty-seven percent." "Jefferson" asserted that under probable allowances of additional imports, by smuggled goods and goods carried abroad, the duty was less than twenty-five percent of the real value of American exports. The editor referenced the claims of many Nullifiers that duties exceeded forty percent on some articles and asserted that those

[31] "Country Rustic," "Letter to the Editor," *The Charleston Courier*, August 2, 1828.

allegations had no foundation. "Jefferson" ended his list by writing that whatever the duty was, it was paid according to individual income everywhere in the United States. The Nullifiers argued that the income from foreign exports was burdened with the whole of the duty. However, the editor contended that if it had any foundation in truth, the whole revenue system from the Washington administration to the present day had been unjust.[32]

"Jefferson's" article was interesting as he began by dramatically contradicting the economic arguments about tariff duties the Nullifiers had made. He asserted that his research had shown that those claims of extravagant duties that were far above what any manufacturer needed to compete with Britain were baseless. Instead, the duties were at a reasonable level that allowed the manufacturing industry to develop in the United States and simultaneously decreased the overall price of goods by giving the British manufacturers more competition. "Jefferson" then answered the Nullifiers' charge that the whole burden of the protective duty fell on those who exported their products and imported manufactures from aboard. He argued that such a claim was completely untrue and if it had any base in fact, it would mean that the entire Federal Revenue system had been oppressive since its establishment during the Washington Administration. If they did not complain and threaten nullification then, they had no reason to do so now, when the government was just continuing a policy it had held since the foundation of the country. "Jefferson" clearly illustrated some of the exaggerations and scare tactics the Nullifiers used. However, he failed to concede that the Tariff of 1828 was the highest it had ever been and disproportionately affected South Carolinians at a time when their economy was already depressed.

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[32] "Jefferson," "To the People," *The Camden Journal*, August 20, 1830.

In 1832, after Congress passed the new tariff that lowered the duties on several articles, the Nullifiers were still unhappy with the situation. On July 21, 1832, the *Mercury* published Senator Robert Y. Hayne's speech in the House that explained why he opposed the Tariff of 1832. In the speech, entitled, "Debate on the Third Reading of the Tariff Bill," Hayne argued for a gradual reduction of the tariff down to the level where it only supplied necessary revenue to the federal government, as allowed by the Constitution, rather than for the protection of particular industries. He wanted the payment of the debt to be spread over several years, so that the duties would be brought down to the final point upon extinction of the debt. Hayne contended that under this plan, the manufacturers would have enjoyed a protection equal to the amount of duties that were necessary for revenue. He claimed that the protection rate would have been about fifteen or twenty percent *ad valorem*. However, when charges, freight and insurance were taken into account, the protection would have been at least thirty-three and one-half percent. Hayne stated that it had always seemed to him, that if manufacturers could not successfully compete with foreign competition when they were protected by a rate of one-third of the entire cost of the article, then they were engaged in a business that was very unprofitable to the country. The sooner this inadequate business was abandoned, the better it would be for all parties concerned.[33]

In this speech, Hayne harked back to the debate between "natural" and "artificial" economies. If a particular industry could not survive when it was protected by his suggested rate of one-third of the cost of the article, then the government should allow nature to take its course and let the industry fail on its own rather than continuously pump

[33] Robert Y. Hayne, "Debate on the Third Reading of the Tariff Bill," *The Charleston Mercury*, July 21, 1832.

money into an unprofitable enterprise. Hayne supported the "natural" economy favored by Nullifiers as opposed to the "artificial" economy of protectionists and Unionists who saw the benefits of domestic industry. Hayne attempted to establish a middle ground by allowing that a tariff could be beneficial. However, he wanted it to be gradually reduced to a level that would only satisfy the needs of governmental revenue rather than any protectionist purpose. The Unionists had argued that even though they believed a tariff was necessary, they felt the Tariff of 1828 was too high and needed to be reduced. However, the majority of Unionist arguments still consisted of the need for protectionist measures to develop industry. Hayne conceded that manufacturers might need some form of a tariff in order to compete with cheaper goods elsewhere in the world, nevertheless, he did not want it to exceed thirty-three and one-half percent. He was more than willing to allow Northern manufacturers to fail if they could not succeed at that rate. Unionists believed in industry and the benefits it would bring their country and therefore still supported paying higher tariff rates than the Nullifiers were willing to pay.

Yeadon immediately responded to the *Mercury's* publication of Senator Hayne's speech two days later, on July 23, 1832. He specifically singled out one aspect of Hayne's speech that he believed defied logic and blatantly misrepresented the economic situation in South Carolina. Yeadon argued that Hayne made it appear as if a reduction in price equaled an increase in tariff rates, as the tariff now represented a larger portion of the total price. Yeadon joked "if this be true we have only to voluntarily quadruplicate the prices we pay for taxed articles, and the taxation becomes a feather." He claimed that the facts were that the tax remained stationary while the price descended, however, Hayne would have everyone believe the opposite. Yeadon concluded his article by writing that

Hayne made it appear as if "the cheaper we get our goods the heavier is the burden of federal taxation—the more intolerable the weight of federal oppression; and of course the greater the necessity for nullification—and its agreeable concomitants, revolution and civil war."[34]

The next day, the *Courier* published another article that illustrated the benefits of the Tariff of 1832 and the great relief South Carolinians could expect from it. Yeadon wrote that if the theory of free trade was well founded, then the reduction of duties on articles would be followed by increased importations and reduced prices. Additionally, the increased importations should correspond with an escalated rate of exported products from South Carolina abroad. To reinforce his point, Yeadon inserted an article from *The Richmond Enquirer* written by a citizen in Washington to his friend in Richmond, endorsing the Tariff of 1832. In the article, the author wrote that the total amount of reductions the South would receive from this new tariff was about twelve million dollars. He admitted that the duty on woolens still remained too high at thirty-five cents per square yard, however, the author would now be able to afford to pay a little more for his coat since he would save so much on the reductions on all of the other articles.[35] Here Yeadon harkened back to the belief that what was good for the whole country would eventually also be good for South Carolina.

He conceded that the tariff was still too high, nevertheless, it was something to be celebrated since it made progress and reduced the duties on a great many articles. He then went on to explain that they accepted the new tariff because it was the best they could get at the time and they would much rather have this tariff "with the Union, than no tariff and

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[34] Ibid.
[35] Richard Yeadon, *The Charleston Courier*, July 24, 1832.

no Union." He wrote that he was satisfied from all he could learn that Virginia would not support the doctrine of nullification, which would lead to violence and secession. Instead, they would take this tariff for the time being and peaceably strive for additional relief in the years to come. The author ended by explicitly addressing the South Carolinian Nullifiers, writing that if they were determined to still pursue nullification, he was satisfied that no other state would join them and he sincerely hoped they would think better of it.[36]

In these articles, Yeadon once again underscored the basic sense of optimism that was a central characteristic of Unionist arguments. He wanted to show his readers that any reductions were progress and something they should be happy about. South Carolinians should not be so unyielding and pessimistic as the leaders of the Nullifiers were, who advocated an "all or nothing" strategy to combat the tariff. Instead, they should be willing to make compromises for the good of the nation. In Yeadon's view, the Union was more important than any short-term losses South Carolinians might experience from the tariff. The reductions were a significant relief for the state and its citizens should be happy to receive them instead of complaining louder and becoming more set in their determination to defy the government. Uncharacteristically, Yeadon used the typical Nullifier strategy of arousing fear by equating nullification with secession and disunion and describing the horrible results he believed would come from defying federal law. Yeadon may have been getting desperate at this point as the Unionists were badly losing the debate among South Carolinians and he felt the need to resort to scare-mongering in order to stave off nullification in his state.

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[36] Ibid.

While other factors such as migration to the West played a factor in South Carolina's economic fortunes, the Nullifiers were right to argue that high tariffs were devastating to their economy. The Whigs ignored the promises they had made in 1833 when they passed the "Black Tariff" in 1842 upon the expiration of Clay's compromise, which raised rates from twenty percent to forty percent of the total price of the good. This caused a dramatic decrease in foreign trade for South Carolina and outraged the state's planters. The ruin that the "Black Tariff" brought to the South and West allowed the Democrats to capture the government back in 1844 and enabled President James Polk to pass the Walker Tariff, which began a period of low tariff rates to satisfy Southern interests that lasted until the Civil War.[37]

Economic issues were at the heart of the tariff debate during the Nullification Crisis. Both the Unionists and the Nullifiers believed the tariff rates were too high and unnecessarily taxed the South for the benefit of Northern manufacturing. However, they greatly differed in the amounts they believed South Carolinians lost from the tariff and the best way to respond to the increasing rates. Most Unionists conceded that the tariff was unfairly burdensome for the South and should be reduced. Nevertheless, they contended that the Nullifiers exaggerated the lengths that it affected Southern planters and made it appear to be even worse than it was. Yeadon instead tried to calmly lay the facts in front of his readers and clearly show them that the situation was not as bad as the Nullifiers claimed it was. Unionists looked to the future with hope and optimism, focused on the long-term and saw the benefits of industry created by an "artificial" economy that allowed the nation to develop a complementary economy. Pinckney's main concern was

[37] Douglas A. Irwin, "Antebellum Tariff Politics: Regional Coalitions and Shifting Economic Interests," *Journal of Law and Economics* 51 (2008): 732-733.

the short-term and he contended that the tariff would diminish South Carolina's profits by robbing the state's farmers in order to pay Northern manufacturers. The Nullifiers feared the future and the direction they saw the country taking. They favored a "natural" economy in which the government largely stayed out of economic affairs and free trade dominated. These differing economic views created irreconcilable differences that caused the Nullifiers to grow more and more attached to their regional economy as they became willing to fight to prevent the federal government's attempts to change it, whether it be through making slavery more expensive or forcing industry on the state.

CHAPTER III: STATES' RIGHTS ARGUMENTS

Since the Founding Fathers wrote the Constitution in 1787 and the states subsequently adopted it between 1787-1790, different interpretations of that founding document and the powers it gave to the individual states versus the federal government have abounded. During the Nullification Crisis, these debates would come to the fore and illustrate just how wide the gap between different sections of the country was in how the regions viewed the powers of the government they operated under and the obligations they had to submit to its authority. During the Nullification Crisis, South Carolinians, like other threatened groups before them, would turn to the doctrine of states' rights to shore up their position in a Union over which they no longer felt they had any influence.

The sectionalism that abounded in South Carolina throughout the Nullification Crisis had not always existed in the state. In the early years of the republic, many South Carolinians had strong nationalist views and supported a more powerful federal government. The wealthy planters in the South Carolina Lowcountry benefitted from a strong government that had the power to establish a national bank that issued reliable currency. Additionally, many Southerners of the late 18th and early 19th century felt very comfortable with a government that was dominated by the "Virginia Dynasty" of slaveholding presidents from the South and the lack of significant agitation for abolitionism in the nation at large. Southerners had a larger population and Jefferson's Louisiana Purchase in 1803 made them feel that they had unlimited room to spread their

influence and slaveholding way of life westward.[1] Due to all of these reasons, most South Carolinians had no reason to embrace states' rights ideas as long as the federal government promoted their interests and did not threaten their prosperity.

The idea that the federal government was becoming dominated by Northerners that were hostile to the South took root due to the rapid demographic changes that were beginning to take place in the country in the 1820s. While the South continued to remain rural and agricultural, the North was beginning the process of industrialization as factories developed in Massachusetts, New York and Pennsylvania. The jobs available at these new factories brought more people to the region to work in the growing industry. The higher population numbers in turn increased the North's representation in the Electoral College and gave them greater power to influence the laws the federal government passed and the leaders that were elected. This caused South Carolinians to lament the loss of their prior position of influence in the national government and led to fears that the growing Northern abolition movement would have a stronger voice in the government and could eventually lead to a nationwide emancipation of slaves.[2] This anxiety attracted many in the state to states' rights ideas that would allow them to remain in the Union but have much tighter control over their own affairs without undue influence from the federal government.

Pinckney's articles in the *Mercury* used the concept of equality, a branch of republicanism, to argue that the government should allow its citizens to pursue their own interests instead of favoring manufacturing over agriculture. Yeadon's *Courier* articles, however, emphasized a different branch of republican thought known as civic virtue. This

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[1] Matthew Mason, "Nothing is Better Calculated to Excite Divisions': Federalist Agitation Against Slave Representation during the War of 1812," *The New England Quarterly* 75 (2002): 534.
[2] Ibid., 116.

was the belief that a republican government could only succeed if its citizens pursued the greater good of the nation. Therefore, Yeadon and the Unionists contended that the tariffs might be burdensome for a period but in the end it would make the nation and South Carolina stronger. Additionally, both Pinckney and Yeadon tried to claim the mantle of the Founders and asserted that they were the true successors to their political philosophies. Pinckney cited Madison and Jefferson and argued that they had supported nullification and believed in strict construction of the Constitution. On the other hand, Yeadon asserted that the Unionists were the ones actually following in the Founding Fathers' footsteps as many of the Founders believed a republican government could only succeed if its citizens sought the greater good of the country rather than their own interests.[3] Therefore, Yeadon was able to claim that the Unionists were in fact the true heirs of the Founders' principles while Pinckney and the Nullifiers corrupted them. Through all of their arguments, Pinckney continued with the standard Nullifier tactic of exaggerating facts and capitalizing on fears to mobilize South Carolinians to support Calhoun's doctrine while Yeadon calmly contradicted Pinckney's assertions and tried to give the reader a clear picture of the actual situation so they would not be so alarmed. The Nullifiers used states' rights as a mechanism to retain control and power in a federal government that they believed had become dominated by Northerners that were hostile to their interests. The Unionists, on the other hand, supported old states' rights principles that believed in strict reliance on the Constitution and the fundamental necessity of majority rule in a republican government.

