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A REVOLUTION GONE BACKWARD

*The Black Response
to National Politics, 1876–1896*

BESS BEATTY

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*A Revolution Goes Backward: The
Election of 1876 and the Hayes
Administration*

In the spring and summer of 1865, as it became increasingly clear that northern victory in the Civil War would result in emancipation, there were days, sometimes stretching into weeks, when southern blacks could savor the profound fact of freedom. But as southern whites strengthened their resolve to concede nothing to their former slaves except the name of freedom, many freed-people turned their attention from jubilation to practical matters of survival. All across the South blacks met to organize their new lives. A first prerequisite, many quickly recognized, was assuring the right to vote. Political participation was a genuine possibility in 1865, but one few people could have imagined only four years earlier. The Civil War, however, had radically transformed perceptions—northern and southern, black and white—of the place of blacks in American life. As focus shifted from emancipation to social, economic, and political realities, black suffrage became central to postwar debate. Although some blacks joined the majority of whites in denouncing their right to vote, many more recognized it as a fundamental base of freedom. “Our work will not be done,” wrote preeminent black leader Frederick Douglass in 1863, “until the colored man is admitted as a full member in good and regular standing in the American body politic.” His sentiments were echoed by blacks in all walks of life. “We’s got to hab a voice in de ‘pintin’ of de law-makers,” a recently freed

North Carolina black man insisted. "Den we knows our frens, and whose hans we's safe in."¹

Black politicization began with federal occupation of the South. White Republicans formed Union clubs to indoctrinate southern blacks politically; increasingly, however, blacks took charge of their own political affairs. All-black Republican clubs replaced the Union clubs in many areas and began, a black Louisianian recalled, "teaching the people what they were to vote for." In time, local activity expanded to statewide freedmen's conventions, "the political debut of southern blacks." Initially some blacks were reluctant to press for the ballot, emphasizing instead the need for trial and jury rights, but most agreed with a Virginia Freedmen's Convention that "the only salvation for us besides the power of the Government is the 'possession of the ballot.'" ²

Many blacks regarded Abraham Lincoln as a virtual Messiah, but some recognized that his policy of leniency toward the defeated South would deliver the race back into the hands of former masters and render political gains unlikely. Although deeply grieved over Lincoln's assassination, many blacks were initially optimistic that President Andrew Johnson, who was well known for his hatred of southern slave owners, would be, as he promised, "your Moses." Hope quickly turned to despair, however, when Johnson inaugurated a program of reconstruction in the South that was almost as lenient as Lincoln's while far less tolerant of black equality. State governments, formed under Johnson's leadership while Congress was out of session, reelected the planter class to office and passed a series of black codes starkly circumscribing black freedom.³

But Johnson's control of Reconstruction proved short-lived. By early 1866, congressional Republicans, led by the radical faction which was determined to prevent a restoration of southern Democratic power, had begun to stymie the Johnson program. They nullified the new state governments, organized the South into military districts, and mandated black suffrage. In April 1866, shortly after Congress had passed a civil rights act over Johnson's veto, Richard H. Cain, a black minister who had recently moved to South Carolina, proclaimed, "Never was there a bright prospect before any people than that presented to the colored people of the Southern states." With passage of the Re-

construction Act in March 1867, it appeared that this bright prospect had indeed become reality. By reversing the restoration of white political power fostered by the Johnson plan and guaranteeing southern blacks the vote, the radical Republicans created a political revolution that was immediate and viable. The revolution seemed secure with the ratification of the Fourteenth Amendment, which assured black civil rights, and two years later the Fifteenth Amendment, which prohibited disfranchisement on the basis of race.⁴

The radical Republicans wrought this political revolution for a variety of reasons. Political expediency was clearly evident in their calculations. As John and Lawanda Cox have explained, although they realized "Republican sponsorship of Negro suffrage meant flirtation with political disaster in the North," they also knew that the southern black vote was necessary to curb resurgent southern Democratic power. Generally the Republicans were adept at turning the suffrage question into a partisan one by linking opposition with Democratic treason. Some Republicans also assumed that ratification of the Fifteenth Amendment was sound political strategy for winning in the North because it would appease "pietistic Yankee Protestants" who believed in black political equality as well as put northern black votes in Republican columns. Undoubtedly some radical Republicans supported the Fifteenth Amendment because they believed in the rightness of political equality. But if Republican support of black suffrage stemmed at least in part from principle, their aspirations for the impact of that vote were far more limited than those of blacks themselves. Whites rarely supported the social and economic revolution that blacks hoped to achieve.⁵

A minority of blacks, due to inexperience or fear of reprisal, avoided politics. The most prescient among the race recognized the flimsy base of their political rights; they knew that they were protected by largely selfish interests. The majority, however, viewed the Fifteenth Amendment as political salvation. In all the southern states, the majority of blacks, once introduced to their rights, participated in elections and were remarkably successful in acquiring nascent political skills. Thomas Holt's study of South Carolina offers impressive evidence refuting the long-standing contention that blacks were merely the tools of white politicians.

Holt writes that "Negroes themselves made the initial moves toward political participation. They organized and paid for their own exclusive conventions, wrote their petitions, identified their leadership, and generally fashioned the basis for the Republican party of later years." Leon Litwack's study of the immediate black response to emancipation and political rights and J. Morgan Kousser's statistical study of southern political behavior following Reconstruction concur that the black political participation rate was high.⁶

Most of the newly enfranchised blacks, recognizing the role of the Republican party in their emancipation, enfranchisement, and continued protection, embraced that party. The emotional response of many blacks to the assassination of Lincoln and the resulting "Great Emancipator" legend further assured their support. In 1872 Frederick Douglass expressed a popular sentiment when he claimed that for blacks, "the Republican party is the ship, all else the sea." Widespread black support for the Republicans was also the result of negative response of blacks to the Democrats. Many found truth in the Republican charge that "the only test of Democratic soundness is hatred of the Negro." In 1870, a group of New York blacks denounced black Democrats as "an enemy to our race forever." Although some northern and southern whites predicted that the freedmen would follow their former masters into the Democratic party, in reality, as Joel Williamson has explained, "the Negro had no real choice; for him, freedom and Radicalism were one and inseparable."⁷

