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BLACKS IN MISSISSIPPI POLITICS, 1865-1900

By

BUFORD SATCHER

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Bachelor of Science
Alcorn State University
Lorman, Mississippi
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Master of Arts
North Carolina Central University
Durham, North Carolina
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BLACKS IN MISSISSIPPI POLITICS, 1865-1900

Thesis Approved:

LeRoy H. Misher

Thesis Adviser

Joseph A. Hunt, Jr.

Alan Selabovich

Henry F. Jursky

Wesley H. H. H. H.

Norman D. Durham

Dean of the Graduate College

967654

PREFACE

The purpose of this study is to determine the nature, extent, and effectiveness of Black participation in Mississippi politics from 1865 to 1900. If someone were to ask why I chose this subject, I would need to answer that it began when I was teaching Mississippi history at Alcorn State University. Whenever we discussed the period of this study in the state's history, a number of questions arose for which satisfactory answers could not be provided. From this experience, I determined to find out as much as possible about the era in Mississippi and the political role Blacks performed in it. Realizing that this task would take much time and patience, I began the tedious and laborious task of research.

My search for primary sources took me throughout the state of Mississippi to its major colleges and universities, and to its county and city libraries. I also made use of the state and county historical societies. When I exhausted their resources, I began to look at the records in various county courthouses, especially those where there were Black population concentrations. The Mississippi State Archives in Jackson was by far the most helpful, because it contained research materials the other institutions did not possess.

Much credit is due to libraries and similar institutions for their assistance. The library staff at Oklahoma State University was most helpful in aiding me in my search for documents, and to these people I extend my gratitude. The staffs of the county and city libraries in

Natchez, Mississippi, also gave invaluable service in locating materials. In addition, the employees of the Natchez Historical Society and the courthouse in Natchez extended much assistance.

I also express my appreciation to those who assisted me in the libraries at Alcorn State University, at Jackson State University, at the University of Mississippi, and at the courthouse in Port Gibson, Mississippi. My gratitude is also extended to the librarians at the Vicksburg Historical Society and at the city library in Vicksburg. Special appreciation is extended to those persons whom I interviewed in Bolivar County. A close friend, Dr. Julius E. Thompson, Professor of History at Jackson State University, went far beyond the call of duty in providing research sources from his personal collection.

To those who provided residence during my research travels, I extend my heartfelt appreciation. Mr. and Mrs. Harry Steward provided shelter during my visit at Alcorn State University, and Dean and Mrs. Herbert Anderson of the same institution generously extended hospitality. Messrs. Curtis and Alberta Giles of Benoit, Mississippi, kindly bore the burden of housing my family during much of my research in Mississippi, and for them my gratitude is unending. Another person to whom I cannot express enough thanks is Miss Shirley Ann Curtis, who also shared her home with my family during my research stay in Jackson.

Next, I would like to thank the members of my doctoral committee for their aid during my study at Oklahoma State University. Thus, I am much indebted to Professors George F. Jewsbury, Neil J. Hackett, and Joseph A. Stout of the Department of History, and to Professor Daniel Selakovich of the Department of Curriculum and Education Instruction. The writer is also deeply indebted to Professor Odie B. Faulk, the

chairman of the Department of History, who helped and encouraged me to pursue the doctoral degree in history at Oklahoma State University. Last, I extend my thanks to Professor LeRoy H. Fischer, my graduate adviser and director of this study. Without his services, this manuscript would not have materialized. For his patience and time, and for going beyond the call of duty, I will always be deeply grateful.

No study is successful without the help, understanding, faithfulness, and sacrifice of someone extra-special. I write of none other than my wife, Pat, who possesses all of these qualities. I thank her especially for enduring the sacrifices that made this study possible. I also thank my children, who perhaps could not understand at times why I did not play with them or take their places. To my family, and especially to Pat and my mother, Mrs. Ethel Satcher, I dedicate this study.