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[3] Steven Watts, *The Republic Reborn: War and the Making of Liberal America, 1790-1820* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984), 219.

James Madison, one of the authors of the Constitution who had the most influence on its final structure, wrestled greatly with the question of how to develop a republic over such a large swath of territory as the United States with so many different conflicting interests and regions. In contrast to traditional wisdom, which stated that republics could only survive in small, homogenous societies with shared interests, Madison believed larger republics actually offered a greater chance of success. In small republics, Madison argued it was very easy for a majority to form that would impose its will on whatever tiny minority was against them and permanently rule the government, destroying the republic and leading to despotism. However, in a large republic like the United States that had several varying regional differences, the sections could be balanced off one another and no one region would be able to form a permanent majority that would pass legislation that favored their interests at the expense of the other regions.[4] In this line of thinking, the various regions would be forced to compromise in order for government to continue working and sectional greed and animosities would have to yield to the national interests and what benefitted the entire country. Madison also argued that large republics provided a greater choice of candidates for public office than smaller republics, increasing the chances that virtuous politicians would be elected who would work for the general good and be above petty regional concerns.[5]

One of the first major controversies concerning the relationship between federal power and individual rights occurred during John Adams' administration during the Quasi-War with France. Many Democratic-Republicans, who opposed Adams' Federalist policies, did not support this undeclared naval war with France. Instead, they looked

[4] Ford, "Inventing the Concurrent Majority," 28-29.
[5] Ibid., 31.

favorably upon the Revolutionary French government for having overthrown the tyranny of monarchy and set out on the same republican path as the United States.[6] For this reason, President Adams signed into law the Sedition Acts, which forbid the publication of material critical of the government and imposed a fine and jail time for anyone found to have violated it. While Adams claimed it was necessary in a time of war for national security reasons, his opponents argued that it was an unprecedented extension of federal power with the goal of stifling dissent, no different than the British government they had just overthrown. James Madison and Thomas Jefferson composed the Virginia and Kentucky Resolutions in response, in which they argued that the laws were unconstitutional. Madison called for joint action by the states to oppose such laws, while Jefferson argued that individual states had the right to declare laws unconstitutional and if the government continued to enforce them, the state had the power to nullify the law and refuse to abide by it.[7] These resolutions horrified the Federalist leadership at the time, however, they were extremely popular among Democratic-Republicans and played a large role in sweeping the Federalists out of power in the 1800 election and installing Jefferson as President.

The Virginia and Kentucky Resolutions influenced supporters of states' rights and sectionalism all the way through to the Civil War. New England had embraced states' rights ideals during the War of 1812 when they called the Hartford Convention to discuss grievances they had with the federal government over Jefferson's trade embargo with Britain and France and Virginia's dominance of the Presidency.[8] They argued that their

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[6] Kevin R. Gutzman, "A Troublesome Legacy: James Madison and the "Principles of '98," *Journal of the Early Republic* 15 (1995): 577.
[7] Gutzman, "A Troublesome Legacy," 579-580.
[8] Mason, "Nothing is Better Calculated to Excite Divisions," 548-549.

interests were not fairly represented in the national government and some delegates even called for secession if the government did not stop trampling on their rights. Therefore, ideas about the rights of states had been an important part of the political culture for years preceding the Nullification Crisis. Sections and regions of the country tended to withdraw into these types of principles when they felt threatened and powerless, so states' rights doctrine became a tool to preserve sectional interests in a country with diverse regions and economies.

In the years following the Panic of 1819, debate in the South Carolinian newspapers heated up as those who opposed the tariff argued that they had suffered enough and South Carolinians needed to assert their rights in order to protect their citizens. Yeadon and the Unionists were much more patient and willing to endure a little more hardship if it served the greater good of the nation and made the country stronger. Harry Watson has argued that voters of the period responded very well when politicians identified a suspected enemy of liberty in the nation and then proceeded to attack and destroy it.[9] This was especially true during times of economic difficulty, when people sought out someone or something to blame for their troubles. The Nullifiers latched on to the tariff, which was imposed on them by outside forces, and used it as a scapegoat that was causing them to lose their liberty and independence. By identifying the tariff as the enemy, Pinckney and the Nullifiers were able to mobilize their readers to support nullification as the only way to preserve their rights in a country that did not look out for their interests.

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[9] Harry Watson, *Liberty and Power: The Politics of Jacksonian America* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1990), 112.

South Carolinians were the most radically opposed when the government passed the "Tariff of Abominations" in 1828, arguing that they needed to call a convention of the state to discuss how best to respond. Some of the most radical South Carolinians, like South Carolina College President Thomas Cooper, had stated in the months leading up to the tariff's passage that it may soon come time for South Carolina "to calculate the value of the Union."[10] Statements like this led those opposed to drastic measures to question whether the tariff opponents of South Carolina had disunion in mind when they called for their fellow citizens to stand up and fight for the repeal of the tariff.

Shortly after the passage of the "Tariff of Abominations," South Carolina's newspapers began to teem with angry denunciations of the new bill that argued against its unjust nature and called for their fellow citizens to resist it on the basis of states' rights guaranteed in the Constitution. As usual, the *Charleston Mercury* took the lead in speaking out against the tariff and argued that South Carolinians must seek refuge in the Constitution, which reserved several powers to the states that would allow them to confront the federal government over the tariff crisis and come out victorious. On July 17, 1828, the *Mercury* published a set of "Anti-Tariff Resolutions from the Inhabitants of St. Helena Parish." In these "Resolutions" Congressman William Elliott argued that "the Union can only be maintained by a fair interpretation and honest exercise on the part of Congress, of such powers as have been clearly surrendered to the federal head." He went on to argue that the constructive powers of Congress allowed the government to assume authority that was never contemplated by the framers of the Constitution. Elliott attacked "this most execrated Tariff of 1828" as protectionist and unconstitutional and contended that as a result, "we see the barrier of the Constitution broken down, and the vital

[10] Freehling, *The Road to Disunion, Volume I,* 257.

interests of the weaker states left with no other guarantee than the will of an interested and reckless majority." Elliott finished his argument by stating that the only way to check the power of Congress was by action of the states. He told his constituents to look to the legislature of South Carolina and "solemnly invoke them to maintain their reserved rights of sovereignty—to arrest the wild career of usurpation" and to rescue the state from the tariff "whose real object is the plunder of the South."[11]

In these arguments, Representative Elliott analyzed the division of power between the state and federal governments as it was set forth in the Constitution. This argument had been debated nearly since the Constitution was ratified by a majority of the states. Alexander Hamilton and Thomas Jefferson had greatly varying viewpoints on this issue, where Hamilton believed that the federal government had a wide range of powers and should be a strong, national government while Jefferson argued that it should be very limited with the majority of powers residing with the individual states. The broad constructionist view that Hamilton, as well as many supporters of the Tariff of 1828 supported, argued that the federal government had the power to do anything that was not expressly prohibited by the Constitution. On the other hand, strict constructionists, who generally opposed the Tariff of 1828, argued that the government did not have the power to do anything unless it was specifically permitted in the Constitution.[12] These differing viewpoints concerning the power of the federal government culminated in the debate over protective tariffs.

The same day William Elliott published his "Anti-Tariff Resolutions" in the *Mercury*, the *Charleston Courier* began to publish a series of articles by a writer who

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[11] William Elliott, "Anti-Tariff Resolutions from the Inhabitants of St. Helena Parish," *The Charleston Mercury*, July 17, 1828.
[12] Freehling, *Prelude to Civil War*, 99-100.

called himself "One of the People." In his editorials, "One of the People" attempted to illustrate that South Carolinians had in fact supported broad construction of the Constitution since one of the first major debates over implied powers of the federal government took place. He examined the beginning of the debate in 1814 over whether the United States should recharter the National Bank after it failed to receive approval for renewal in 1811. In September of 1814, a Mr. Jackson proposed a bill that would amend the Constitution to give Congress the power to charter a National Bank. However, several representatives in Congress, particularly those from the South Carolina delegation including Calhoun, Chappell and Lowndes, believed Congress already had the power to establish a National Bank and therefore did not see the need to vote on the bill. "One of the People" asserted that since they would not have been re-elected if their constituents opposed the Bank, they obviously supported its recharter and by extension the implied powers of the Constitution, as it was for the "general welfare" of the nation. The districts of Abbeville, Richland and Colleton that these Congressmen represented were the ones that clamored the loudest about states' rights and federal usurpation during the Nullification Crisis. Therefore, "One of the People" insinuated that these "States' Righters" only supported nullification because it would give them power and personal glory, not because they had any heartfelt belief in strict construction or states' rights.[13]

In his article, "One of the People" hoped to show that there was no validity to the strict construction claims of the opponents of the tariff in South Carolina. In fact, they had already given their assent to broad construction and shown that they considered implied powers of the federal government to be fully constitutional and in the best interest of the nation. However, this shift in belief "One of the People" discussed had

[13] "One of the People," *The Charleston Courier*, July 17, 1828.

taken place among many former South Carolinian nationalists who had begun to lean more towards strict construction and states' rights in the mid to late 1820s. This shift was for a variety of reasons, however, most had to do with the changing economy of South Carolina and the perceived shift in nature of tariffs passed by the federal government. They had supported tariffs in the interest of "national defense," however, they viewed the new tariffs the government enacted in the 1820s as sectionalist in nature and protective of manufacturers over planters. In summary, many South Carolinians that had previously supported nationalism now argued that the federal government had abandoned true nationalism and replaced it with an oppressive program that favored certain sections of the country and persecuted the South.[14]

On August 13, 1828, the *Mercury* continued to pummel the advocates of the tariff. In an article that reported on an Anti-Tariff Meeting in Columbia, the editor attacked the tariff from the standpoint of a consolidated and all-powerful government that he believed would result from its enactment. The author wrote that "the broad principles in which the American people have cast the foundations of their institutions is that every man is free to pursue his own interest according to his own judgment." He further argued that it was not the job of the government "to direct man what is his interest, but to protect him in the pursuit of it." The editor contended that if the people of South Carolina surrendered this great principle, it would give up the achievement of the Revolution and destroy everything their fathers had fought for. He looked to the Constitution and conceded that the power to regulate commerce was given to the federal government, however, the power to regulate manufactures and agriculture through protection was assumed. The author then posed the question "What then is left to the state governments?" He asserted

[14] Freehling, *Prelude to Civil War*, 118.

"this power enables the general government, to control every citizen of every state, in his daily occupations" which allowed it to abuse its power and force every citizen "to give up the pursuit he has selected, for one which the government selects for him."[15]

The editor of the "Anti-Tariff" article later shifted his focus to the construction of the Republic as outlined in the Constitution by the Founding Fathers and the balance they had intended between the general government and the state governments. He contended that "the great political discovery of which we have so much and so justly boasted, is, that we had one government for those interests which are common to the whole Union; and other governments to supervise the peculiar interests of the states." He then argued that the United States flattered itself with the notion that they had solved the difficulties involved in governing a republic that extended over such a wide territory with so many diverging interests. If such a balance between the state and federal governments was not preserved, the hopes of success and happiness for all in a continued Union would come to an end. Here the editor referred to Madison's Federalist No. 10, which argued that a large republic could succeed as long as local and state governments retained authority over matters in their jurisdiction. This was necessary because the national government would not have been familiar with all of the issues and events that concerned every town and state in the Union, therefore the state governments were an integral part of insuring all of the citizens of the nation had a voice on matters important to them. The editor argued "It is obvious that Congress is incompetent to perform the business of the state governments. The representatives of Maine are uninformed of the wants and needs of the people of Mississippi. The people of Rhode Island and Connecticut cannot legislate for the people of South Carolina and Georgia on matters of local interest." He contended that when they

[15] "Anti-Tariff Meeting," *The Charleston Mercury*, August 13, 1828.

attempted to do so, they fell into unequal and imperfect legislation that brought the government into disrepute and created animosity among the states. He ended his report by stating that those at the "Anti-Tariff Meeting" resolved not to trade with their "fallen states" that supported the tariff until it was repealed. He also called for South Carolinians to make at home as much of the domestic articles they normally imported from the North as possible.[16]

The concept of republicanism had two major contrasting strands of thought within it, civic virtue and equality, that the Nullifiers and Unionists each grasped onto in order to support their respective positions and claim that they were the true republicans. Unionists believed in the concept of civic virtue and sacrificing for the greater good, while Nullifiers placed their faith in equality and the belief that government should not interfere to uphold one industry at the expense of another. The conflict between these two different strands of republican thought and what it meant to live in a republican society was at the heart of the conflict between Unionists and Nullifiers in South Carolina.[17] The Nullifiers feared a future dominated by Northern manufacturing and believed equality among the sections without protection was the best way for them to prosper and preserve their agricultural way of life. The Unionists, on the other hand, saw the future in more optimistic terms and believed that South Carolinians would be fine and the tariff would only help to create a stronger nation in which to live. James Huston has argued that the idea of individuals being free to pursue their own self-interest was one of the dominant parts of the tariff debates during the 1820s. Those who were opposed to protectionism advocated the republican principle of equality. In this line of thinking, tariffs were

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[16] Ibid.
[17] Major Wilson, "Liberty and Union: An Analysis of Three Concepts Involved in the Nullification Controversy," *The Journal of Southern History* 33 (1967): 354.

inherently unconstitutional and unfair because they burdened certain groups and sections of the country more than others. In their view, republican equality allowed citizens to be free to carry out their occupations and daily work duties without interference from the government.[18]

In his "Anti-Tariff" article, the editor supported this republican equality by arguing that government existed solely to allow its citizens to be free to pursue their own interests and occupations without disturbance from any outside forces or the federal government itself. Here the editor was arguing for a "natural" economy unencumbered by federal interference. However, he added another political layer to that argument by aligning the republican concept of equality with a free trade economy as opposed to the "artificial" economy that fit better with civic virtue ideals. Surprisingly, President Jackson also supported this viewpoint of government's chief purpose, however, he believed even more strongly in majority rule and argued that if the majority of American citizens supported the increased tariff rates, they should be enacted. The Unionists, on the other hand, supported the republican principle of civic virtue, which called for citizens to sacrifice for the public good and the general welfare of the nation.[19] Therefore, even though tariffs might be burdensome and unequal for a short period of time, the sections that were negatively affected should be willing to endure some hardships so that the greater good of the nation could be achieved. The advocates of civic virtue asserted that the Founding Fathers had supported this idea and it was the foundation of the republican government they created.