But if black support for the Republican party was inevitable, it was rarely uncritical. Occasionally, black leaders and newspapers urged the masses to vote Republican out of a sense of obligation to the North and the Republican party. In 1867, for example, the *Augusta Loyal Georgian* proclaimed that "he [the black man] owes it to the great Union Republican Party of the land, that would enshrine the principles of truth and liberty, repurchased and reconstructed in the late war, to vote, and vote to a man for that party." But more commonly blacks demanded that the relationship between the party and its black partisans be one of mutuality and were sharply critical when they perceived that it was not. Even among the masses of uneducated blacks, those most likely to deify the Republican party, there

were demands that they be allowed to participate and hold office as equal members and that their political loyalty lead to changes in their economic status.⁸

Black criticism of the Republican party accelerated as Republican support for Radical Reconstruction waned. In 1868, most blacks rejoiced that Ulysses S. Grant, perceived as a friend of blacks, had been elected president. Grant, however, had limited moral commitment to black rights. In Congress the radicals were increasingly replaced with a new breed of Stalwart Republicans who emphasized partisan needs and conservative economic policies while deemphasizing black rights. The general amnesty granted by Grant and Congress meant that in a number of southern states the Democrats were voted back into office. Furthermore, following passage of the Fifteenth Amendment in 1870, many Republicans determined that nothing more needed to be done for the black population. When in 1872 a number of disgruntled Republicans, many of them former radicals who now despaired of black men as voters, split from the regular Republicans over the issues of corruption and formed the Liberal Republican party, it was clear, as Kenneth Stampp explains, that "the crusade for Negro rights had lost its vitality." Although the Liberals nominated Horace Greely, once an outspoken abolitionist and champion of black rights, a party that condemned radical policy held limited appeal for black voters. There were several groups of black Greelyites organized, but few prominent black leaders supported the Liberals; the vast majority of black voters voted for Grant.⁹

But if they anticipated support from Grant, theirs proved to be an empty vision. The president continued to maintain troops in the South but they were rarely effective in protecting black rights. A series of force acts, passed in 1870 and 1871 to curb the violence of the Klan and other southern vigilante groups, were only erratically enforced. As a result, Democratic violence rapidly accelerated, and an increasing number of blacks were disfranchised de facto. Growing northern opposition to even the limited force Grant exerted in the South combined with economic recession and revelations of corruption in government to bring about, in 1874, the first Republican congressional defeat since pre-Civil War elections. Some Republicans naïvely as-

sumed that protecting black rights could reverse their loss, and in 1875, during a lame duck session, they pushed through a civil rights bill, the last major piece of Reconstruction legislation. But the bill was of limited significance because it made no reference to education and included only limited means of enforcement. A growing number of Republican politicians concluded that it was politically more expedient to forget the South in order to win in the North. In the fall of 1875, President Grant, under advice that the use of federal force in the South would jeopardize Republican electoral success in the North, refused to send troops to deal with particularly violent elections in Mississippi.¹⁰

Black criticism of Republican retrenchment in the early seventies did have limited impact. White concern with black political defection was a major motivation behind passage of the ineffective 1875 Civil Rights Act. Blacks, however, were justifiably skeptical of the renewed goodwill of the Republican party. In the 1875 state elections, violence toward southern blacks accelerated, allowing further "redemption" by the Democratic party. In the spring of 1876 a white newspaper correspondent reported from the Nashville National Colored Convention that the delegates were "sick of the Republican party...it has deceived them, betrayed them insulted them."¹¹

While some black politicians, dependent on Republican patronage, remained Republican sycophants, others increasingly expressed their disillusionment. John R. Lynch, a Republican congressman from Mississippi, counseled blacks to remain loyal Republicans on the national level but to divide according to their interests on the state and local levels. Pinckney B.S. Pinchback, lieutenant governor of Louisiana in the early 1870s, became even more vitriolic in attacking the Republicans. After being denied a seat in a Republican-dominated Senate, he charged that blacks "as a race are between the hawk of Republican demagogism and the buzzards of Democratic prejudices."¹²

Despite their growing disillusionment, the majority of blacks remained Republican; a minority, however, endorsed the Democratic party. Northern support for the Democrats was rendered somewhat easier after 1868 when moderates gained control of the party and launched a "new departure" which included at least theoretical acceptance of the Reconstruction amendments.

Democratic leaders recognized that despite extensive northern prejudice, too much blatant emphasis on race was often interpreted as intent to overthrow the results of the war. As a result, northern Democrats began deemphasizing racism at the same time that Republicans were deemphasizing black rights. Northern blacks continued to stress the southern situation in their political rhetoric, but their more liberal environment largely divorced their state and local political response from that of southern blacks. The black Democratic vote in northern local and state elections rose steadily in the seventies although it remained a minority of the total black vote. Northern blacks who voted Democratic commonly labeled themselves independents. Peter Clark, principal of a Cincinnati school and a leading northern advocate of independence, condemned the Republicans for their diminishing zeal in supporting black needs and particularly urged independence on the local level. George T. Downing, a wealthy Rhode Island businessman, was another northern leader who recommended independence on the grounds that a divided black vote would not be taken for granted.¹³

Southern blacks, who faced increased violence rather than a moderate "new departure," had no such incentive to support the Democratic party voluntarily. Still, for a variety of reasons, a small minority of southern blacks did vote Democratic. August Meier identifies southern black Democrats during this period as generally "of the old servant class, or successful, conservative farmers and businessmen who identified their interests with those of upper-class whites." A few former slaves, accustomed to heeding the dictates of their masters, followed them into the Democratic party; others were bribed or forced to become Democrats. There were also black Democrats who sincerely believed that southern Democracy rather than alien Republicanism could best solve the unique problems of the South or that self-imposed segregation would be the result of excessive adherence to one party.¹⁴

The minority of southern blacks who voted Democratic often met with sharp criticism and even violent reprisal from black Republicans. A staunch Republican from Mississippi explained, "We don't believe they have a right to acquiesce with a party who refuse to recognize their right to participate in public af-

fairs." But the number of blacks who voluntarily voted Democratic remained small. Because of general black distrust of the Democratic party and considerable southern white Democratic opposition to any black voting, most blacks in the North and South considered themselves Republican and voted for that party if at all possible.¹⁵