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CHAPTER I

BLACKS UNDER CONGRESSIONAL RECONSTRUCTION

IN MISSISSIPPI

In 1860, Mississippi had a total population of 791,305 people, of whom 437,404 were Black. There were 353,899 Whites and two Indians. Thus Blacks were in the majority by 83,505. Moreover, there were sixty-one counties in the state in 1867, the time when Blacks registered to vote under Major General E.O.C. Ord's program; thirty-two of these counties had Black majorities, but three of these contained almost as many Whites. Actually, there were some 110,000 White voters in the twenty-nine counties, giving the Black counties a 15,000 majority in the state, which gave them seventy percent representation, while the White counties had thirty percent. But these figures were based on old tabulations. Although the previous counts cited a majority of 15,000 Black voters, there was a majority of approximately 20,791 Black voters in these counties. There were 58,385 White voters in the twenty-nine counties and 79,176 Black voters in the thirty-two counties which had a majority according to recent calculations. Hence, Blacks would play a major role in Mississippi politics between 1865 and 1900.¹

When news of the close of the war reached Mississippi, Governor Charles Clark immediately called a special session of the legislature. He told its members to make preparations to call a state convention to meet in Jackson on May 18, 1865. On the same day, he issued a

proclamation to the inhabitants of the state. Clark informed the people that troops would probably be sent to the state to maintain order and to protect property. The governor also told the people that if they conducted themselves in a tranquil manner, it would not be necessary to send troops to any particular area of the state. Finally, he asked the residents to face the coming events with fortitude and common sense.²

Responding to the governor's recommendation, the state convention met at the scheduled time and place. In a message to the state convention, the governor discussed the responsibility that he had taken in calling the convention and the adverse conditions under which it assembled. The governor also pointed out that he had served the state and its laws with loyalty and devotion, and that he was pleased with his services. In addition, he indicated that the state would soon rejoin the Union, but that he was afraid that military occupation would complicate the matter. He told the members of the state convention to take precautionary measures in cooperating with the authorities, but at the same time he suggested the passage of legislation that would not conflict with the rights of the state and its residents. Next, the governor outlined his threefold purpose for calling the convention. He recommended that the legislature have more power, that the state's constitution be revised, and that the ordinance of secession be repealed.³

The state convention held a three day session, a period in which they were primarily concerned with the preparations to elect members to a state convention in Jackson on June 19. At the June meeting, the members would call another convention to assemble on July 3 to repeal the ordinance of secession and to work out a plan for the return of the state to the Union. When Mississippi presented this plan to the federal

government, it was not accepted. General E. G. Osband arrested Governor Clark and imprisoned him at Fort Pulaski, a federal prison in Georgia. Osband also confiscated state property, including the state archives. Responding to that action, the governor appointed two citizens, William L. Sharkey and William Yerger, to go to Washington to represent the state. President Andrew Johnson told the representatives that he could not talk to them in an official capacity, but that he would receive them as ordinary citizens. The president told them that the readmission of the state depended upon Mississippi's acceptance of the results of the war. Sharkey and Yerger agreed to accept the terms of war, providing that they would be reasonable ones.⁴

In addition to the state's attempt to qualify itself for readmission to the Union, the city of Vicksburg had appealed to the people of Mississippi early in May, 1865, to appoint delegates to a convention in Vicksburg. Likewise, a group of residents calling themselves the "Loyal" or "Unionist Mississippians" held a conference in Memphis, Tennessee, early in the same month. Here the delegates made plans to hold a convention in Vicksburg on June 5 in order to revise the state's government. However, this strategy came to no avail, because few delegates attended the convention and those present found it difficult to organize. Hence, both attempts to organize a new government failed.⁵