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[18] James Huston, "Virtue Besieged: Virtue, Equality and the General Welfare in the Tariff Debates of the 1820s," *Journal of the Early Republic* 14 (1994): 534-535.
[19] Ibid., 529.

The editor also encouraged South Carolinians to make all of their articles at "home," referring explicitly to the state of South Carolina. This was significant because the word "home" tended to have a different meaning for Nullifiers than it did for Unionists. A Nullifier would have declared himself to be a South Carolinian first and an American second, while a Unionist would have argued the opposite and placed his identity as an American as of the utmost importance while his citizenship within South Carolina would have been secondary.[20] These differing viewpoints had a major impact during the Nullification Crisis as the Nullifiers sought to satisfy the needs of South Carolina first without regard to the effects on the rest of the nation, while the Unionists argued for measures that would help the largest segment of the country and further the prospects of all Americans, even if it meant South Carolinians had to make a few sacrifices for a while.

The *Mercury* quickly adopted Calhoun's theory of nullification after its publication in December of 1828 and over the next two years relentlessly pounded into the minds of South Carolinians that it was the only remedy for federal usurpation and exorbitant tariffs. This doctrine carried the Nullifiers to victory in the South Carolina state legislative elections on October 11, 1830. However, amid fears of radicalism and disunion, the Nullifiers had to temper their rhetoric and argue, as Calhoun had done, that seceding from the Union was the last resort. It would only be undertaken when all of their peaceable attempts at redress had been exhausted. In the months leading up to the elections, they strongly advocated for the need to resist the tariff, lest the South be defeated on this issue. Many Nullifiers felt that if they did not make a stand on the tariff,

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[20] Brian Holden Reid, *The Origins of the American Civil War* (New York: Pearson Education, 1996), 442.

the majority government of the North could then force other bills opposed to their interests through the Senate, such as colonization and abolition.

The fear that the Northern majority would try to force abolition on the South manifested itself in an article in the *Mercury* on October 9, 1830. Pinckney wrote that the South was in a permanent minority and there was a sectional majority arraigned against it. He contended that this majority had different views and interests and little common sympathy with its fellow countrymen in the Southern states. Pinckney asserted that those differences were the "origin of evil and the great fountain of the waters of bitterness." The country was divided into slaveholding and non-slaveholding, and this difference created the necessity for different modes of labor and different economic systems. He finished his editorial by writing that no matter how hard different regions or sections tried to find common ground, slavery was the "broad and marked distinction that must separate us at last."[21]

In his article, Pinckney highlighted the fear of many South Carolinians that a Northern majority would not only force high tariffs on their region and exploit them economically, but also interfere with the institution of slavery upon which their entire economy rested. William Freehling has argued that the entire nullification crisis itself was based on these fears over slavery and that South Carolinians were actually more concerned over increasing federal power out of fear of abolition than high tariffs. He contended that South Carolinian Nullifiers used the outcry over tariffs as a means to mobilize supporters to stop the growth of federal power as they argued that if the national government had the power to force burdensome tariffs on the South, they also had the

[21] Henry Pinckney, *The Charleston Mercury*, October 9, 1830.

ability to abolish slavery.[22] Pinckney attempted to capitalize on this fear in his article as a way to take advantage of the anxiety many of his readers already had over this issue and convince them of the necessity of nullification if their way of life was to be preserved.

On August 5, 1830, Pinckney and the Nullifiers began to argue that their views on the Constitution and nullification best aligned with the Founding Fathers and attempted to illustrate that they were the true heirs of the Founders political philosophy. The *Mercury* produced evidence that they claimed showed that Thomas Jefferson, a Founding Father, would have been on their side in the nullification debates. Pinckney published an article from the *Portsmouth Gazette* whose author had recently discovered a letter that he claimed clearly illustrated Jefferson's views on the construction of the Constitution in relation to the powers of the Supreme Court. In the letter Jefferson had argued for the supremacy of the states over the Supreme Court, which was an extension of the federal government. The goal of this article was to help refute the argument put forward by Henry Clay and others in favor of the tariff that the Supreme Court was the final arbiter on disputes between the federal government and the states.

The *Portsmouth* editor argued that Clay's interpretation of the Constitution would "establish a system of consolidation, which would reduce the once sovereign and independent states to mere counties." He went on to argue that it was the Democrats' duty to "oppose this germ of aristocracy and hold up to them the warning voice of Jefferson—of him who in theory and practice was the most thoroughgoing Democrat America ever knew." The author ended his article by attempting to establish that the minority faction in government had no other choice but to form a convention and nullify the unjust laws. If sectional majorities were allowed to be formed and carry out policies

[22] Freehling, *Prelude to Civil War*, 127.

that were damaging and destructive to the minority party, then he contended that there was no safety for the states. If the Courts of the United States were the only arbiter, then the original sovereignties, without whose consent the Constitution and nation could never have been formed, had lost all power and the government had given them no other option than to nullify if they wanted to have any chance at all of protecting their reserved rights.[23]

While the Nullifiers argued that they were the true representatives of the Founders and fought for Jefferson and Madison's states' rights principles, the Unionists used a letter written by the seventy-nine year old Madison to contend that they in fact best represented the ideology of the Founding Fathers. Madison published a letter in 1830 in which he publicly came out against nullification and wrote that it was an unconstitutional act he had never supported, an act that violated the principles of the nation's republican government. He asserted that the Founders worried that controversies like this would arise and therefore the Constitution authorized the federal judiciary to be the final arbiter and see to the "peaceable and authoritative termination of them," just as the Unionists had argued all along. He ended his letter by quoting from the thirty-ninth number of *The Federalist*, which described the Constitution as establishing a completely new type of government that would be a blend of national and state governments so that neither side had too much power, to prove that the authors of the Constitution did not give individual states the power to decide on the constitutionality of national laws.[24] This letter allowed the Unionists to assert that they had been right along, they were the ones that were

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[23] *The Charleston Mercury*, August 5. 1830.

[24] Alexander Hamilton, James Madison and John Jay, *The Federalist*, ed. J.R. Pole (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2005), 206-211.

actually upholding the principles of the Founders while the Nullifiers corrupted them in order to push their own agenda and interests.

The *Charleston Mercury* responded immediately on October 22, 1830 and asserted that Madison was the one who had changed, not the Constitution or the rights of states. In this article, Pinckney referred back to Madison's Virginia Resolutions and argued that he "utterly rejects and repudiates the doctrine, that the Supreme Court is the ultimate arbiter in relation to such questions, and avows with great force the very arguments which he has now used on this subject." He contended that Madison clearly wrote in his resolutions that the powers of the federal government were limited by the plain sense and views of the instruments that created the Constitution, the individual states. Additionally, Pinckney wrote that Madison asserted that in the case of a deliberate and dangerous exercise of powers by the federal government that were not granted to it in the Constitution, the states not only had the right, but were duty bound to interpose to arrest the progress of the evil and keep the national government within its established limits.[25] By laying out these responses to Madison's repudiation of nullification, Pinckney hoped to defend the doctrine and reassure those who supported the measure that they were doing the right thing. The rights provided to the individual states were what they must preserve for future generations in order to keep their independence and say in the national government.

The *Courier* immediately came out in opposition to the doctrine of nullification in order to combat the *Mercury's* attempts to argue that it was sound states' rights doctrine. While articles published in the *Courier* were not afraid to say that they disapproved of the high tariff, they also felt strongly that nullification was blatantly unconstitutional and the

[25] Henry Pinckney, "Mr. Madison," *The Charleston Mercury*, October 22, 1830.

wrong response for South Carolinians to take. Unionists valued states rights as much as the Nullifiers, they even called themselves the "Union and States' Rights Party," however, they contended that nullification was a corruption of true states' rights doctrine.[26] The Unionist Party included many of South Carolina's "Old Republicans" like state senator William Smith and former governor John Taylor, who had supported states' rights and a weak federal government for their entire careers. Nevertheless, they asserted that nullification violated republicanism because it rested on the doctrine of absolute state sovereignty, something that was never allowed for in the Constitution. Additionally, it defied the principle of majority rule, which was the foundation of a correct republican government. Therefore, the "Old Republicans" joined the Unionists to defend the Constitution and the true ideology of states' rights from Nullifiers like Calhoun that they viewed as recent converts from nationalism who attempted to use states' rights for their own personal gain.[27]

In an article on August 10, 1830, a writer who called himself "Gallatin" argued that the right for a state to secede from the Union was never even contemplated by the framers of the Constitution. The whole reason they decided to draft a new Constitution was to avoid disunion and the attempts at separation that had occurred under the weaker Articles of Confederation. "Gallatin" contended that it would have been absolute folly to provide for the return of a single state to its original individuality as a political body because it would allow for all of the factious and ambitious politicians to assert their right to secede any time they felt wronged by a piece of legislation. "Gallatin" described the adoption of the Bill of Rights to the Constitution as a means to "prevent misconstruction

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[26] Sinha, *The Counterrevolution of Slavery,* 37.
[27] Ibid.

or abuse of its powers." He argued "common sense would certainly have led to the express insertion of the rights of a state to judge of the violation of the compact, and to act upon such judgment—had it been the intention of the people to invest a state with it."[28]

"Gallatin" then proceeded to argue that the authors of the Constitution were very particular to mention all possibilities of change that might take place in the Union. They specifically wrote that new states may be submitted to the Union by Congress, who could then approve or deny the request. "Gallatin" extended their logic and wrote that if they felt the need to explicitly acknowledge the fact that new states could be added to the Union, they certainly would have declared the right of states' to remove themselves from the nation if they had that power. He contended "Would they have solicitously provided for the enlargement and extension of the Republican empire, and been carelessly indifferent of its diminution or dismemberment?" "Gallatin" then decided to approach the argument from a different perspective, where he stated that "all rights of individuals, States and Governments, must be correlative. A constitutional power of a state to disconnect itself from our republic, necessarily would involve a correspondent prerogative in the Union, to drive a state out of its jurisdiction." He asserted that no one would allow for the government in Washington to have such tremendous powers.[29]

Throughout this whole article, "Gallatin" wanted to make it clear to his readers that the doctrine Calhoun had developed for defending South Carolinian rights had no merit in Constitutional law and was completely absurd if you took the time to think it through. By deciding to write a new Constitution and replace the Articles of

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[28] "No. XIII," *The Charleston Courier*, August 10, 1830.
[29] Ibid.

Confederation, the leaders of the nation had decided that the national government needed to have a certain amount of power if the country was going to function properly. "Gallatin" wanted to show that, while the states may have retained their individual sovereignties under the Articles of Confederation, they gave them up when they ratified the Constitution and became a member of the United States of America. They still retained reserved powers that were enumerated in the Bill of Rights, however, those rights made no mention of the ability of a state to either judge the constitutionality of laws for themselves or secede from the Union if they were displeased. The threat of secession would have allowed for anarchy and created a constant barrier to effective government.

"Gallatin" calmly laid these facts before the readers and hoped they would be persuaded to resist nullification and the possibilities for disunion that came with it. "Gallatin's" editorial tone was much more relaxed than that of the Nullifiers he opposed. The Unionists tended to dispassionately lay out the facts for their readers to see that the Nullifiers were not telling them the truth, while the Nullifiers tried to stir up fear and passions to convince their readers of the necessity of what many Americans believed was a radical, secessionist doctrine. These differing editorial styles reflected the larger strategies of the two camps to convince readers to support their side. The Nullifiers preyed on South Carolinians' fears and uncertainties while the Unionists appealed to logic and reason to convince readers to take a step back and really examine the situation and see if it called for the extreme measures the Nullifiers claimed were necessary.

On September 15, 1830, the *Mercury* published a series of radical states' rights toasts from a celebration in Sumter in which the Nullifiers hoped to prove to South

Carolinians that nullification was not dangerous and that they were reasonable and calm people. They also wanted to convince voters that they were not disunionists and were as patriotic as any other American, in fact, they viewed resistance and nullification as the only real way of preserving the Union. Otherwise, it would be dominated by one party that imposed its policies on another, which would make the achievements of the Revolution and the innovative means of government the Founders had developed worthless.