By 1876, blacks were well aware that freedom did not mean political equality because they knew that the Fifteenth Amendment did not in reality protect their vote. Proscription and violence had already eroded black suffrage, particularly in rural areas. But extralegal means of disfranchisement were not yet as effective as white Democrats wished; most qualified black voters in the North and South could still vote. For them, the 1876 presidential election loomed as pivotal in determining whether or not the precarious political rights they still enjoyed could be maintained in the face of resurgent Democratic power. Although the presidency had less power and prestige in this period than before or since, many blacks, facing diminishing political power on the state level, looked to the president for redress of their grievances. Blacks were generally disappointed that Grant was not seeking a third term despite his inept handling of the enforcement acts. In the preconvention months, there was considerable debate among them as to which Republican candidate they should support. Despite the rise of southern terrorism and the resulting de facto disfranchisement, many retained enough confidence in the efficacy of black political participation to discuss potential black candidates for the vice-presidential nomination. No one seriously suggested a black presidential nominee, but blacks did agree that their endorsement of a candidate should be on the basis of his stand on black rights. Their opinions were not without weight. Blacks dominated or played powerful roles in most southern Republican party organizations and would be delegates to the Republican convention. Also, some white Republican politicians still believed that the black vote in both the North and South could make a difference in the outcome of the election.¹⁶

In the months prior to the Cincinnati convention, Senator Oliver P. Morton, a leader in the fight for black suffrage, was the candidate most frequently endorsed by blacks as the best

alternative to Grant. Frederick Douglass used his considerable influence to convince a majority of southern black delegates to support Morton. The Nashville Colored Convention, meeting in early 1876, endorsed Morton on the grounds that he was the candidate most sympathetic to the particular problems of blacks. And in April the Washington *People's Advocate* reported that Morton was held in the highest regard by local blacks because of his efforts to assure their rights, although the paper later switched its own support to Zachariah Chandler, another radical who was chairman of the Republican Congressional Committee.¹⁷

A majority of the southern black delegates attending the Republican National Convention, held in Cincinnati in June, voted for Morton on the first ballot. P.B.S. Pinchback seconded Morton's nomination and described him as a man who "will strike terror to the hearts of those monsters in the South." Blacks were not, however, unanimous for Morton. Senator James G. Blaine, who had supported black suffrage but opposed continued military protection, was prominent among other candidates they endorsed. Henry M. Turner, Georgia minister and editor, was one of several speakers who seconded Blaine's nomination.¹⁸

In reality, none of the potential Republican nominees was likely to "strike terror to the hearts" of southern redeemers. Even Morton, previously a staunch radical, now called the radical program at best a necessary evil. Most white delegates were now more interested in the issue of corruption in government than they were in Reconstruction policy. With the exception of a speech by Douglass in which he called on Republicans to be true to their principles, convention speeches emphasized reconciliation.¹⁹

Governor Rutherford B. Hayes of Ohio had rarely been mentioned by black leaders as an acceptable candidate, but when he and William A. Wheeler were nominated, most blacks gave the ticket their enthusiastic approval. The *People's Advocate* insisted that, contrary to reports that there seemed to be an erosion of black support for the Republican party, "the colored men of the South, the North and the West, will with very rare exception be found supporting Hayes and Wheeler against anything the Democrats may set up." Senator Blanche K. Bruce, who claimed to

have headed a solid delegation for Hayes, congratulated the nominee on behalf of four million blacks and predicted "an administration of the government of the nation as fruitful in glorious results to all the people as was that of the martyred president."²⁰

Blacks could point to evidence from Hayes's past to justify their support. As a young lawyer he had defended fugitive slaves. After the war, he had generally endorsed radical Republican policy. In 1867 Hayes ran for governor of Ohio on a platform favoring black suffrage, a position still unpopular in much of the North. But he also had a record, typical of many northern Republicans in the seventies, of vacillating between support for the radical policy of the sixties and reconciliation with the South. To many blacks reconciliation was synonymous with abandonment. That Hayes was now the Republican candidate, however, was for the majority enough to elicit their support. They were initially reassured by Republican canvassers, notably Robert G. Ingersoll, who repeated the "bloody shirt" rhetoric of earlier campaigns. Although Hayes himself usually maintained a guarded silence, he instructed his campaign workers to emphasize the horrors of "rebel rule" as a counterbalance to the focus on national depression.²¹

Despite general awareness that the election would be close, in the preconvention months few blacks expressed concern that the first Democratic president since before the Civil War might be elected and accordingly they showed little interest in whom the Democratic nominee would be. Despite efforts by northern Democrats to mute their racist image, most blacks, North and South, fully intended to vote Republican and were confident that their party would retain the presidency. When Samuel Tilden was nominated with Thomas Hendricks, who had opposed emancipation on the grounds of black inferiority, as his running mate, they were given much less attention in the black press and by black political spokesmen than the Republicans received. The *People's Advocate's* negative assessment, which condemned Tilden as "a monster in the art of cunning" and Hendricks as "a hopeless democrat," was typical of the limited coverage.²²

Early in 1876 Pinchback warned that "the prospects of a bloody / campaign are daily increasing and consequently colored voters

are becoming more and more demoralized." But despite a growing awareness that their status in the South had so degenerated that their participation in some areas could result in violent retaliation, the majority of politically active southern blacks openly supported and often campaigned for the Republican ticket. Hayes received a number of requests for financial assistance from blacks who wished to campaign for him. Isaac H. Smith of New Bern, North Carolina, wrote that "in a campaign like this if the colored men had proper information they would vote a Republican ticket," but he doubted they could continue fighting the wealthier Democrats without some assistance.²³

Frederick Douglass promised to take an active part in a contest he viewed as "the same old conflict, liberty, union and civilization on the one hand, disunion and barbarism on the other." Some blacks, however, were less certain that the line between good and evil was so clearly drawn in this campaign and often qualified their support for the Republicans. Pinchback's *Weekly Louisianian*, which proclaimed itself "Republican in All Times and Under All Circumstances," was prominent among black papers in supporting the Hayes ticket, but Pinchback was also typical of many black Republicans when he hedged his support by condemning the party for selfishly using black votes. George Washington Williams, an Ohio minister with political aspirations, warned that the slights and frustrations blacks were encountering in the campaign promoted a sense of self-reliance that could lead to independence. He demanded that if black loyalty was to be retained, "primitive Republicanism in its letter and spirit must be resuscitated."²⁴

Some blacks went beyond criticism of the Republicans and demands for the resuscitation of earlier idealism to active support of the Democrats. A conscious effort by northern Democrats to downplay racism and win over disgruntled black Republicans won black supporters in northern cities, although they were still a small minority. Some agreed with the three black men from Baltimore who claimed that the Republican mission to end slavery was over and that "the Democratic party is the party of reform." At the Nashville Colored Convention, John Shaw, a black Democrat from New York, insisted that the Democrats should gain adherents as Republican abandonment progressed,

but in 1876 such ideas were still roundly condemned by most black leaders and voters in the North.²⁵