Shortly after a discussion regarding amnesty with Secretary of State William H. Seward, Johnson issued an amnesty proclamation on May 29, 1865, stipulating conditions under which states should reorganize to rejoin the Union. The proclamation was based upon President Abraham Lincoln's original plan of reconstruction. But Johnson made an exception, excluding persons owning property valued at \$20,000 or more. The

proclamation required individuals to take a loyalty oath pledging to uphold and to support the United States Constitution. They also had to accept all provisions of the proclamation, including the emancipation of slaves. North Carolina became the first state to test the act. In reference to the nature of the proclamation, the president cited Article IV in the fourth section of the United States Constitution. That section explained that the federal government guaranteed all states a republican form of government, but that the participation of a state in the Civil War led the federal government to intervene in state affairs. Thus, the president had found it necessary to appoint a provisional governor in order that he call a convention to change the state's constitution. No one would be allowed to vote for delegates unless they had taken the amnesty oath. William W. Holden, an acquaintance of President Johnson, was appointed governor.⁶

On June 13, 1865, Johnson appointed William L. Sharkey as provisional governor of Mississippi and also extended amnesty to the residents of Mississippi. Hearing about this, a segment of the Black community in Vicksburg held a mass meeting in protest. Jacob Richardson presided over the meeting and M. H. Mason, another member, served as secretary. During the meeting, the members listened to the reading of their preamble and resolutions of protest. In essence, the protesters stated that the president's amnesty proclamation only restored the status quo which existed in the state before the war. They also complained that the amnesty provisions were unjust to the Black people in the state. They closed by saying that an appeal would be made to the United States Congress asking that Mississippi be denied readmission until the state enfranchised its Black citizens.⁷

Meanwhile, Governor Sharkey began to assume the responsibilities of his office. On July 1, he explained the provisions of the federal amnesty proclamation to the people of Mississippi. The first section of the proclamation related to the appointment of Sharkey as provisional governor and the second advocated a speedy return to the Union by organizing a state government. The third and fourth sections indicated the procedures for amnesty to be taken by individuals and related steps for the appointment of persons to vacant offices. Other articles outlined the method of electing representatives to Congress from the state, while still other sections dealt with the operation of educational institutions and regulations regarding crime.⁸

Immediately, preparations were made to get the state started toward reorganization. On July 17, 1865, the governor asked the legislature for the passage of a one dollar tax on each bale of cotton produced. He explained that the charge would be used to pay the expenses for the constitutional convention. Four days later, he recommended an act that would double property taxes in situations where people refused to pay, and ordered the authorities to exercise eminent domain by selling private owned cotton at public auctions until enough money was secured to pay the taxes.⁹

The Mississippi Constitutional Convention convened on August 14, 1865. There were one hundred delegates present, mostly Democrats, Old Whigs, and Conservatives. By modern standards, the majority was conservative. Thirty-five of the members were lawyers, thirty-eight were farmers, while the remaining number consisted of preachers, businessmen, and physicians. Some of the members were former judges, and thirty had served in the state government. One delegate had attended the

constitutional convention of 1832 and had also represented the state as a United States senator. Seven of the representatives had attended the secession convention in 1861 and all but one had opposed secession. Yet, seven of the participants had registered as Unionists at the constitutional convention in 1851. Eleven of the participants were native Mississippians and all the remaining were natives of the South, except eight.¹⁰

The constitutional convention of 1865 contained but few men who had experience in public office. One fact which exemplified this peculiarity was that only a small number were former legislators. Furthermore, there was no one present who had served in the state's highest office. There was one basic factor which accounted for this situation. A considerable number had been Whigs, long the minority party in the state before the Civil War. Many of the delegates never occupied political positions in the state, while several secessionists did not choose to attend the constitutional convention of 1865. Finally, there were those who could not attend because of amnesty restrictions.¹¹