The first toast portrayed Nullifiers as the saviors of the Union rather than its destroyers by stating, "The Federal Union: Resistance by the states to every encroachment on their rights by Congress, its only preservation: submission, its certain dissolution." The second toast by Robert Witherspoon emphasized the patriotism of the Nullifier party and argued "South Carolina: The flame of liberty burns as vividly in her breast as it did in '76. She views many of the late acts of Congress as unconstitutional, and as it effects her, unjust and oppressive: she will again remonstrate, but may ultimately be forced to the exercise of her sovereignty." One final toast that punctuated the supremacy of states' rights over the federal Union came from Dr. Furman: "The Federal Union and the State Sovereignties: The one to be maintained with zeal, good faith, and even certain sacrifices; so long as it is worth maintaining; the other, without qualification and at all hazards."[30] The speakers sought to reassure the electorate of their trustworthiness to not do anything rash and shore up votes for the October election. However, Dr. Furman's toast once again illustrated the commitment of Nullifiers to their home state over the nation at large. By arguing that state sovereignties should be maintained "without qualification and at all hazards" while the federal union should be

[30] "States' Rights Celebration in Sumter," *The Charleston Mercury*, September 15, 1830.

maintained with certain sacrifices only "so long as it is worth maintaining," Furman showed that he put his loyalty to South Carolina before anything else and would gladly choose South Carolinian sovereignty over being a member of the United States.

The *Courier* anticipated these arguments in an article the editor wrote on September 13, 1830, entitled "To The State Rights and Union Party of Charleston." In this editorial, Yeadon addressed his fellow citizens and implored them to see that the Nullifiers were just hiding their true intentions behind the veil of patriotism and the Constitution. He wrote that those opposed to nullification were "fixed in our determination to overturn those schemes, which, disguised as they may be under the mask of Nullification or Convention, are nevertheless certain to involve our beloved country in all the horrors of disunion." Yeadon continued by arguing "the Nullifiers in their rallying address, have assumed an air of bold denial of any purpose against the Union; they loudly assert their fond attachment to its continuance."[31] However, he urged South Carolinians to see the falseness of their claims. He encouraged his fellow citizens to search all of their speeches and statements and see if they have ever denied nullification or convention. If they were opposed to these things, which he believed would surely engulf the nation in turmoil and disunion, they could have easily said so and come out against them. However, they had done no such thing, for fear that it would destroy their party in the state and be a death blow in the eyes of their supporters before the election. Yeadon asserted that the Nullifiers argued that they would never do anything to endanger the Union, while at the same time they supported candidates who would advocate nullification and advance the doctrines of disunion. He ended the article with a

[31] Richard Yeadon, "To The State Rights and Union Party of Charleston," *The Charleston Courier*, September 13, 1830.

plea for South Carolinians not to be fooled by these demagogues who only seek power. They will destroy the state and the proud Union of which it is a member, ignore their claims and save South Carolina.[32] Here Yeadon once again called for civic virtue and the greater good of the nation rather than the narrow self-interest of the Nullifiers.

Yeadon's pleas fell on deaf ears as the Nullifier Party won four of the states' nine seats in the elections. These four seats were all taken from Jackson's Democratic Party, as the President had lost quite a bit of support over his refusal to reduce the tariff. This changing face of the South Carolina legislature alarmed many Unionists like Yeadon who feared the Nullifiers would succeed in their reckless course and drive the state out of the Union. The ability of Pinckney and the Nullifiers to convince South Carolinians that nullification was not radical or unconstitutional was a turning point in the Crisis, as the Unionists would never again have the level of support they had previously enjoyed and the Nullifiers continued to gain more and more adherents to their strict states' rights views.

On July 14, 1832, Congress passed the Tariff of 1832, which reduced some of the duties from their 1828 levels. South Carolinian Nullifiers, however, were not satisfied and believed it was still an unfair protectionist tariff. In an editorial that the *Mercury* published from *The Cheraw Republican* on August 16, 1832, the editor strongly argued against the new tariff and the uncompromising nature of Congress. He contended that the general government had recklessly disregarded their rights for the last ten years and pursued a policy that, "if not speedily arrested, must inevitably terminate in a subversion of your liberties, and a substitution of the will of an arbitrary majority for the Constitution." The editor argued that by arbitrarily assuming powers that were not

[32] Ibid.

delegated to them, Congress had substituted their own discretion for the laws of the Constitution. He contended that South Carolinians had tried to petition against these unconstitutional actions in a peaceful manner, but the government just ignored them and derided their complaints. When Congress was finally forced to take up the issues due to the state's unwavering determination to resist at any and every hazard, they passed a "bill of compromise." However, he wrote that this "compromise" made South Carolina's oppression "more unequal and galling than before." It completely exempted the North from the burden of taxation and threw it entirely on the South. He concluded with the belief that South Carolinians could no longer put any hope in the national government, but should instead look to the sovereignty of their state as the only peaceful and efficient remedy.[33]

After publishing his opinions, the editor included a list of resolutions that an anti-tariff committee passed in response to the Tariff of 1832. These resolutions stated that the Nullifiers "regarded the Tariff Bill recently enacted by Congress as a palpable and dangerous infraction of the Constitution of the United States, as deceptive in its nature, and more oppressive to the South than the Bill of 1828." The second resolution continued "We can see no security against oppression in any modification of the tariff which does not renounce the right of the North to tax the South." The final two resolutions stated "it is the imperative duty of South Carolina to interpose in her sovereign capacity to arrest the progress of usurpation and protect her citizens from unconstitutional oppression. We recognize a Nullification by a Convention of the people as the proper mode to arrest said unconstitutional acts."[34]

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[33] "From *The Cheraw Republican*," *The Charleston Mercury*, August 16, 1832.
[34] Ibid.

In both the editor's argument and the resolutions, the Nullifiers made it clear that they did not believe this new "Compromise Tariff" was a compromise at all. Instead, they contended that it was even more oppressive and unequal than the Tariff of 1828. In this instance, their political concerns took precedence over their economic concerns. Even though the tariff was lower, the fact that the government enshrined protectionism as a policy and refused to renounce it made the Nullifiers extremely angry. They harked back to Calhoun's theory and argued that a biased majority had been established that dictated governmental policy benefitting their own sections while hurting the regions it did not represent. Protests would no longer get them anywhere, instead it seemed to be time to call a State Convention and nullify the new tariff so South Carolinians would not have to pay the exorbitant duties. The Nullifiers believed that this would be the only way to restore the balance of power between the different sections of the country and branches of government that the Founders enshrined in the Constitution. Otherwise, they would be forever rendered to a tributary status in the nation and the republic would not be representative of the entire country.

On August 14, 1832, the *Courier* strongly attacked the assertions Pinckney made in his editorial that the only hope left was to rely on state sovereignty and nullification. In an editorial entitled "Can a State Be a Rebel? Can a State Commit a Treason?" Yeadon wrote that Nullifiers often asked the above questions as if the answer was automatically "no" and that it somehow proved the constitutionality of nullification. He contended that the Constitutional provision with regard to treason applied only to individuals, not states. The question therefore shifted to whether a state could allow its citizens to commit treason. He further argued that in the court case *United States v. Fries*, Judge Samuel

Chase established that "if a body of men resist or oppose the execution of a statute of the United States by force, they are guilty of the treason of levying war."[35] Yeadon then clarified that he believed resistance to an unconstitutional law was always lawful. However, if the constitutionality of a law was only a matter of dispute, then resistance would be treasonous unless a competent tribunal decided the law in question violated the Constitution.

Yeadon argued that if the government of South Carolina decided to declare the tariffs unconstitutional and authorized its citizens to oppose its enforcement by armed resistance, they would leave their citizens vulnerable to apprehension and trial in Federal Court. No judge would absolve them of their crime if they claimed that they were only obeying the laws of the sovereign state they lived in because South Carolina was still a part of the Union. Therefore, they were still citizens of the United States and owed their allegiance and obedience to the nation at large and the federal laws the national government passed. Their actions attempting to nullify the tariff and resist its enforcement would be considered treasonous. South Carolina could not defend its citizens from these charges or protect them from punishment because the state, as a member of the Union, did not have the power to overturn a conviction made by the national government. He ended by writing "executive clemency might pardon the criminals, but state sovereignty would be powerless to save the victims."[36]

In this editorial, Yeadon wanted to convince South Carolinians who might be inclined to support nullification and believed it was a constitutional means of resistance to think twice. He illustrated a grim scenario in which Nullifiers were arrested and

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[35] Richard Yeadon, "Can a State Be a Rebel? Can a State Commit Treason?," *The Charleston Courier*, August 14, 1832.
[36] Ibid.

charged with treason by the government of the United States and bluntly stated that South Carolina could provide them with no help in that situation. They could talk about state sovereignty and the right to nullify unconstitutional laws all they wanted, however, the fact remained that the government and the majority of the country believed the tariffs were constitutional and there was no judge who had struck the laws down. Therefore, if they attempted to nullify, they did so at their own peril and with the full knowledge that they were resisting the laws of their country that had been legally passed by Congress. Yeadon argued that this was a very dangerous move to make that could result in great consequences. South Carolinians should be very careful before they fell under the sway of the Nullifiers' excitable rhetoric. He wanted them to really think about what might result for themselves and the state at large if they took this drastic step and defied the federal government. Yeadon hoped that, upon reflection, they would settle on a more peaceful means of protest that would not isolate the state from the rest of the country.

The Nullifiers were able to convince enough South Carolinians that they had waited too long and the federal government was never going to lower the tariff to the rate they wanted. Therefore, they set up a Nullification Convention in which the state adopted the Ordinance of Nullification, wherein they declared the tariffs of 1828 and 1832 null and void within the borders of South Carolina after February 1, 1833. This sent Jackson into a rage and led him to assert that no state had the right to declare a federal law unenforceable. He drafted the "Proclamation to the People of South Carolina" where he argued that nullification was unconstitutional and encouraged citizens of the state not to be misled by ambitious men who only sought to improve their own positions. He then

encouraged Congress to pass a "Force Bill" that would authorize him to use military force to ensure that South Carolina paid the tariffs and did not defy federal law.

On March 1, 1833, after much negotiation, Congress passed the Compromise Tariff of 1833, which gradually lowered the rates of the tariff over a period of ten years. On the same day they passed this new tariff, however, the government enacted President Jackson's Force Bill. While many reluctantly agreed to accept the Compromise Tariff, the Force Bill caused an uproar not only in South Carolina, but also among many States' Rights Whigs who had supported Andrew Jackson throughout the crisis. In an editorial in the *Charleston Mercury* on March 9, 1833, Henry Pinckney argued that South Carolinians were happy to accept the Compromise Tariff in order to end the conflict, even as objectionable as it was. However, the Force Bill, which he referred to as the "Bill of Blood," violated the Constitution and must be resisted. Pinckney wrote that even though nullification had succeeded and the tariff laws had been declared null and void, South Carolina's struggle was far from over. He contended that Jackson had "openly set the Constitution at naught, and the first reluctant step towards justice is followed by another audaciously trampling upon the only safeguard of our liberties."[37]

Pinckney argued that the Force Bill effectively excluded South Carolina from being a party to the tariff compromise. He wrote that Congress in effect told the state "Take this or we take your blood. Accept the new tariff bill, or expect to be whipped into acceptance of it by the President, whom we have armed with powers above the Constitution to coerce you. Pay this much tribute or we make war upon you." Pinckney asserted that the Barbary Powers in Africa exacted their tribute by the same kind of "compromise." Pinckney ended his article by calling for the South Carolina Convention

[37] Henry Pinckney, *The Charleston Mercury*, March 9, 1833.

to peaceably safeguard its citizens' rights by distinctly recognizing the sovereign rights of state interposition and secession in South Carolina's constitution. Additionally, he wanted the state government to prescribe an oath of paramount allegiance to South Carolina that every state officer must take as a condition for him to accede to public office. He also believed every new citizen to the state should be required to take this oath before they could reside in South Carolina.[38]

In this article, Pinckney admitted that the government had finally proposed an acceptable compromise to the tariff issue that would help South Carolina's economy and ease the tension between the state and the national government. However, he contended that the Force Bill nearly undid all of the gains South Carolinians had won through their determination to resist the tariff and their steadfast adherence to the doctrine of nullification. Instead of being able to celebrate their victory, they were treated like a rebellious province that the national government believed needed to be crushed. States' rights and the doctrine of nullification were both called into question by the assertion in the Force Bill that the federal government had the power to coerce a state to submit to its laws. Even citizens of other states, like Senator John Tyler of Virginia, who had opposed nullification and believed it was unconstitutional, felt that states had the right to secede if they did not agree with the national government's laws or policies.[39] However, the Force Bill seemed to strip states of these powers and called into question traditional beliefs about the powers of the state in relation to the federal government and the President. It seemed that while South Carolinians had won the relief they sought from the tariff in the

[38] Ibid.
[39] Freehling, *The Road to Disunion*, 281.

short-term, they had lost the long-term battle over state sovereignty and the constitutionality of nullification.