Southern blacks, directly confronted with Democratic "redemption," had less incentive to leave the Republican party although some southern Democrats recruited their support. Northern Democrats, recognizing the possibility of a backlash if there was excessive campaign violence, urged the southern wing of their party to cease the use of violence. In Louisiana, one of the most violent states, some state Democratic leaders heeded these warnings and replaced earlier terrorist tactics with parades, barbecues, and speeches emphasizing Democratic concern with black rights. All across the South, Democrats tried to persuade blacks to abandon the Republicans by linking Hayes to the corruption of the Grant administration and by claiming that the collapse of the Freedmen Saving's Bank, created by a Republican Congress to help blacks financially, was proof that northern Republicans cared nothing for them. Some blacks did willingly join Tilden clubs. But for the most part Democratic appeals to blacks were not successful, as the South Carolina Black Oak Democracy inadvertently admitted when resolving to protect "the few colored democrats who have & will join the party."²⁶

As a result, despite warnings from the North, southern Democrats continued using fraud, intimidation, and violence to prevent black Republican voting. Buying black votes was another method successfully used in both the North and South. According to the *People's Advocate*, this was sometimes accomplished with the aid of "unprincipled, but shrewd and experienced colored men," but it was also made possible by a general awareness that the Republicans had fallen short of patronage promises. It was also often a result of economic necessity. In Barnwell County, South Carolina, some blacks claimed that they were forced to sell votes "to keep starvation off." Economic coercion—threatening blacks with the loss of jobs and land—persuaded large numbers that they could not vote.²⁷

Violence persuaded many others. All across the South whites resorted to the Mississippi Plan—the successful use of intimidation and violence to destroy the black vote. Congressman Robert Smalls charged South Carolina Democrats with fraud, murder, and more "inhuman brutality" than he had ever

thought possible. Attorney D. Augustus Straker labeled the situation "organized chaos." In Louisiana the term "bulldozing" was coined to describe the racial outrages that occurred. A U.S. marshal in the state reported that blacks "are politically in a state of siege." The violence came to a head in Hamburg, South Carolina, where on the fourth of July a parade of black militiamen resulted in the massacre of six black men and the looting of black homes. The incident had the impact northern Democrats feared: briefly southern violence was again a viable issue with northern Republican voters.²⁸

In light of such violent opposition, it is remarkable how many blacks remained politically active. Most northern blacks focused on race relations in the South and thus overwhelmingly concluded that the Republicans must be reelected. Despite the possible repercussions, blacks in both the North and South formed clubs to work for Hayes. The few southern black Democrats who openly acknowledged their political allegiance had to contend with ostracism and even physical abuse from loyal black Republicans for their unorthodox views. In North Carolina, Garland H. White, a Baptist minister and leading black Democrat, became so unpopular that he was forced to go north to campaign for Tilden. When black Democrats in Nashville tried to organize, black Republicans broke up their meeting with "eggs, potatoes, and heavier missiles." Southern black Republicans were also tenacious in their determination to vote. In South Carolina, the most violence-ridden state, over 90 percent of the eligible black population voted, and the vast majority of them, as in other southern states, cast their votes for the Republicans. Despite all obstacles, James A. Garfield observed, the black voter "almost universally inclines" to vote against former masters.²⁹

A major reason many blacks were unwilling to make good on threats to desert the Republicans was an awareness of how close the 1876 election would be and the real possibility that a Democrat might win the White House. Robert Marcus has observed that the closeness of elections in the late nineteenth century "supported party regularity by raising the cost of expressing one's dissatisfaction with the party above what most voters were willing to pay." This was particularly true of black Republicans. Although they increasingly hedged their support for the GOP

with qualifications and warnings, they were generally unwilling to express their dissatisfaction by voting Democratic.³⁰

The outcome of the election was uncertain from November to March. Early returns indicated that Tilden, by carrying all of the southern states, had won the electoral college by one vote. Continued Republican control in Florida, South Carolina, and Louisiana, however, enabled their Republican electoral supervisors to claim victory for Hayes. The resulting dual electoral returns, plus a disputed vote from Oregon, gave both parties a claim to the presidential victory. For nearly four months the country was uncertain whether Hayes or Tilden had been elected. Democrats and Republicans both demanded that their particular candidate be inaugurated, and some even threatened war if he was not.

Some blacks, initially confident that Hayes had been elected, wired him their congratulations. John Langston, former vice-president of Howard University and in 1876 a member of the Board of Health of Washington, D.C., claimed to speak for all black Americans when he congratulated the Republican nominee on his victory. The Thanksgiving program of the St. Paul A.M.E. Church in Urbana, Ohio, proclaimed, "The political status of the Negro is something to make us thankful." Lew Wallace, sent by the Republican party to investigate conditions in Florida, reported that blacks there retained hope and confidence in "freedom and God."³¹

A number of blacks soon realized, however, that the election might be settled in favor of the Democrats. A southern black man wrote Hayes that his people, having first heard that Tilden won and then that Hayes had won, were bewildered. Fears that slavery would be restored if Tilden was elected and demands for violence if necessary to assure a Hayes victory were reported in some parts of the country. A black Mississippian wrote, "What a hell of a fix the country is in," and questioned whether the southern "bulldozers" would be so bold if blacks fought back. W. W. Dedrick insisted that "Hays has a right to be declared president having received 185 electoral votes. To doubt or hesitate on this proposition is to be damned. The triumph of Tilden is the triumph of murder as an element in politics." Ex-judge Grandison Harris assured Hayes that if the Investigating Com-

mittee came to Georgia it would discover that the state had been counted Democratic only because Republicans had been driven from the polls. John Lynch, congressman from Mississippi during the electoral crisis, recalled years later that he voted against the establishment of a commission because he believed that Hayes had been duly elected and that Grant should use force if necessary to assure his inauguration.³²

The election result, publicly settled by an Electoral Commission drawn from Congress and the Supreme Court, was covertly influenced by the maneuverings of special interest groups which brought together northern Republicans and their potential southern Democratic allies. These majority factions of both parties had come to recognize their common interests, particularly their mutual desire for conservative economic policy, federal internal improvements, and the suppression of labor strife. Once the southern Democrats had effected a compromise which included southern home rule, aid to southern internal improvements, southern representation in the administration, and most important, removal of the last troops from the South, they tacitly supported a pro-Hayes count. Although southern Democrats had agreed to respect southern black rights, many blacks immediately recognized the pejorative implications of the compromise. Even before the new president was inaugurated, they warned against Republican abandonment. Pinchback charged the Republican party to "be brave enough" to insure the citizenship that it had conferred upon blacks. To leave the South alone, he admonished, "would be to turn the lamb over to the wolf." Perception that this was exactly what the Compromise of 1877 had done would grow over the next decade until "the betrayal of 1877" became synonymous to blacks with Republican abandonment and racism.³³