The governor presided over the constitutional convention and James R. Yerger, a native Mississippian, was elected president of the body. In a short speech, Yerger said that he hoped that they were heading for a period in which reconstruction would bring serenity, prosperity, and security for future generations. Following Yerger's address, the oath of allegiance to the United States Constitution was administered to each delegate. Three days after the convention assembled, the delegates drafted a memorandum to be sent to President Johnson, asking him not to send Black soldiers to the state. On August 21, following an intensive debate, an amendment to the state constitution was passed by a vote of

eighty-six to eleven. The amendment proclaimed that the state had abolished slavery and that no form of slavery, unless it be as punishment for crime in cases where one was found guilty, would exist in the state. In addition, the legislature in future sessions would have authority to enact legislation necessary to preserve the public welfare. The legislature would also provide for the protection and security of the recently emancipated people of the state and for their property. Lastly, the law must look after the residents of the state and protect its Blacks against vices which may emerge as a result of their recent liberty.¹²

In the midst of the proceedings, President Johnson sent Governor Sharkey a notice expressing some of his desires regarding the drafting of the constitution. He indicated that the vote could be extended to those Blacks who could interpret the United States Constitution and write their names. He also suggested the franchise for those Blacks who owned and paid taxes on property worth \$250. In the same communication, Johnson told the governor that if he could effect these measures, he would weaken the opposition and set an example which the other states would follow. Furthermore, he added that it could be obtained without any problems and that it would put the Southern states on an equal basis with the free states regarding Blacks. In his final comment, the president said that he hoped and trusted that the delegates would do these things. By doing them, he stated that the Radical Republicans, who were fanatical about Black suffrage, would have no grounds for not accepting senators and representatives from the South.¹³

While Governor Sharkey and the president communicated, the delegates to the Mississippi Constitutional Convention were busy trying to complete their work. Having passed an amendment to the constitution abolishing

slavery in the state, they formulated an ordinance authorizing a general election in relation to the election laws and the constitution of the state. The regulations pertaining to the state's general election were based upon the same requirements as the ones passed in January of 1861. The law provided for an election to be held on October 2 for representatives at the national, state, and local levels, and for a special election for judicial, county, district, and other state officials. On August 22, the convention enacted laws renouncing the ordinance of secession and all the other ordinances of the secession convention of 1861 were repealed except the one dealing with finance; the decision was reached to leave this for the legislature to handle.¹⁴

Although the delegates agreed on most of the proceedings at the constitutional convention, there were differences of opinions concerning the amendment to abolish slavery. On this, the debate lasted almost four days before the members reached a final decision. Hugh Barr, a delegate from Lafayette County, objected to the wording of the amendment. He offered a substitute amendment to the effect that slavery was abolished in the state by the federal government. Barr concluded that it would be a mistake to lead the residents and future generations to believe that the delegates had deliberately and on their own free will ended slavery, when in reality it had been forced upon them by an invader. Other delegates proposed similar amendments, but the committees rejected all the proposals on the grounds that the state was powerless in its present condition.¹⁵

As normal operations continued during the session, the constitutional convention turned to other matters. Shortly before the convention adjourned, it rejected a proposal to present the constitution to the

people for approval or rejection. On the same day, several of the delegates held an unofficial meeting. They drew up a petition requesting the president to pardon Jefferson Davis and Governor Clark. A resolution was passed to that effect and the convention asked William Yerger, a delegate, to present the petition to the president of the United States. This and one other proposal adopted by the convention became the subject of criticism. The New York Times criticized the delegates for petitioning the president not to send Black troops to Mississippi and for asking for pardons for Davis and Clark. However, these charges were based upon misinterpretations or false communications. For example, the proposal not to send Black troops had been suggested but was never passed. On the other hand, the proposal concerning Clark and Davis also failed, but members suggested a memorial as private citizens, and subsequently decided to send a similar petition to the president, containing more than 4,000 signatures, which had been signed primarily by women in the state.¹⁶

President Johnson had requested that the convention ratify the amendment to the United States Constitution ending slavery. But that would not be the case. The convention terminated its work ten days after it convened. Before the meeting adjourned, a motion was made and adopted giving Yerger the liberty to recall a session of the convention on February 24 of the following year if the conditions in the nation necessitated such action. However, the delegates never ratified the Thirteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution which ended slavery.¹⁷