The *Courier*, unsurprisingly, took a completely different view of the situation and fought back against the Nullifiers' threat to secede from the nation. On the same day Pinckney wrote his editorial in favor of a Test Oath and the affirmation of South Carolina's right to secede, the *Courier* published an article by Judge J.S. Richardson of Spartanburg that illustrated the dangerous course the Nullifiers had led the state on over the past five years. He wrote that all throughout South Carolina people asked the question "Are you for the State?" Every Carolinian of course affirmed that he was, however, with this affirmation came the expectation that he would volunteer in the state's militia should the federal government attempt to coerce them. Richardson tried to help his readers understand the true meaning of the question "Are you for the State?" by briefly discussing the history of the Nullifiers. He asserted that nullification was "first concealed under a cry for states' rights, under the pretense that it was constitutional and peaceable, civil not military." It was under these beliefs that the doctrine became popular and the Nullifiers gained seats in the South Carolina legislature. However, Richardson contended that the situation had changed significantly since Calhoun first wrote his *Exposition and Protest* and nullification was now becoming intertwined with military resistance. Every South Carolinian knew that to assemble in arms in order to oppose Federal laws was treasonous and would put every man thus arrayed in peril. Therefore, the only way the state could militarily resist the enforcement of the tariff was to secede. Unfortunately for the Nullifiers, the vast majority of South Carolinians still opposed such drastic actions.[40]

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[40] J.S. Richardson, "To the Citizens of Spartanburg District," *The Charleston Courier*, March 9, 1833.

Due to the hostile political climate, the Nullifiers would have to begin another campaign throughout the state, just like they had done to promote nullification, to convince their fellow citizens to "patriotically support" their home state as opposed to the federal government. Richardson did not believe the Nullifiers would come out and admit that they supported secession, instead they would use clever rhetorical strategies like asking if people were "for the state." They would never talk about the state going out of the Union, but everyone who was able to read between the lines would know what the end result would be. Richardson argued that the proper remedy to this campaign was for South Carolinians to say that they were for the "State in the Union" and would therefore not volunteer for either the state or the federal militia, as separate governments. Instead, South Carolinians should support remaining in the Union, where they would not have to fight against their fellow countrymen. Richardson believed the Nullifiers would try to illustrate the support for secession throughout the state by pointing to the high numbers of citizens in the militia. Therefore, he implored his fellow South Carolinians to ignore the Nullifiers' calls for support and to stay out of the state militia until the question was decided. Secession would bring civil war and disaster for the state, if they wanted to preserve the "great republic" they must fight back against the Nullifiers' propaganda and unmask their true goals: disunion and war.[41]

The Nullification Crisis ended when South Carolinians repealed their Nullification Proclamation and accepted the Compromise Tariff of 1833. However, as can be seen from the editorials written shortly after the passage of Henry Clay's Compromise, the Nullifiers as well as many others across the South were far from happy with the Force Bill that accompanied the new tariff. The South Carolinian government

[41] Ibid.

nullified the Force Bill as an unconstitutional extension of the President's powers and succeeded in passing the Test Oath for new officeholders and citizens in the state, like Pinckney suggested. However, Jackson ignored the state's nullification of the Force Bill and allowed the crisis to draw to a close. While the Nullifiers succeeded in getting the government to lower the tariff, they had ignited a controversy over federal powers and the means individual states had to resist national laws that would not be settled until the Civil War.

Throughout the whole crisis, the Nullifiers viewed states' rights as the sole means they possessed to resist the federal government that had become dominated by manufacturers that opposed their interests. They favored equality and argued that the government had no business interfering in the economies of different regions of the country. Additionally, they claimed to be the true heirs of the Founding Fathers. Pinckney and the Nullifiers asserted that they were restoring the country to how it was supposed to be, even if Madison said they misinterpreted his doctrine, he was the one who had strayed from the principles on which the nation was founded. They constantly tried to stir up fear and anxiety to amass supporters and convince South Carolinians of the necessity of what many saw as a radical doctrine. The Unionists, on the other hand, believed strongly in the republican concept of civic virtue and argued that South Carolinians should do what was for the good of the entire nation instead of just their small section of it. They also claimed to be following in the Founders' footsteps and used Madison's letter to prove their point. Finally, they consistently refuted the wild accusations and claims of the Nullifiers with reason and clarity and hoped that their plain statements of the facts would illustrate the radicalness of nullification to their fellow South Carolinians.

CHAPTER IV: HONOR, OPPRESSION AND SLAVERY

"The 4th of July- A day which has been sanctioned by the triumph of freedom; may it never be polluted by the empty mouth honor of the slave, who has no regard for his rights, or wanting the courage to assert them."[1] This toast at a Nullifier convention at the height of the Nullification Crisis was quickly followed by another that stated, "The spirit of '76, which spurned oppression, defied power and triumphed. South Carolina—Onward in her course, if vanquished, she is not disgraced, if submissive, she is base."[2] President of South Carolina College Dr. Thomas Cooper ended this series of toasts with "Our legacy to posterity: poverty and degradation; servitude and submission. Our refuge: a connection of the people of South Carolina."[3] The preceding toasts embodied the culture of honor in South Carolina that despised submission and viewed domination by outside groups as a great disgrace that had to be resisted. The Nullifiers used these ideas about honor to argue that those who accepted high tariffs and expanded federal powers were cowards that had no honor or place of importance in society, while the Unionists emphasized different aspects of honor that dealt with preserving the great nation their ancestors created for future generations. Several historians have discussed the concept of honor and how it affected all aspects of life in Southern society. Joanne Freeman has described how the political became personal and politicians had to immediately defend

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[1] *The Charleston Mercury*, July 13, 1830.
[2] Ibid.
[3] Ibid.

any perceived insults, otherwise they would not be considered a fit public servant and would have no legacy to pass on to posterity.[1] This culture heightened tensions in a state that was already on edge and made it difficult for the state's leaders who did not want to appear as if they were submitting to anyone. The Unionists had to counter these charges of submission by the Nullifiers and argue that they were in fact the ones preserving the state's honor while the Nullifiers blustered and destroyed the state's reputation.

Stephanie McCurry has argued that dependence on others was a sign of dishonor in antebellum southern society as independence was one of a man's most valued qualities that helped to define republicanism in the antebellum South.[2] The independence of the household was at the center of Southern society and both yeomen and planters alike were willing to fight if that was challenged in any way. A man must rule over his wife and children and have complete control over their decisions and actions. In this way, even poor farmers who owned no slaves could still feel a sense of mastery and a place of membership in a ruling class by virtue of their leadership in the household.[3] Therefore, dependents were an inferior class of people and if a man was subservient to the whims of another person or region, he would not be respected by his community and could have little hope of success.

Lacy Ford has argued that the presence of slaves in Southern society helped bond all white males together by virtue of the freedom and liberty they received based on their skin color.[4] Personal independence and the ability to control your own economic affairs

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[1] Joanne Freeman, *Affairs of Honor: National Politics in the New Republic* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 261.
[2] Stephanie McCurry, *Masters of Small Worlds: Yeoman Households, Gender Relations, and the Political Culture of the Antebellum South Carolina Low Country* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 19.
[3] Ibid., 17-18.
[4] Ford, *Origins of Southern Radicalism,* 353.

were at the heart of the "country-republican" ideals inherited by many Southerners.[5] Country-republicanism was a British philosophy in the 17th and 18th centuries that promoted personal independence at the expense of the government, which they viewed as inherently corrupt and dominated by selfish, factional interests, and low taxes. Ford has argued that this philosophy was further developed in South Carolina by the presence of slaves, who allowed all white males to be independent and prevented the development of a proletariat that would be slaves to a capitalist class that they would have to depend on for their livelihood.[6] In this line of thinking, it was of the utmost importance that the South not become slaves to the North and allow a Northern majority to dictate the laws of the country that could hurt their economic autonomy and reduce their personal independence.

It was not only individuals whose honor could be impugned, but also entire states or regions. During the Nullification Crisis, South Carolinians believed the federal government and the Northern United States had challenged their sense of honor. They argued that the government treated them like second-class citizens and did not take their values and beliefs into account when passing legislation or making decisions that affected the entire nation. The leaders of the state, such as Governor James Hamilton and Senator John C. Calhoun, contended that the federal government ignored their constitutionally guaranteed rights and passed a tariff bill that favored one section of the country over another.[7] The importance of defending one's honor against governmental oppression in the form of tariffs can be seen as early as 1827 in a speech made by South Carolinian Nullifier Robert Turnbull, in which he stated, "If you love life better than honor, -prefer

[5] Ibid., 50.
[6] Ibid., 354.
[7] Freehling, *Prelude to Civil War,* 258.

ease to perilous liberty and glory; awake not! Stir not...Live in smiling peace with your insatiable oppressors, and die with the noble consolation that your submissive patience will survive triumphant your beggary and despair."[8] No honorable man could stand for such oppressive behavior from the government and the state must resist to preserve not only their economic prosperity, but their sense of honor and self-worth as well.

Pinckney and Yeadon both used this concept of honor to convince their readers to support their respective sides in the nullification debate, however they emphasized different aspects of it. Both editors argued that if South Carolinians did not support their side in the debate they would become traitors and bring shame on their descendants. Pinckney and the Nullifiers insisted that future generations would be ashamed if they slavishly submitted to the whims of the federal government while Yeadon and the Unionists contended that destroying the nation their ancestors had created would actually be what would make future South Carolinians blush for them. Additionally, they both argued that South Carolinians needed to preserve their honor and liberty for posterity but again they had very different ideas of how to do that. Pinckney and the Nullifiers asserted that their fellow South Carolinians had to resist the tyranny of the federal government and restore it to how the Founders intended it to be while the Unionists argued that they instead needed to stick it out through difficult times in order to preserve the great democratic experiment in government their ancestors had created. Finally, the consistent Nullifier tactic of using excitable rhetoric and fear to manipulate their readers continued as the Unionists fought back by continuing to calmly state the facts and refute the Nullifiers' wild claims.

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[8] Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor,* 40.

Immediately after the passage of the Tariff of 1828 on May 19, editor Henry Pinckney of the *Mercury* began clamoring about how horrible it was, not only to their economy but also due to its blatant disregard for the principles of the Constitution and the precepts upon which the country was founded. In an editorial on May 29, 1828, James Hamilton contended that "the Constitution has become a dead letter… and contains no safeguard which the majority may not overleap and the minority is considered to have no rights."[9] He further argued that the North was by climate and population a manufacturing section while the South was agricultural and could never be manufacturing. He then appealed to the Southern ideals of honor by writing that "they mock you in the Northern papers…if nothing is done, your children will be forced to live in a society with no rights."[10] Hamilton attempted to make his readers believe that the North was violating the very letter of the Constitution by allowing this tariff to be enacted and he claimed that if they did not do anything about it, their descendants would not be able to enjoy the liberty and freedom that they had savored and the South would be relegated to a minority section of the country that had no say in national decisions. By using these tactics and appealing to the South's sense of honor, Hamilton hoped to convince readers to take action against the tariff and not allow it to stand. Here Pinckney used his belief in honorable resistance to argue that if South Carolinians did not fight the tariff, their descendants would lose their liberty and become a powerless minority subjected to the whims of the federal government.

In June, Pinckney began to focus on all that the South had done for the United States over the years. He used the background of the War of 1812 to illustrate the South's

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[9] James Hamilton, Jr., "Speech by Major Hamilton with excerpts from Northern Papers," *The Charleston Mercury*, May 29, 1828.
[10] Ibid.

loyalty to the Union and interest in the good of all sections of the country rather than a narrow local or regional interest. The War of 1812 had been fought for several reasons, including trade restrictions imposed by the British and the impressment of American sailors into the Royal Navy. While most Americans saw the conflict as a fight to protect their newly gained independence from Great Britain, some in the South would later argue that the war had largely been fought for New England trade interests and did not benefit the South at all. In this line of thinking, the South had sacrificed many men and put forward a great effort all so New England trade could prosper. They were fine with this at first since the South was very nationalistic and promoted a strong Union and the defense of their rights to trade and defend their land without having hostile enemies surrounding them.

Southerners like Pinckney felt that the South had received no thanks for their efforts during this difficult time in American history and had instead been saddled with high tariffs that further benefitted New England trade at the expense of Southern agricultural interests. He would use this point to further the idea that the South was not radical or a hotbed of secession, instead they had always supported the Union and the good of the whole country. Pinckney contended that when the South argued that a measure like the Tariff of 1828 went too far in supporting one group over another, the government should listen to them since they had an unblemished record of patriotic loyalty. He would argue that it was not the South that was being disloyal, but the North who greedily pushed for more and more protection after they had already received a more than generous amount from previous tariffs.

In another editorial in the *Mercury* one month later, on June 20, Pinckney described the North's treatment of the South and the lengths they went to in order to oppress the region despite all that the South had done for the good of the whole country. He wrote: "The South has always remained loyal to the Union, even when others have threatened to tear it apart, as such, their claims should be heard and recognized when they address [challenge] an unjust issue."[11] The editor went on to write about the great effort the South put forward during the War of 1812 and the high losses it suffered despite the fact that the war was largely fought for New England seamen and the South did not really have a stake in the contest. In return for the South's sacrifices and patriotic loyalty, the editor argued that all they had gotten was to be treated like a colony by the North while the federal government spent tax revenue on internal improvements and public expenditures for the North and West while the South received nothing. The editor wrote that the South must fight if it wanted to preserve its honor and liberty and not be ruled by a Northern majority. He ended his article by stating that if the liberty and religious, civil and political rights that Southerners hold most dear were to survive, they could not submit to this unjust tariff that favored one section of the country over another.[12] Here again Pinckney made the point that they had to fight back against the tariff and the increasing power of the federal government if South Carolinians' rights were not going to be ignored and scorned.