Most whites in both the North and South welcomed this symbolic end to a decade of Radical Reconstruction. The *Nation*, which generally expressed opinions more sympathetic to black rights than most Northerners held, predicted "the negro will disappear from the field of national politics." But despite widespread awareness of the possible ramifications that the compromise and Hayes's developing southern policy had for them, many blacks initially rejoiced at the Republican victory and expressed

confidence that they would not be betrayed. On the South Carolina coastal island of St. Helena "smiles, laughter, hand-shakings, huggings... tears of joy" and "fervent thanks to heaven" greeted the final electoral count. On Hayes's inauguration day the Vidalia (La.) *Concordia Eagle* praised the Republicans for handling the controversy with "admirable skill" and criticized the Democrats for showing "as little political generalship as honesty." Some of this optimism stemmed from a tendency to rationalization and wishful thinking following political setbacks. The New Orleans *Republican* insisted that the president would not "abandon his political friends and supporters in the South for the personal advantage he would be likely to derive from the conciliation of his utterly routed enemies." Several blacks writing congratulations to Hayes noted the president's concern with their status when his election was in doubt and expressed confidence that with his victory the race's best interest would be considered. But there was also uncertainty. Not infrequently optimism was joined with reminders of the sacrifices that blacks had made to bring Republican victory about.³⁴

In April, the last troops were withdrawn from Louisiana, and quickly thereafter the Hayes administration began implementing its southern policy. This policy was predicated on the idea that the Republican party, in order to win in the South, must switch its emphasis from wooing black voters to converting the "Whiggish" element—antebellum southern Whigs and other Southerners who were primarily concerned with industrial development. The new southern Republican party would be secured by dispensing patronage to potential native white converts rather than to carpetbaggers and blacks. This policy had roots dating back to Lincoln's administration and had been periodically proposed ever since by Republican politicians. They were prodded by conservative northern businessmen who had come to the conclusion that under Radical Reconstruction they were "estranged from their natural allies." These businessmen hoped for economic reasons to restore stability to the South and to establish ties with "New South" businessmen who were in accord with them on most economic issues. President Hayes's own belief that the "best people" should dominate public affairs fit well with this conservative strategy. His southern policy was a profound

change from radical Republican thought, but, as C. Vann Woodward explains, many Republicans had concluded that "old Radical Southern policy" was "quite out of line with its [the party's] true nature."³⁵

Initially some black leaders counseled accepting the president's policy. John Langston of Virginia, Richard T. Greener of South Carolina, and J. Willis Menard of Florida, were typical of southern black Republicans who were dependent on the northern party for protection of their political and journalistic endeavors—a dependency that undoubtedly influenced their defense of Hayes's policy. Langston, who held a Republican appointment, described "peaceful reconstruction" as a blessing to blacks. Greener, a professor at the University of South Carolina which was dependent on Republican support for its precarious integrated status, wrote Hayes that "the policy that you have so simply outlined, if honestly, impartially and rigidly carried out, will give the only harmony, peace and true moral development which at the present time is so badly needed among both races in the South." Menard, a Florida editor and politician, admitted that a cursory examination of Hayes's policy could cause blacks some concern but denied that there was any alternative. Like most other black politicians, however, his ability to rationalize support for conservative Republican policy had limits. Blacks, he said, should work to shape their own political destiny by considering both parties and should also give more attention to non-political endeavors.³⁶

Organized blacks also tried to remain optimistic and sent the president assurance of their continued support in the early months of his administration. A Memphis group passed a resolution endorsing Hayes's policy with only two dissenting votes. A group from Virginia resolved, "That we hail with joy the dawn of a new era fraught with signs and promises of peace and prosperity to the entire people of our distressed country." Louisiana black Baptists offered a prayer of thanks that "the wise policy of our ruler is cementing the white and colored races." But groups also expressed reservations about Hayes's policy. A complimentary resolution from Alabama was tempered by the conclusion that "it is the earnest wish of the colored citizens of the South to fully enjoy the blessings of civil and political lib-

erty—without any curtailment or proscription—allotted to any other class.”³⁷

Some northern blacks were also initially optimistic about the prospect of Hayes’s southern policy, and because they were less directly aware of its potentially regressive ramifications, were less qualified in their praise. Shortly after the inauguration, Douglass was invited to confer with President Hayes on southern affairs; the president later recorded in his diary that Douglass approved his policy. Douglass’s silence at the removal of federal troops and his acceptance of a position in Hayes’s administration do indicate his tacit support. John Bagwell claimed to speak for New Jersey blacks in celebrating this “triumph of Truth, Justice and Liberty.” Blacks from Hayes’s native Ohio were particularly outspoken in their defense and urged southern blacks to remain loyal when many in that section grew pessimistic. George W. Williams headed a group of Ohioans who issued a circular letter calling on southern blacks to support the administration. If Southerners violated their promise to protect black rights, the circular assured, Hayes would turn from pacification to force. James Poindexter, Benjamin Arnett, John P. Green, and Alfred Anderson were also black Ohio leaders who defended the president. Poindexter urged an economic alliance between black labor and southern capital with less emphasis on politics.³⁸

Some black leaders continued supporting Hayes and defending his southern policy throughout his presidency. Almost two years after Hayes took office, Williams claimed that a large number of southern blacks accepted the southern policy. John Lynch claimed to verify this from the more proximate perspective of Mississippi. Hiram Revels, a Mississippi senator from 1869 to 1871, agreed that Hayes’s policy was successful and predicted that it would lead to a day when there would be mutual confidence between southern blacks and whites. James L. Herbert, another Mississippian, claimed two years after it was initiated, that the president’s policy was the best promotion of racial and sectional harmony since the war. About the same time George Hull of Virginia wrote Hayes that the “poor ignorant colored race” was “almost to a man . . . Stalwart Republican but had no one to instruct them politically.” They would never vote contrary to the wishes of the northern Republican party, he assured the

president, if they knew those wishes. C. C. Antoine, former state senator and lieutenant-governor of Louisiana, offered a more typically mixed reaction: He praised Hayes for efforts to punish violators of black suffrage but despaired that there had been a general failure to convict.³⁹