The constitutional convention concluded its work on August 24, 1865. President Johnson sent a message to Governor Sharkey congratulating

the convention for its work in pioneering the way for the state to re-join the Union. On the same day, Sharkey sent a duplicate copy of the convention's work to Secretary of State Seward. When Seward received the notice, he told Sharkey that he would call it to the attention of the president at the earliest possible date. But instead of sending the copy directly to the president, the secretary forwarded a copy to John A. Andrew, the governor of Massachusetts, for his approval. Seward asked the governor's opinion on the grounds that his state was the only one to oppose slavery at the beginning of its statehood. Andrew also sent a copy to William Lloyd Garrison, the famed abolitionist, for his opinion. Andrew pointed out that he wanted Garrison's thinking on the matter because he started the abolitionist movement and promoted it to a greater extent than Lincoln or John Brown. The treatment of the Mississippi Constitution as a political document likely produced some exasperation among the people of the state.¹⁸

While these transactions were taking place, other events were operating in Mississippi. On the same day that the governor sent a copy of the state's constitution to Washington, military authorities took a man from the auspices of a civil magistrate while he awaited trial for shooting a Black man who had been caught committing a robbery. The incident brought quite an uproar from the public. The military retaliated by upholding the removal action and stated that the person involved had been accused of a crime and would stand trial in a military court. Furthermore, the military charged that the accused had committed a crime against Black soldiers and on one occasion had assaulted a Black female. Finally, the provisional military government of Mississippi told the state's judiciary that it did not have the power to handle such cases as

long as the state was under military supervision. Governor Sharkey made an attempt to counteract the action by directing that the citizens organize themselves under the militia laws of the state. He said that this was necessary in order to prevent crime and plundering in the state, and because the military was ill-prepared to provide adequate protection for the citizens.¹⁹

Though there were a variety of crimes committed in the state ordinarily tried by civil courts, the military forces felt compelled to handle these vices during reconstruction in Mississippi. Sharkey had asked the president's permission to organize military units in the state when he visited Washington, and this was granted. Nevertheless, when he issued an order to call out the militia, the military authorities in Vicksburg counteracted his command. The provisional military officials told Sharkey that they were trying to restore the state to its former position through mutual cooperation, but that the actions of the citizens toward the military complicated those efforts. The military officials also stated that it would be detrimental to organize militias at a time when the environment was filled with hostility. To exemplify their point, the authorities pointed out that if Sharkey permitted militias to be formed while Black troops were present, the troubles would be ten times greater, especially while prejudice existed toward the Blacks and the Union as well. They, therefore, prohibited the governor from organizing militia units and warned that anyone who attempted to act in that capacity would be reprimanded and punished.²⁰

With a determination to have his way, Governor Sharkey sent the president a telegram telling him that the military authorities had interfered with his order to organize militias in the state. President

Johnson, in spite of an attempt by Major General Carl Schurz to uphold the military authorities in Mississippi, issued an order to repeal the military action. Schurz was in the South acting as the president's personal agent when the conflict occurred. Schurz favored the military action along with other Northern sympathizers. The issue went on for more than two weeks but, nevertheless, the military retracted its order and Sharkey organized the militia units.²¹

In addition to cooperating with Governor Sharkey regarding the militia, President Johnson followed through on the policy that he had made earlier in his amnesty program of promising to issue pardons to Mississippians. In September and October of 1865, the president issued dozens of pardons to Mississippians who had supported the Confederate States. For example, Henry Laird of Panola County, F. A. Metcalf of Washington County, and many others throughout the state were pardoned.²²