In response to these types of arguments, Richard Yeadon of the *Courier* tried to temper the inflammatory rhetoric coming out of the *Mercury* and calm down South Carolinians. In a series of articles in June 1828, one editor who simply called himself "A

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[11] Henry Pinckney, *The Charleston Mercury*, June 20, 1828.
[12] Ibid.

Native" argued, "the tariff is not as bad as the radicals say, it is not an arbitrary interference by the government but rather something a paternalistic government should do."[13] The author went on to write that just because something might be inconvenient for one section of the country does not mean it should not be passed. He asserted that the South was not being oppressed because they received indemnities from the government and even though the tariff had a negative effect on South Carolina's economy, the greater good of the nation was more important and South Carolinians should support the prosperity of the United States. "Native" tried to get his readers to see the big picture by discussing the larger prosperity of the nation as a whole, reminding South Carolinians that the advancement of the young nation was what was most important, what benefitted the North would eventually benefit the South. He wrote that the United States needed to create a stronger, more self-sufficient economy after the War of 1812 that did not have to depend on potential enemies like Great Britain for their goods. "Native" ended by stating that the tariff would easily fall within the bounds of constitutional law as it was "for the common defense," and the government was therefore acting fully within its rights and not illegally legislating against the South as many at the *Mercury* asserted.[14]

In a letter to the editor on July 1, a reader of the *Mercury* attacked the character and motives of one of the most prominent supporters of the tariff, Senator Daniel Webster of Massachusetts. He wrote that Webster had suddenly changed his opinion about the tariff without giving any good explanation why. Earlier in the year, he had argued against the tariff that Senator Henry Clay of Kentucky had introduced to the Senate, saying that it was protection beyond all bounds of necessity that would ruin

[13] A Native, *The Charleston Courier*, June 12, 1828.
[14] Ibid.

commerce. However, despite having made these prior statements, Webster seemingly made an about-face and voted for the Tariff of 1828. The reader ended his letter by insinuating that this change of heart may have been for personal advancement and to satisfy his supporters and wealthy patrons in the North, declaring that Webster had lost his principles and therefore the reader's support.[15]

This charge of losing one's principles and working for personal advancement was a serious accusation to make, as antebellum politicians were expected to be very principled people of strong character, who were only interested in the good of the state and not in lifting up their own personal name. Politicians refused to campaign and actively seek votes from their constituents, as this would be a dishonorable practice that would make them appear as if they were begging for votes.[16] Honor was one of the most important qualities people expected in a politician and if an office holder was seen as behaving dishonorably or advancing his own interests, he could quickly be voted out. The charge by the reader of the *Mercury* that he may have been trying to keep wealthy patrons happy was completely counterintuitive to the image of an ideal antebellum politician, a disinterested statesman who never really wanted office but had it forced upon him by his supporters. This type of politician was immune to the workings of party machines or the opinions of wealthy supporters; he was only concerned with doing what was best for the area he represented.[17] By taking that away from Webster, the reader of the *Mercury* was attacking his honor and his very standing as a legitimate and upstanding politician.

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[15] Letter to the Editor, *The Charleston Mercury*, July 1, 1828
[16] Kenneth S. Greenberg, *Masters and Statesmen: The Political Culture of American Slavery* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988), 11.
[17] Ibid., 13.

The *Courier* argued right back against this charge of dishonorable intentions on the part of Webster just because he changed his positions on the issue. In one of his last articles, "Native" wrote that decent and good politicians should change their minds if new facts come to light or they are made to see a different point of view. "Native" had previously opposed the Tariffs of 1816 and 1824, which most South Carolinians viewed as being not nearly as bad as the "Tariff of Abominations" in 1828. However, he realized that the reasons he had for opposing those tariffs did not stand up to logic or serve to benefit the country. "Native" originally opposed the earlier tariffs because he felt the United States was engaging in a futile economic war with Great Britain that it had no hope of winning. He also believed it would force the government to begin direct taxation of its citizens very soon; a prospect he felt would be expensive and inconvenient for the people.[18] "Native" changed his mind because he realized that if the United States wanted to have a Navy that would be respected throughout the world and be able to have commerce with distant nations, they would have to be able to pay for it with higher taxes from their citizens. He also contended that the tariff would help develop American manufacturing and eventually result in a lower cost of goods for everyone, since the South could then buy domestically and not have to pay the British for the cost of shipping their goods to the United States. "Native" knew that the tariff was not guaranteed to work this way, but he was willing to take the chance with the hope that the result would be substantial economic independence and peace and comfort at home. He ended by writing that the South could not claim to be for the good of the whole nation and above sectional interests if they were not concerned with the struggles of Northern manufacturers against British competition. South Carolinians needed to support the prosperity of everyone in

[18] A Native, *The Charleston Courier*, June 30, 1828.

the country or they would be guilty of the same prejudices and sectional interests they attributed to the North.[19]

"Native's" final argument in favor of the tariff and the right for politicians to change their minds was an important one, as Unionists needed to be able to show that Webster and others who may have changed positions were not being selfish and dishonorable but instead seeking to do what was best for the country and their constituents in particular. In this line of thought, politicians had a right to change their opinions if the prosperity of their region was in trouble and they could do something about it. He masterfully laid out the reasons one might change his mind and illustrated the positive benefits of the tariff not only for the North, but for the South as well. He also made a significant appeal to nationalism by accusing South Carolinians of the same biases they had made against the North. "Native" clearly pointed out that those Nullifiers who claimed to be so attached to the Union and whose only goal was to restore government to how it was meant to be were ignoring the plight of the manufacturers and instead supported the business of a foreign country like Great Britain that might well attack them in the future.

On July 23, the *Mercury* published a speech by Major Alexander Gorden that relentlessly attacked the federal government and the recently passed tariff. He reminded South Carolinians of the lengths their forefathers had gone to and the blood they had spilt in order to resist British oppression. He went on to say that the state should in no way change masters from the British to the North and "submit to a policy as degrading as the heart of man has ever conceived and as oppressive as the spirit of consummate tyranny

[19] Ibid.

could invent."[20] He then implored all of the country to unite against the tariff, saying that he would rather be forced to serve a foreign master than become the tool of a misguided and unprincipled brother who had forgotten all of the ties of gratitude and affection that bound them together. He finished by declaring that once the rest of the country realized how unjust the tariff really was, they would join South Carolina in the fight to have it repealed because they were bound by the common struggles for freedom and independence against the British. The country would begin to fight for the good of everyone instead of selfish, local interests and would start to act as a band of brothers should.[21]

The argument Gorden made was interesting as he began by arguing against the North and using the rhetoric of oppression and submission to encourage his neighbors to stand up for their honor and not bow down and submit to the whims of the North. By arguing that South Carolinians should not switch masters he brought up the strong opposition to submission in the state and being "slaves" to any outside powers. However, he then attempted to appeal to the North's sense of justice and brotherhood in order to get them on board to support South Carolina's fight by describing the hardships they had both gone through in throwing off the chains of oppression from Britain. His argument that it would be better to serve a foreign master than a "misguided brother" was an intriguing one that was rarely made, as most Nullifiers argued that serving any master would be the lowest form of living. His goal here was to make the North see the tariff from the South's point of view, in the belief that once they realized how unfair it was, they would fight with South Carolina and work to have it repealed, just like they did

[20] Alexander Gorden, "Speech by Major Alexander Gorden," *The Charleston Mercury*, July 23, 1828.
[21] Ibid.

during the Revolutionary War. This reminder of the Revolutionary War was an attempt by Gorden to make his readers recall the great effort their ancestors had gone to in order to create the democratic government they had. He argued that it would be very dishonorable for them to now just switch from British masters to Northern ones without standing up and fighting for their rights and making their ancestors proud.

Two days later, on July 25, a man who called himself "Carolinian" wrote a letter to the editor in the *Courier* that encouraged South Carolinians to take a step back for a second and really think about whether the tariff was worthy of such radical actions as disunion and secession. He argued that if the majority of the people who were opposed to the tariff were judged by the language and outrage of a few advocates of disunion, open resistance would seem inevitable. However, he wanted people to remember that it was their privilege to be able to talk openly about laws enacted by the government because they lived in a free, republican society and not a dictatorship. He implored those who were in favor of disunion and secession to pause and reflect before they "commit a treasonous act that would degrade the Union and disgrace the history of South Carolina."[22] If they destroyed the republican principle of majority rule, their liberty and independence would be in name only and would produce anarchy and confusion at home and disrespect abroad. "Carolinian" wrote that much had been said about oppression under the effects of the tariff, but no one had really felt it yet. Instead of worrying about what might happen to their economic situation in the future, South Carolinians should turn their attention to domestic concerns and "prove by industry and frugality that they cannot be forced by prohibitory laws to become the abject dependent of others for her

[22] Carolinian, "A Letter to the Editor," *The Charleston Courier*, July 25, 1828.

supplies."[23] He ended by stating that while South Carolinians blustered and threatened, the North was working to promote its advantage and superior industry and enterprise to make the South feel their dependence. "Carolinian" believed that South Carolinians needed to act now if they wanted to preserve their position of importance in the Union.[24]

The goal of "Carolinian's" argument was to calm South Carolinians down and make them realize that instead of complaining, they needed to get to work to develop their own manufacturing industry so they would not become dependent on Northern goods and instead be self-sufficient. In typical Unionist fashion, "Carolinian" tried to bring reason to the debate and simply state that while he did not support the tariff, he believed the state should wait and see if it really was as bad as some of the Nullifiers said. He used the language of oppression and dependence, so often rhetoric that came from Nullifiers, to make South Carolinians defend their honor by developing their own industry so they would not have to worry about the tariff or be dependent on another section of the country. "Carolinian" was in the minority of Unionists in advocating for South Carolinians to industrialize, as most Unionists believed the complementary economy that would develop from Northern industrialization would best serve their interests. However, it was an interesting perspective he advanced by calling for South Carolinians to use the tariff crisis as a push to develop an independent economy that would not have to rely on other countries or regions of the United States for their manufactures.

State elections were held in South Carolina on October 11, 1830, a very important time for both Nullifiers and Unionists as it was the first chance for the people of South

[23] Ibid.
[24] Ibid.

Carolina to vote and voice their opinions on the doctrine of nullification since the crisis began in 1828. Both sides tried to recruit supporters to their camp, however, the Nullifiers ran a much better campaign for several reasons. One astute political maneuver undertaken by many Nullifiers was to organize grand balls at the large plantation mansions throughout South Carolina where people would gather to discuss the doctrine of nullification and its validity in the current protective climate of the country. This helped the Nullifiers' cause by bringing many different classes of South Carolinians to the same place where nullification was promoted. The events were open to all and many of the poor yeoman farmers were very excited to be able to visit their neighbors' large houses and mingle with the wealthy planters. It made them feel like they were part of a larger cause and in the same community as the planters they had revered and deferred to for years.[25]

In addition to having well-organized political functions, the Nullifiers also radically changed South Carolinian politics by bringing the poorer and lower class whites into the political process in a state that had previously been dominated by the wealthy elite. They invited them not only to balls, but to political rallies and barbecues as well where they encouraged them to vote for Nullifiers who would defend South Carolina's honor from an oppressive government and restore the principles of freedom and liberty that the Founders had ingrained in the Constitution.[26] This was an idea that both wealthy and poor whites could support and helped form a common bond across class boundaries that focused on honor, a principle which was shared by poor and wealthy whites alike. The Unionists, on the other hand, refused to involve the "rabble" and lower classes in

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[25] Stewart, "A Great Talking and Eating Machine," 207.
[26] Ford, *Origins of Southern Radicalism,* 130-133.

their debates and political events as they believed the yeoman did not have enough knowledge and intelligence to participate in the political process and therefore had no place in South Carolinian politics.

In the months leading up to the election, the *Courier* attempted to portray nullification as a radical strategy that pushed the state towards secession and would eventually end in civil war. On September 11, 1830, the *Courier* published an interview with a Revolutionary War soldier in an attempt to illustrate the recklessness of the Nullifiers' strategy and the horrific results it would produce. The veteran was asked about the possibility of the Nullifiers calling a state convention to decide on whether or not to nullify the tariff. He asked what was intended by the convention and was told by the Nullifiers that it would make South Carolinians rich and happy, lower the price of goods and put Congress in its place. The *Courier* wrote that he replied, "If these talkers knew a little bit better what liberty cost, and how much was suffered during the Revolution, they would not now try so foolishly to destroy it."[27] In using the voice of a veteran of the Revolution, the Unionists hoped to demonstrate the patriotism of their cause and show how much they valued the nation their ancestors had fought so hard to create. They knew the blood that had been spilt to create an independent nation and had no interest in tearing it apart over an issue like the tariff. Here the Unionists used the Revolutionary War to argue that they would best honor their ancestors by sticking it out through tough times in order to preserve the nation and free society the Founders had worked so hard to create. This type of rhetoric was intended to push South Carolinians to vote for Unionists in the election out of fear of what the Nullifiers would do to the state and the nation.

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[27] Richard Yeadon, *The Charleston Courier*, September 11, 1830.