Most black defenders of Hayes’s southern policy were conservatives who hoped for political appointments. The majority of blacks were less reluctant to criticize a Republican president. As it became increasingly clear that promises to protect black rights were not being kept, their frustration and criticism increased. Anxiety about what Hayes’s policy meant for southern black rights proliferated in the North. This was even true in Ohio. Robert Harlan reported in August 1877 that “nineteen out of every twenty colored men I know believe that the Republican party wishes to unload them.” Fred Roney tried to give substance to the criticism when he organized a boycott of elections in Columbus. Philadelphian Abraham Barber wrote Hayes of his concern that not enough had been done for southern blacks. A group in New York refused to endorse Hayes unless he guaranteed protection of all people in the South. Although a New Jersey Colored Convention failed to pass a resolution against Hayes’s policy, several speakers condemned it.⁴⁰

Criticism continued to be most common in the South where blacks experienced firsthand the impact of Hayes’s southern policy. In letters to the president as well as to black leaders, southern blacks described the lawlessness and violence they confronted and made both pleas and threats that something be done. South Carolina Congressman Joseph R. Rainey told Hayes that in some counties of his state intimidation and violence were effectively disfranchising his people and that they were “depressed beyond measure” when popular state leader Robert Smalls was unjustly convicted of fraud. D. Augustus Straker predicted that the Republican party would soon be wiped out in the state and determined to leave the South for good. “The promise of peace by the Democrats,” he insisted,

is a promise to the race to be broken to the heart. I do not question the good will of President Hayes towards us as a race. I admire, agree with, and am willing to uphold his hands in reconciling the conflict

between the races in the South and making our motto *E pluribus unum* not merely words but a veritable fact, but let him be certain that there is mutuality in the contract.

Congressman Lynch also began to exonerate the president. Hayes's policy, he rationalized, did not correspond to the president's personal convictions but was necessitated by preinaugural pledges.⁴¹

Although it was generally black leaders and editors who publicly criticized Hayes's southern policy, the masses were most dramatically aware of its impact and they also protested. Benjamin Johnson of Arkansas wrote, "We are suffering very bad in the South. We have no rights hear among the white people they dont consider we colored people no more than dogs. We need protection. We want our Republican friends to do all they can for us black people the Democrats kill us and there aint anything dont about it." A citizen of Booneville, Mississippi, urged Blanche K. Bruce, the only black man in the Senate, to work for a bill guaranteeing the freedom to vote because every black in the state from former officeholders to the "small Republican in the cotton field" was denied that right. Another Mississippian asked Bruce if he expected any protection for the black vote in 1878, warning that "the party is dead as Hector without it." There were also charges more serious than disfranchisement. In East Feliciana, Louisiana, activist James Laws was reported as one of possibly hundreds murdered "because he was a Republican nigger."⁴²

H.C.C. Astwood led the New Orleans Young Men's Protective Association in complaining about the outrages committed against blacks in the 1878 Louisiana elections. By 1878 many of the state's black political leaders, particularly in rural areas, had been forced either to cease political activity or to flee the state, and some had been killed. Black voters in some sections of the state were given badges to protect them from violence after being forced to vote Democratic. Pointing to the growth of such outrages against black Republicans since the last presidential election, the Protective Association determined that their earlier faith in the president had been ill-founded. Although Hayes was described as personally "honest, honorable and humanitarian,"

his southern policy was condemned as a threat to the very lives of black Americans. The group claimed loyalty to the Republican party but declared itself ready to cooperate with white Louisianians "whenever such cooperation does not interfere with our cardinal principles."⁴³

Proposals that blacks leave the Republican party and make the best possible terms with the Democrats, although still rare, became more common in the later years of Hayes's administration as blacks desperately searched for a viable way to stem the growing disfranchisement and violence they confronted. Gilbert Myers of Mississippi is an example of a small number of wealthy southern blacks who became Democrats in order to protect their property. He reported to a Senate committee in 1879 that he voted Democratic, "because I sympathize with my own self, knowing that I expected to stay with them [white Democrats] to make property if I could, and the South has always been kind to me." Pragmatic P.B.S. Pinchback, whose advice to southern blacks ranged from the most radical to the most conservative, at this time lobbied in his New Orleans paper for accommodation with the Democrats. The *Weekly Louisianian's* Washington correspondent condemned northern Republicans for their betrayal and virtually advocated support for the Democrats when he wrote, "All things considered, it is better to trust those with which you live, even if they are stained with your blood, than to link your political fortunes to a set of cold, heartless and hypocritical leaders in the north, as represented by the present executive and the class of men he has called around him." Another correspondent for the paper claimed that if blacks would "vote for the conservative and independent thinkers of the South" they could "break down the wall of prejudice which surrounds the Democratic party." The relatively benevolent regime of Democratic governor Wade Hampton in South Carolina fostered the movement of some blacks into the Democratic party, a response repeated in some other parts of the South. The Montgomery (Ala.) *Advance*, in what was probably an effort to reform the Democrats by flattery, claimed that under Bourbon control the South was a haven for the race, but this was a view roundly condemned by most southern blacks.⁴⁴

Most blacks still stopped far short of actual endorsement of

the Democrats; their qualified praise was usually veiled criticism directed at the Republicans. More common than Republican apostasy was continuation of a tenuous relationship that often included harsh criticism and warnings that the party must accept its moral obligations. Pinchback, possibly motivated by a desire for lucrative patronage, typified this sentiment when he threatened, "The Republicans must either do the proper thing by me, or I will make them rue the day they forced me to take arms against them. . . . I am as true a Republican as treads the earth, and you know it well, but by the eternal, I will have recognition or revenge."⁴⁵

As blacks became increasingly frustrated by Republican policy and at the same time remained opposed to the Democrats, affiliation with a third party was proposed as an alternative. The Greenback party, which had been formed in response to postwar economic dislocations and which had by the late seventies broadened its platform to include a variety of social issues, was the first major third party to be endorsed by blacks. In the later years of the Hayes administration it attracted some southern blacks on the state level. In the 1878 Texas state elections, almost half of the blacks voting supported the Greenbackers. But their allegiance was ephemeral, and the majority, perhaps heeding warnings that the Greenbackers were merely "forlorn Democrats," were back in the Republican fold by 1880. On the national level the Greenbackers had little appeal for black voters, but they did play a role in conditioning poor black and white southern farmers to the possibility of seeking solutions to economic problems through alternative political routes. Occasionally there were radical proposals that blacks launch a new party as well as conservative suggestions that they abandon politics altogether. George T. Downing, for example, although generally adamant about black rights, proposed shortly after Hayes's election that the race should become better educated and more skilled in the art of government before becoming active politically. But in the seventies, when many blacks still believed that political participation could be effective, such advice was given little consideration. Although blacks were becoming increasingly critical of Republican treatment, most still believed that this party was the most efficacious vehicle for assuring their rights.⁴⁶