On the same day, the *Mercury* attempted to counter this narrative of disunion and secession by writing that "we support the original purity of the Constitution and the perpetual duration of the Union."[28] A few weeks later on October 6, they published an article in support of the Nullifiers, or States' Rights ticket, stating, "we support the principles of Thomas Jefferson who argued that states have rights against the government and an ability to stop unconstitutional usurpation of power."[29] Later the article argued, "We reject the idea that there is no middle ground between secession and revolution and complete submission to unjust acts by the government. We are committed to opposing the usurpation of a despotic majority by all constitutional means, in contrast to the other party who is in favor of submitting to those violations as the more peaceful course of action."[30]

In these two articles, the *Mercury* was attempting to argue that nullification was not a radical and secessionist doctrine, rather it was allowed by the Constitution and was a perfectly legal means of redress when the government overstepped its bounds. The argument that they did not believe that one either had to be in favor of secession or complete submission to the government was a way to show that there was a middle course of action that could be taken, which they supported. The Nullifiers did not want to lead South Carolina down the course of secession, rather they only wanted to put the excessive powers of an overbearing government in check and restore the leadership of the country back to the way the Founders intended it to be when they wrote the Constitution. Finally, the use of the term "complete submission" and the characterization of the Unionists' as being in favor of submitting to the violations of the government was a way

[28] Henry Pinckney, *The Charleston Mercury*, September 11, 1830.
[29] Henry Pinckney, *The Charleston Mercury*, October 6, 1830.
[30] Ibid.

to call South Carolinians to defend their honor and not submit to tyranny in any form. Submission was something only slaves did and any honorable man would have no part in this kind of degrading conduct, rather he would stand up for his rights and those of his family and not let the government arbitrarily dictate how to live his life.

The *Courier* refuted Pinckney's attempts to claim to be following in the footsteps of the Founders and instead asserted that the form of nullification Pinckney advocated was completely different from what Jefferson and Madison had called for in 1798. In an article in the *Courier* published on October 6, 1830, Yeadon argued that nullification as advocated in the *Mercury* was tantamount to a complete nullification of the Union between the states, in other words, secession.[31] The Unionists briefly summed up their view of the doctrine by writing "nullification is revolution…and revolution is disunion and civil war."[32] In this final argument before the state elections, Yeadon tried to tie the Nullifiers back to revolution and disunion and distance them from Founding Fathers like Jefferson and Madison by telling their readers that nullification as advocated by Pinckney was at complete odds with what those great statesmen had supported. He insisted that it would destroy the Union they created and take South Carolina on a dangerous and isolated journey that would do great harm to the state. Nevertheless, the Nullifiers clearly won this debate as they had great success when the election results came in and members of the States' Rights Party took hold of the governorship and stole four seats away from Democratic supporters of the Unionists.

The concept of honor played a big part in the arguments the *Mercury* put forward during the election year of 1830. In February of that year, there had been a great debate in

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[31] Richard Yeadon, *The Charleston Courier*, October 6, 1830.
[32] Richard Yeadon, *The Charleston Courier*, October 6, 1830.

Congress between Senator Daniel Webster of Massachusetts, who supported a strong federal government and nationalism, and Senator Robert Hayne of South Carolina, who promoted a smaller federal government with greater powers for the individual states. The *Mercury* printed the speeches of both Hayne and Webster on February 23, 1830, a few days after they had been given in the Capitol. In Hayne's speech, he connected honor with the concept of paying taxes, arguing, "if you ever pay a fraction of a cent based on unjust principles, you have become a slave. The South will always fight for liberty."[33]

By describing people who pay unjust taxes as slaves, he was bringing in the idea that no honorable and free man should submit to a tyrannical government that oppressed its citizens and did not follow the laws of its country. It also recalled the Revolutionary War when the American colonists resisted what they viewed as unjust taxation, placing the Nullifiers in a long line of honorable people who had resisted tyranny. Taxes in particular had held a special significance in Western society for hundreds of years. Bertram Wyatt-Brown has argued that this resistance to arbitrary taxation dated back to tribal chieftains in Germany during the period of the Roman Empire. He wrote that free warriors would give gifts to their lord, with the understanding that they were voluntary and indicated proof of loyalty. However, if the ruler began to treat these gifts as something he was entitled to and deserved, the vassals would feel degraded. Taxes and tributes were signs of slavery, while gifts were honorable. Wyatt-Brown contended that these ideas about taxes remained prevalent throughout Western Europe in the Middle Ages and were inherited by all colonial Americans, particularly white Southerners.[34]

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[33] Robert Y. Hayne, "Speech by Robert Y. Hayne," *The Charleston Mercury*, February 23, 1830.
[34] Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor,* 70.

A couple of months after the Webster-Hayne debate, the *Mercury* published an article from the *Columbia Telescope* on May 12, 1830 entitled "Union-Disunion." The author of the article wrote, "no friend to the state would say that we were bound to perpetual submission to the injuries we complain of in order to preserve the Union." He continued by saying that "a man that will hold that doctrine is not a man to be reasoned with, but to be opposed, it is the language of our oppressors, and he who uses it, joins them."[35] The author was attempting to show that South Carolina did not have to blindly follow every law the government dictated in order to keep the country together. Rather, the leaders of the country should be obeying the Constitution and not passing laws that contradicted its tenets. He also painted those who believed you must follow the "unreasonable" laws of the government as submissionists who refused to stand up for their rights. Here the Nullifiers sought to counter the Unionists' argument that the best way to preserve liberty for future generations was to endure some hardships in the present so that the nation would survive. The author argued that such a concept was ridiculous and South Carolinians should instead fight to restore the government to how the Founders intended it to be and prevent the federal government from amassing too much power and dominating the states.

At the same time the *Mercury* was writing about the need to oppose the laws of the nation and not let the federal government dictate what South Carolina could and could not do, the *Courier* received several letters to the editor about the Nullifiers' increased use of radical language and scare tactics to convince people to support them. In one letter on May 10, a reader who called himself "Plain Truth" argued that the Nullifiers made all sorts of claims about how the Southern planter would be devastated by the tariff and lose

[35] "Union-Disunion," *The Charleston Mercury*, May 12, 1830.

all kinds of profits, however, they provided no proof for the claims they made. He wrote that he did not want any more abstract reasoning, sweeping generalities or the use of the cabalistic term "states' rights." Instead, he wanted plain, authentic, unequivocal facts, if they existed. "Plain Truth" felt that if the Nullifiers were going to argue the tariff represented just grounds for resistance, even militarily, then they were bound to make their case with accurate facts rather than emotional rhetoric that could fire people up but often had no substance to back it up.[36] "Plain Truth" sought to expose the Nullifiers' rhetoric as being emotionally charged but lacking in any real facts to back it up. This characteristic tactic of the Nullifiers had been successful so far and the Unionists now felt the need to directly attack it and challenge their fellow South Carolinians to test their statements and see if there was any actual evidence to support them.

In another letter to the editor the next day, "Anti-Nullification" tried to get South Carolinians to examine the work they were doing on their own port in Charleston and see why it may not have been making as much money as the one in New York. He wrote that the New York port was managed much more efficiently than Charleston and it was the merchants' fault for letting their expenses keep exact pace with their income. He made a strong case for improving Charleston's economic situation by not getting excited over the tariff, but instead by seeking to better manage the sources of income they already had. He ended his letter by making a plea to the citizens of South Carolina to "look about home—wide awake—think less of tariff and anti-tariff, and more of improving our trading facilities. "Anti-Nullification" argued that if they did that they "shall accomplish more to aggrandize and honor our state in five years, than can be attained in a century, by the most dignified act of nullification that has been yet dreamed of by the newest fledged

[36] Plain Truth, *The Charleston Courier*, May 10, 1830.

political philosophers."[37] For this South Carolinian, the most pressing need of the state to solve their economic problems was not to defy federal laws, but to focus instead on better educating people on how to run their ports and businesses and improve their existing infrastructure. Honor was not obtained by rebelling against laws you thought unjust, but by helping your state and home right now to improve its current situation and put it on a permanent path to a brighter future.

Jonathan Wells has argued that a business-minded middle class developed in the South during the antebellum period that viewed dueling and Southern codes of honor as archaic. Instead of adhering to manly codes of honor, these Southerners sought to emulate Northern business practices and pushed for further education and industrialization.[38] "Anti-Nullification" was a good representative of this segment of society as he advanced a middle class argument by encouraging his fellow South Carolinians to try to compete with the North and improve their own industry rather than simply whining and adamantly clinging to an economy based solely on agriculture.

By this point in the debate, the Nullifiers had been calling Unionists "submissionists" and cowards for two years now and the Unionists at the *Courier* seemed to have grown tired of it. On the same day the *Mercury* published their July 4th toasts about defending the Union and restoring the balance of power to how it was intended to be, "A Citizen of South Carolina" wrote a scathing letter to the editor in the *Courier* about the Nullifiers' arrogance and constant attempts to portray Unionists as submissive and cowardly. He argued that they hide their true goals of revolution and war under the term "states rights." They gave inflammatory toasts and pushed revolutionary doctrines

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[37] Anti-Nullification, *The Charleston Courier*, May 11, 1830.
[38] Jonathan Daniel Wells, *The Origins of the Southern Middle Class, 1800-1861* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 81-82.

on the people all while they claimed to be infallible, as if they alone were qualified to interpret the Constitution. He wrote that they called people who loved the Union "submission men," however, he wished that these "hot-headed and unreflecting men" felt a little more submissive to the legislative and constitutional authority of the government.[39] The reader believed people who had been unable to answer to reason and logic had always resorted to name calling and attacked the character of their opponents. He then went on to question who exactly they were "submissive" to, not a foreign despot or their own unrestrained passions and jealousies but instead the legitimate government of their country. He ended by writing that if the Nullifiers thought the people they called submissive men were afraid, they had greatly deceived themselves. "Let the crisis come," he challenged, "and they will find that the men who have been opprobriously stigmatized as submissive men, will be among the foremost to defend the interests, the independence, the integrity of the Union."[40] In this letter, "A Citizen of South Carolina" undertook a strong defense of the Unionists position and fought back against the attacks of submission and dishonor the Nullifiers had been charging them with, making it clear that if he needed to defend his homeland and the country and state he loved dearly, he would be first in line to stop the Nullifiers' reckless actions.

A reader of the *Courier* who called himself "Washington" wrote one final letter to the editor on this subject two days later to defend Unionists against the charge of cowardice hurled at them by the Nullifiers. He argued that Unionists were not cowards, instead "he is the greater coward who rashly and prematurely puts an end to his own existence [as part of the Union], because he fears consequences, and lacks the fortitude

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[39] A Citizen of South Carolina, *The Charleston Courier*, July 13, 1830.
[40] Ibid.

and patience to wait the issue of events."[41] Here "Washington" attempted to point out that Nullifiers were the ones that were truly afraid because they feared what might happen if the tariff was allowed to stand. The Unionists were really the brave ones because they were willing to endure possible hardships for the sake of preserving the Union that they held so dear and were willing to wait and see if it turned out to really be as bad as the Nullifiers said it was. He ended by suggesting that if Nullifiers believed you should not submit in order to be an honorable and patriotic citizen, they should look to the words of Jefferson, who they admired so much, when he said "absolute acquiescence in the decision of the majority, is the vital principle of Republics, for which there is no appeal but to force, the vital principle and immediate parent of despotism."[42] The reader was able to use the Founding Father that Nullifiers looked to most, as the one who originated their doctrine of nullification, and adopt his words to make the Nullifiers appear as if they were in favor of anarchy and despotism and opposed to the rules of good republics, a sound strategy for defending Unionists and convincing South Carolinians to support them.

On July 14, 1832, a new tariff bill that had largely been written by Congressman John Quincy Adams of Massachusetts passed in Congress and became the law of the land. The goal of the tariff was to satisfy the South by somewhat reducing the heavy duties of the 1828 tariff to make them a little more manageable. However, South Carolinians were extremely unhappy with this new tariff, as they believed that it did not fix the situation at all and the rates were still far too high. In general, the Tariff of 1828 had raised duties on imports to as high as forty-five percent of the total cost of the item,

[41] Washington, *The Charleston Courier*, July 15, 1830.
[42] Ibid.

while the Tariff of 1832 lowered that rate down to thirty-five percent. This new rate was still one of the highest tariffs ever passed in the country up to that time. There would not be another tariff to come close to the rates of these two until the Smoots-Hawley Tariff passed to protect American industry during the Great Depression one hundred years later in 1930.

As usual, South Carolinians were the first to speak out angrily about this new tariff and the *Mercury* was filled with articles that lamented the state's treatment during this whole affair and pushed for South Carolinians to stand up to the government once and for all. On August 2, 1832, the *Mercury* published a speech by a "Mr. Holly," who argued that the rest of the southern states needed to unite with South Carolina if they were ever going to have a chance of forcing the government to permanently lower the tariffs. He argued that the government would not blockade or attack them if they stood together, as the federal government was too attached to the Union and would not dare attempt to coerce states that had been original compacts to the Constitution.[43] "Mr. Holly" contended that the southern states needed to call a convention to decide the best course of action to "preserve liberty for future generations, instead of letting the government trample over our rights and put down with one decisive blow the doctrine of states' rights that they have fought so hard for, creating a consolidated empire."[44]

The speech was a last attempt to try to garner support for South Carolinians' position on the tariff, as they had received so little support thus far in the controversy. He particularly called out Georgia because he probably believed they would be the most likely state to support nullification. Georgia had recently experienced a conflict with the

[43] Mr. Holly Speech, *The Charleston Mercury*, August 2, 1832.
[44] Ibid.

federal government over Native American rights, when settlers wanted to take the lands of the Natives, but the Supreme Court ruled that the tribes were sovereign states and must be dealt with on a diplomatic level. Nevertheless, the settlers proceeded to unilaterally force them from their lands with the support of President Andrew Jackson. Due to this conflict over states' rights just two years earlier, many South Carolinians hoped Georgia would see their conflict over the tariff in the same light and unite with them against the government. Unfortunately for the Nullifiers, that was not the case and South Carolinians remained isolated throughout the crisis. Once again, the Nullifiers resorted to the charge of the government "trampling over their rights" and the need to "preserve liberty for future generations." This was a final attempt to rouse divided South Carolinians to stand up to a government they believed to be out of control and that would continue to restrict the liberty and freedoms they so cherished until there was none left if nothing was done to stop them.

Three days later, on August 5, a "South Carolina Representative" published a statement in the *Mercury* about the new tariff in which he argued that the protection of Northern manufacturing interests had become the settled policy of the country and no help could be expected from Congress. He wrote that the southern states supported the earlier tariffs in 1816 and 1824 because they were told they would never be asked to pass another tariff like that again. However, the tariff bills had continued to go higher and higher, despite the fact that Alexander Hamilton, who founded protectionism, believed that industry should only be protected during its infancy and not perpetually. The small relief South Carolinians would receive from the reductions in duties would be offset by

the burdens imposed on the exchanges of the South in the new tariff.[45] The "Representative" contended that the Tariff of 1832 was just an artful way of putting the burden of taxation on the South while benefitting the North. This tariff was supposed to be the North's great concession to the South and it amounted to nothing, while the Northern politicians promised that if this minuscule reduction was proved to not be sufficient to protect their industries, the rates would go back up.[46] In this statement, the author submitted to the people that protectionism had become a fact of life and there was no longer any hope that Congress would provide aid if they continued to keep waiting and politely asking Congress for redress, as the Unionists insisted they must do. In his opinion, this new tariff did not really change anything even though the Northern politicians would have liked to make it appear as if it was a big concession on their part. He even employed the argument of one of the Founding Fathers who supported protectionism, Alexander Hamilton, when he wrote that even he did not believe tariffs should last for such long periods and now the author believed that the government had lost all sense of decency with their continued enforcement. At this point, many South Carolinians were beginning to realize that the government was not responding to their complaints and they may have to take a more radical course of action, such as nullifying all governmental tariffs within their borders.

In response to these final arguments against the new Tariff of 1832, the *Courier* attempted to prove that the tariff was a great step toward compromise and provided significant relief from the duties enacted by the Tariff of 1828. On August 1, editor Richard Yeadon anticipated the Nullifiers' argument that the new tariff was even worse

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[45] A South Carolina Representative, *The Charleston Mercury*, August 5, 1832.
[46] Ibid.

than the old one by writing that "the leaders of nullification will not only attempt to prove that a reduction on nine millions of taxes is a bona fide addition to the burdens of the people, but that they will prove it to demonstration, in the opinions of thousands."[47] He continued by arguing that the Nullifiers had taken leave of their senses and quoted from *The Journal* when their editor wrote that if the Nullifiers could succeed in making South Carolinians believe against their wishes that the new tariff, with all of its reductions, increased their burdens, they could convince the state of anything. He ended by sarcastically attacking the South Carolinian politicians who supported nullification by writing, "Believe the statements of your Senators and Representatives, fellow citizens. They are honorable men, and would not put their hands to a statement that is not correct. We have already heard this."[48]

Yeadon expertly anticipated the Nullifiers' argument, which appeared in the *Mercury* only three days later, that the new tariff made conditions worse for South Carolinians. He suggested that the tariff was actually a significant reduction of duties and lightened the state's burdens. Yeadon was able to effectively show that these same politicians had lied before and there was no reason to believe they were not misrepresenting facts again. His charge that the Senators could no longer be regarded as honorable men that South Carolinians could put their trust in was a significant one. If citizens of the state viewed their politicians as liars, that would destroy their ability to govern in a disinterested fashion that only served to do good for the state and would take away their claims to honor, a vital quality in any antebellum politician.

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[47] Richard Yeadon, *The Charleston Courier*, August 1, 1832.
[48] Ibid.

Finally, on the very same day the *Mercury* called for the Southern states to unite in order to end the governmental policy of protectionism once and for all, the *Courier* published a scathing article pointing out that the Nullifiers had no real support from any other southern state. In an article entitled "Nullification liberty to be left in the lurch," Yeadon wrote that the Nullifiers in South Carolina had always looked to the cooperation of other southern states in order for their project to succeed. They had believed that if they put themselves in the forefront of the opposition to the tariff, the other southern states would see them as the champion of a common cause and would not allow the government to coerce the South.[49] However, now the circumstances had changed since the Tariff of 1828 had been repealed and a much lighter and less onerous tariff had been enacted in its place. Yeadon argued that even during the height of the excitement over the previous tariff, South Carolina's neighboring states had rebuked them and discouraged the doctrine of nullification. He then used examples from papers in Alabama and Virginia to illustrate that the leaders of those states strongly opposed nullification, with the Virginia paper specifically warning South Carolinians against it. They still disapproved of the new tariff, however, they sought to unite and use constitutional means of redress to force further reductions in duties rather than the unconstitutional doctrine of nullification. Therefore, he pleaded for the Nullifiers in South Carolina to pause and think before they made the irreversible decision to nullify the tariffs, writing "Recollect that you are dealing with the destiny of the state—that you are putting at hazard the glorious fabric of Union and regulated liberty, the priceless legacy of a patriot ancestry."[50] He ended the article by stating that if they failed, "the blood of friends and kindred shed in vain—the

[49] Richard Yeadon, "Nullification likely to be left in the lurch," *The Charleston Courier*, August 2, 1832.
[50] Ibid.

flag of freedom torn by freemen's hands, and stained with freemen's gore—the domestic altar fruitlessly profaned and violated—the victor's glory exchanged for the traitor's shame. Behold this picture."[51]

Yeadon once again used the Unionist argument that destroying the nation their ancestors created was the real dishonor. The picture he painted at the end was an excellent illustration of the honor rhetoric typically used by the Nullifiers to support the Unionist position. The idea of the flag of freedom being torn apart by freemen and the victor's glory exchanged for the traitor's shame was a way for the Unionists to argue against taking any radical course of action. A decision to go against the laws of the government and betray the democracy their ancestors had died for would destroy their freedom and liberty and leave them and their children with nothing but the shame of traitors. This was a compelling way to demonstrate the radical and potentially disastrous results that could come from nullification and made South Carolinians think about the possible consequences of nullification.

Both sides used the language and rhetoric of honor, oppression and slavery throughout the crisis to amass supporters to their cause. However, they had different beliefs of what honor and submission actually meant and each side emphasized different aspects throughout the debate. Pinckney and the Nullifiers contended that slavishly submitting to a hostile, unconstitutional government would make them traitors to their ancestors and bring shame to their descendants while the Unionists argued that destroying the nation the Founders had worked so hard to create would be the real dishonor and bring disgrace to their families. The Nullifiers and the Unionists also had different methods of preserving liberty and independence for future generations. The Nullifiers

[51] Ibid.

argued that they must resist in order to restore the balance of power between the state and federal governments that the Founders had intended while the Unionists insisted that they had to endure any difficulties that arose from the tariff in order to keep the nation together and preserve this unique experiment for generations to come.

CHAPTER V: CONCLUSION

Newspapers played an important role in shaping public opinion throughout the Nullification Crisis. This period was the height of the partisan press and editors on each side actively worked to shape public opinion and push South Carolinians to support their respective positions. The majority of antebellum politicians avoided active campaigning for themselves or particular issues and instead left that to their party's newspaper. This study helps illustrate how the Nullification Crisis played out within South Carolina and how South Carolinians responded to the different tactics the Nullifiers and the Unionists used throughout the debate. Early in the crisis, the Nullifiers' scare tactics had little effect at generating support as the Unionists' calm demeanor reassured South Carolinians that the tariff was not that bad and that nullification was a remedy that was far worse than the disease. However, once the Nullifiers calmed down and took a less extreme approach before the South Carolina state legislature elections in 1830, they were able to convince many of their fellow citizens that nullification was not the dangerous secessionist doctrine the Unionists claimed it was but instead a legitimate Constitutional device that would allow them to preserve their liberty and independence within the Union.

The Nullifiers won the debate as the state did eventually nullify the tariffs of 1828 and 1832. The Compromise Tariff of 1833 allowed them to claim victory as they received a reduction in the tariff rates and enabled them to argue that nullification was a valid doctrine and a legitimate way to fight for their rights. The fact that this idea began

to gain widespread acceptance in South Carolina at this time was very meaningful to the future of the state as this idea of resistance to federal tyranny would play a great role in South Carolina in the years leading up to the Civil War.

The Nullifiers won the debate largely because they succeeded in combining the economic interests of South Carolina with social and political beliefs about honor and states' rights ideals. They argued that the tariff would destroy South Carolina's prosperity and rob its farmers of their hard-earned profits in order to enrich Northern manufacturers. They contended that if South Carolinians submitted to a federal government that had amassed power far beyond what the Constitution granted it they would forever bring shame to their descendants and be no better than slaves to their Northern masters. In order to prevent this economic disaster and slavish submission, the Nullifiers asserted that South Carolina must find refuge in nullification and extreme states' rights doctrine that would give their minority state power and allow them to control contentious issues and have them settled on their terms. The success of this argument changed the course of South Carolina and allowed the Nullifiers to gain control of the state government and dominate it for the rest of the antebellum period.

Following the Nullification Crisis, the Nullifiers succeeded in passing the test oath for all new South Carolinian citizens and officeholders that required them to take an oath of loyalty to the state above all else, including the Union. In this way they could ensure that the government of South Carolina would always fight for the state's local interests rather than the larger good of the country as Yeadon and the Unionists had so long argued would best serve South Carolinians. This was followed by a clampdown on dissent and civil liberties within the state that William Freehling has termed the "Great

Reaction." During this post-nullification reaction period, South Carolina's leaders sought to silence any critics of the state or the institution of slavery. This further served to marginalize Unionists and solidify the Nullifiers' "state-first" philosophy and the siege mentality that South Carolinians were living in a Union dominated by Northerners that opposed their interests.[1]

In 1836, Henry Pinckney, now a United States senator, succeeded in passing a "gag rule" that forbid Congress from receiving any petitions that called for the abolition of slavery. This further alienated Northerners who believed South Carolinians were trampling on the civil liberties of the rest of the nation because of their sensitivity to slavery and widened the divide between North and South.[2] As Northern attacks on slavery increased, South Carolinians were able to convince other Southern states that the North and South had dramatically different societies and could no longer coexist in the same nation. This culminated with South Carolina leading secession after the election of Abraham Lincoln to the Presidency in 1860. The former Nullifiers who had maintained control of the state government since the Crisis argued that they were no longer safe in a government controlled by Northerners openly hostile to slavery and decided the time had come to exercise their Constitutional right of secession. They had never forgotten the doctrine of nullification and state supremacy that Calhoun had claimed for them thirty years earlier. They believed that state supremacy had been reaffirmed by their victory in the Nullification Crisis, however, nullification was no longer sufficient to preserve their rights and they felt they had to exercise the option to secede in order to prevent the government from destroying their way of life.

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[1] Freehling, *Prelude to Civil War*, 333.
[2] Ibid., 353.

The Nullification Crisis was a very significant point in putting South Carolina on the road to secession and establishing firm states' rights ideals and the mentality of South Carolina above all within the state. The newspaper editors played a major role in influencing this debate and the way South Carolinians saw the issues surrounding the Crisis. In the end, the Nullifiers' tactics of scaring South Carolinians about their economy, their reputation and the rights reserved to their state succeeded over the Unionists' pleas for a calm and rational approach to the situation that even saw the benefits to a tariff that seemingly only hurt the state's economy. The Nullifiers' victory in the debate allowed them to capture the state government and direct its course for the rest of the antebellum years, as they pushed their pessimistic view of the future and South Carolina's position in the Union on the state and marginalized all Unionist opposition. The optimistic view of the future Unionists had espoused largely disappeared from South Carolinian thought after the Crisis and failed to save the state from the disastrous Civil War years that actually did devastate their economy and abolish the institution of slavery that the Nullifiers had argued only they could preserve. The Nullifiers put South Carolina on an ill-fated path that led to defeat and devastation in the Civil War that began with the passage of the "Tariff of Abominations" and Pinckney's cries for opposition and resistance, the same cries the states' leaders made thirty years later when they left the nation.

The Nullification Crisis is important for the public to understand because it played a major role in the radicalization of South Carolina and the strong states' rights ideas that developed within the state that put it on the path to secession. While the Civil War gets wide attention in the public sphere as a seminal event in American history, the

Nullification Crisis is largely overlooked. However, it played a pivotal role in leading to the Civil War and nearly caused the secession of South Carolina thirty years before it actually took place. It is essential that the public not only understand the Civil War but also the different causes that led to it, particularly the Nullification Crisis.

The newspaper rhetoric during the Nullification Crisis is integral to developing an understanding of South Carolinian society at the time and the events that surrounded the controversy. By studying the newspaper arguments, the public can see how the debate played out within the state and how the editors approached the issues of honor, the South Carolinian economy and states' rights that were focused on the most. These arguments are significant because South Carolinians politicians used them for years after the controversy during the Civil War and beyond. In fact, many of these ideas are still well represented today and can be seen in recent debates over nullifying the Affordable Care Act in states across the country, including South Carolina, where a states' rights bill that would forbid the state from establishing a health insurance exchange has been introduced. Nullification is not just an issue of historical interest but is relevant to the major political debates of today and the public greatly benefits from gaining an understanding of how it has worked in the past and the role it played in American history.

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