Prominent among the rights demanded was the right to hold political and appointive offices. Blacks had become accustomed to having representation in the federal government during the Reconstruction era and continued to demand a recognition many considered symbolic of the race's citizenship and equality. Although the fight for patronage was most tenaciously pursued by leaders who stood to profit personally, blacks with little chance for recognition also demanded black appointments. When Frederick Douglass was appointed marshal of the District of Columbia in 1877, some accepted this as proof that Hayes would consider black interests. Henry Highland Garnet, New York pastor and former minister to Liberia, wrote that in New York the appointment was viewed as the most complete acknowledgment of black rights yet given by a president. The appointment was also labeled "another shot heard around the world," and "another degree on the dial." Douglass responded to his own appointment by praising Hayes as "a just man whose policy embraces the welfare of both races." Soon after, John Langston was named minister to Haiti. The two appointments, affirmed a Virginia group, were "honest fulfillment" of Hayes's "declared purpose as to our race." The appointment two years later of James Hill to be internal revenue collector of Mississippi was heralded by the *New Orleans Weekly Louisianian* as a timely and important appointment that would be most helpful in retaining black support for the Hayes administration.⁴⁷

Not all blacks, however, considered symbolic appointments as the fulfillment of Republican obligations. Alexander Crummell, Episcopal divine and noted intellectual, more pessimistically noted, following the Douglass appointment, "I have the most serious misgivings, for President Hayes putting one black man forward does not compensate for his pulling back 4 1/2 million black men in the south and giving supremacy . . . to the old power-holding body." Such criticism became more common as blacks became aware of the administration's "lily-white" policy. Despite considerable evidence by 1879 (including defeat in the 1878 congressional elections and a Senate investigation into southern election illegalities) that his southern policy was not building a viable white southern party, Hayes continued to pursue a "genteel strategy." Robert Elliott, former congressman

from South Carolina, reported that black Southerners were everywhere concerned that Hayes was filling most federal offices in the South with Democrats or white Republicans whom blacks could no longer trust. Norris Wright Cuney, the leading black Republican in Texas, complained that, although blacks made up four-fifths of the state's Republican party, they held no federal appointments. Six months after praising the Republican appointment of Hill, the *Weekly Louisianian* condemned white Republicans for intimidating blacks in the state so that they feared seeking appointive positions and warned that attempts to obligate blacks by harkening back to the Emancipation Proclamation and at the same time denying them recognition would bring the most intelligent of the race into revolt. Black men who themselves aspired to office were particularly bitter in their denunciation of Republican policy. Edwin Belcher, a leader of black Republicanism in Georgia and an inveterate office seeker, had concluded by 1879 that no black Georgian could ever expect an appointment from a president who had solicited their votes and then ignored them for three years. William Pledger, shortly before he was elected chairman of the Georgia Republican party, scorned Hayes's promises to appoint a black man as collector of revenue by suggesting that "the man to whom it is tendered ought to hurl it back into the face of the administration that it may grow to a larger size." J. M. Bynum of Mississippi included Senator Bruce when he condemned the Republicans for ignoring black Republicans while trying to appease southern Democrats. He wrote Bruce, "It is humiliating to us who have stood to our principles to have the cold shoulder turned to us. I want to see Republicans in office that have stood by their guns through the thickest of the fight."⁴⁸

As black leaders became increasingly disenchanted with the Republican administration they had helped to elect, they organized to protest. Organizations formed in the seventies epitomize the ambivalence many blacks felt as to the best means to the desired end of "effective liberty." While they generally stressed integration rather than separation, they also stressed black self-help and unification. They were conservative in that they commonly urged adapting to middle-class social and economic standards. Despite emphasis on conformity and self-help, however,

many of these groups continued appealing to and even demanding that the Republican party fight for their rights. The American Protective Society to Prevent Injustice to the Colored People was typical. Pinchback, Lynch, Bruce, Cuney, Isaac Myers, J. W. Cromwell, J. C. Napier, and J. S. Hinton were leaders at a conference in Nashville which founded the organization. They resolved:

We the colored people of the United States of America do declare the first principle of a republican government to be equality of its citizens before the law and the obligation of the government to protect all classes of citizens by its laws; that we recognize with profound regret the existence of a race distinction, having caste and prejudice as its principle directed toward the colored people of this country with such force of discrimination as to nullify the constitution and render law enacted thereunder unoperative; that the civil, political and intellectual advancement of our race is thereby seriously impaired, and the life and property of our people are unjustly abused.⁴⁹

Organizations to work for an end to racial proscription became common, but they were not supported by all black people. Some were fearful of any harsh rhetoric directed toward whites. Henry Scroggins, for example, condemned the Nashville convention on the grounds that protest could only make matters worse, possibly even leading to reenslavement, and demanded that the race seek redress of its grievances only through the established governmental process.⁵⁰

On the other hand, more radical blacks were convinced that proper channels would never serve to ameliorate conditions in the South. While the black elite registered its protest in print and at conventions, thousands of poor black Southerners determined that the only viable course left was to leave. Steady erosion of political rights, combined with social and economic woes, fed the exodus. In 1877, several months after the last federal troops were withdrawn from Louisiana, a colonization council met in the state and decided that "the whole South—every State in the South—had got into the hands of the very men that held us slaves," and that "there was no hope for us and we had better go."⁵¹

Some aspiring emigrants concluded that black rights would

never be respected in any part of the United States and proposed settlement in Africa, particularly in Liberia. In South Carolina the Liberian Exodus Joint-Stock Steamship Company was formed to facilitate large-scale immigration to Africa. In 1878, the Louisiana-based National Colored Colonization Council sent a petition with three thousand signatures to President Hayes, asking for aid in relocation in Liberia or a separate black territory unless protection could be assured to southern blacks. D. D. Bell of Mississippi wrote Bruce of the despair in his state. "There are hundreds of colored people here," he lamented, "'refugees' from the southern part of the state driven here by the bulldozers. I hope you will do all you can to help us to Africa as we never can get justice in the U.S. Senate."⁵²

Some blacks opposed a return to Africa but supported the creation of a separate territory in the United States. In the summer of 1877 a group in Charlotte, North Carolina, asked the president for information concerning colonization, "for we find that you are about to shake hands with the South. If you do that you are putting us in a worse condition than we were when we were slaves. The only way that we see to obtain our freedom is colonizing into a country of our own." John Williamson, North Carolina leader for colonization, introduced a resolution in the North Carolina House demanding a separate territory for blacks as the only way they could receive their fair share of rights and honors.⁵³

The majority of would-be emigrants, however, wanted to remain American citizens but relocate outside the South, particularly in Kansas, considered "the quintessential free state." This alternative generated a national debate when, in January 1879, Senator William Windom of Minnesota proposed that blacks who were not allowed to vote and exercise their constitutional rights be federally assisted in emigrating from the southern states. Possibly in part motivated by Windom's resolution, thousands of blacks left or attempted to leave the South in the Exodus of 1879.⁵⁴

Although some southern whites supported the exodus of blacks as good riddance, many others, fearful of losing their cheap labor supply, worked to stem the migration. Thomas W. Conway, a former Freedmen's Bureau official and superintend-

ent of education in Louisiana who now lived in New Jersey, wrote the president about southern obstruction. "This is bondage," he told Hayes. "We may have to cry aloud to you Mr. President, as we cried to your illustrious predecessor, Mr. Lincoln, to issue our emancipation proclamation, for surely our colored brethren in the South have not been emancipated except on paper." Although some planters used force to curb the exodus, others counseled a more benign course. In May 1879, a group met in Vicksburg, Mississippi, and pledged to seek protection of black suffrage as a means of keeping black labor in the South. Their fear of a labor shortage did prompt some improvement for southern blacks, but the change was limited and generally short-lived.⁵⁵

The idea of migration also generated debate among blacks. Nell Painter points out that "respectable Blacks' opinion on the Exodus ran the gamut from conditional criticism, through conditional approval, to enthusiastic acclaim." The most strident critic was Frederick Douglass, who argued that the race's enemies would claim that ignorant blacks were imported into the North to outvote intelligent whites, a charge that was in fact frequently made. Douglass was also concerned that emigration would become an alternative to demanding rights in the South. Some southern black political leaders, who were dependent on the masses for a political base and whose higher economic status gave them a quite different perspective, agreed with Douglass and opposed the exodus. Benjamin "Pap" Singleton, an exodus leader, claimed that it included only working men—that "not a political Negro was in it." A number of these black politicians were at the Vicksburg meeting and cooperated with whites in seeking ways to keep black labor in the South. But other black political leaders, including Joseph Rainey of South Carolina, James T. Rapier of Alabama, and J. C. Napier of Tennessee, gave no credence to the Vicksburg pledge and supported the exodus out of the South.⁵⁶

Many northern Republicans, black and white, championed the movement. Senator Windom headed the National Emigration Aid Society to aid the refugees, and Richard Greener, removed from the faculty of the University of South Carolina by the Hampton administration, served as the society's secretary. In

Missouri, J. Milton Turner's Colored Immigration Aid Society competed with the Colored Relief Board in giving direct relief to the exodusters. John Cromwell, editor of the *People's Advocate*, and John Smyth, former minister to Liberia, were among the leaders in forming the Southern Emigration Company "for the purpose of aiding the colored people of the Southern States in moving from their present abodes of misery and poverty."⁵⁷

Private aid, however, was far too limited to support massive emigration, so many would-be Kansas emigrants also appealed to the federal government for help. President Hayes, who expressed sympathy for the movement, received numerous requests for assistance. W. H. Mann of Battleboro, North Carolina, asked for pamphlets and aid for black North Carolinians to immigrate to Africa, Kansas, or, inexplicably, Arkansas. Twenty blacks from Hinds County, Mississippi, petitioned the president for help in moving to Kansas because they were so oppressed that they could no longer endure. Thomas Farmer, speaking for blacks in Arkansas who had been so badly swindled and outraged "that starvation and neckedness had almost overtaken us," also requested assistance. Edward Bailey demanded that Hayes provide the needed aid because the race's condition had greatly worsened since he took office. A. H. Johnson of Laurens County, South Carolina, wrote Senator John Sherman that he was "forced to the conclusion that the treatment we receive at the hands of our Southern White friends will never be better—that our rights of citizenship can never be employed under Democratic rule in the South" and appealed to Sherman either to buy land in Kansas for black emigrants or in some way to advance the funds needed to start a colony. But little aid was forthcoming, and in 1880 most blacks remained in the South, where they continued to confront political and economic discrimination.⁵⁸

T. Thomas Fortune, a prominent black editor of the period and author of several books, described the chain of events set in motion by the election of 1876 and the Compromise of 1877 in a terse and dramatic phrase: "a revolution gone backward." In *The Negro in Politics* (1886) he asked "What did the party gain by its open barter and sale in 1876," and responded "It gained Rutherford B. Hayes. . . . It gained scorn and contempt for aban-

doning the vital principle which had made it invincible; it gained discredit with the honest voters of the country which entailed upon it as succession of defeats up to the present." The Republican party, Fortune asserted, "had sacrificed principle to perpetuate its control of the Federal power and patronage."⁵⁹

Although blacks would be critical of future Republican administrations for failing to stem the tide of disfranchisement, segregation, and violence in the South, Hayes's Compromise of 1877 would remain the event most symbolically representative of Republican abandonment. Fortune's assessment of the Hayes administration was predictive of those offered by black leaders in the eighties and nineties. Even some blacks who had defended Hayes's policy during his administration were critical in later years. When asked in 1885 about the effect of the election of Grover Cleveland on black rights, Frederick Douglass claimed that the Hayes years, rather than the election of a Democratic president, had brought an end to black political rights in the South. In 1896, the twentieth anniversary of Hayes's election, the *Omaha Gazette* insisted, "This country does not want any Hayes in the White House. It would have been better for Tilden to have been seated than for the rights of the negro to have been surrendered by Hayes."⁶⁰

When this editorial appeared in 1896, the southern black vote had been virtually eliminated. In 1880, however, many southern blacks could still vote and they continued to look to the national government for protection from proscription and violence and to the Republican party as the most promising source for that government. As the election of 1880 approached, blacks rationalized that a new Republican president would reverse the setbacks of the Hayes years. This hope was given voice by W. D. Sherman, Jr. [?] of Springwood, Georgia, who in a barely literate but very insightful letter, described the sentiments of many southern blacks in 1880: "Under Grant's administration the Republicans were more in power than under mr Hays though this present govnt administration yet so has proved energy to my judgment to all with the exception of the Southern policy." But because of this southern policy, Sherman was hopeful that a new president would be elected. "The gentlemen at the North doesn't

understand the swindling killing and cheating at these rates the white people here can and does take 10 whites and pools more votes than 100 colored can." Still Sherman was optimistic. "The day will soon be here," he wrote, "when we shall hear from Chicargo Illinois we hope to that Hon. Sherman are president."⁶¹