Meanwhile, a number of Blacks in Mississippi remained on the plantations with their former owners while others wandered leisurely about the state in bewilderment. Most of them held exotic ideas concerning their recent freedom. While the White community gradually accepted emancipation, it was not ready to bestow equality on the Blacks. Some owners even anticipated the restoration of the Blacks in the near future to their previous status as bondsmen. Some minor disputes developed between employers and Blacks. Working agreements were finalized and land owners faced the coming year with an eagerness to draw up new contracts, somewhat fearful that labor would be hard to get. However, serious problems developed when Blacks were granted the rights to sue and be sued, and to testify in the courts. To further confuse the issue, Colonel Samuel Thomas, Assistant Commissioner of the Freedmen's

Bureau in Mississippi, made a proposition to turn his court over to the state judicial system. His proposal suggested that Blacks be treated on the same basis as Whites, with total equality under the law. Governor Sharkey approved of the plan and urged all judicial officers to follow it until the legislature examined the proposal. He also ordered the termination of all Black courts.²³

Apprehension toward activities of Blacks in some communities would not allow some White residents to wait on the legislature to act on the matter. An unusual case occurred on November 1, 1865, when Joel H. Berry, a resident of Molino, Mississippi, contacted F. A. Wolfe, a state legislator from Teppah County. Berry informed Wolfe that some Blacks were in the process of trying to purchase or obtain guns. He stated that perhaps they only wanted to exercise their liberty to hunt, but on the other hand, he added that they might have something else in mind. Therefore, Berry reasoned that if hunting was not their purpose, then similar actions could arise in other communities. He felt that the legislature should examine the matter. Before closing, he asked if it were wise for Blacks to arm themselves. While time would allow these difficulties to submerge themselves temporarily, the state election was approaching.²⁴

The state election took place on October 2, 1865, without difficulty or excitement except for a campaign in support of the soldier candidates in certain counties. Benjamin G. Humphreys, an ex-brigadier general of the Confederate Army, was elected governor. Humphreys received a total of 19,027 votes to his opponent's 15,648. His victory represented solid support for a former soldier against a candidate who had opposed secession. There were also five Congressmen elected from

Mississippi. To fill the seat in the United States Senate that Jefferson Davis, the former president of the Confederacy once held, Governor Sharkey was elected, and the regular term in the United States Senate went to James L. Alcorn, a native Mississippian. Shortly after the election, President Johnson issued an executive order requesting the release of former Governor Charles Clark and other prisoners who had been confined. During their probationary period, these men were asked to appear to answer charges against them.²⁵

Governor Sharkey informed the authorities in Washington that Humphreys had taken the oath of office just after November 1, 1865, and that the legislature had assumed its regular functions. In reply to Sharkey, Secretary of State Seward told him that the president desired him, rather than Humphreys, to continue serving as provisional governor. Thus, Humphreys' term of service, beginning on November 1, 1865, would be deferred. Meanwhile, the president maintained a provisional government in the state. Secretary Seward reminded Sharkey that it was imperative that the Mississippi Legislature adopt the Thirteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution. Anything short of that, Seward added, would lead to the opinion that the legislature would repeal the amendment in its state's constitution abolishing slavery. Moreover, Seward asked if the convention ratified the amendment in the state, then why should the legislature hesitate to incorporate it into the United States Constitution? Finishing his reply, the secretary said that he had the firm belief that the legislature would adopt the amendment. Thus, such action would allow the acceptance of Mississippi's congressmen by the current Congress. Later in the month, the president asked Sharkey to keep him informed of political developments in the state.²⁶

Governor Humphreys sent a message advising the legislature to send a delegation to Washington to inform the president of the condition of affairs in the state. The governor directed them to let it be known that a measure of danger and inconveniences existed in the state as a result of insurrectionary actions by Blacks and pressure from Black troops. He told the delegates to secure written statements from citizens in various counties concerning the conduct of Black troops as evidence. His last request was a plea for arms for the militia to defend the state.²⁷

After Humphreys acquiesced to the superiority of the United States Constitution, he said that in his opinion the states could not legally separate the chains that bind them. The governor acknowledged his regret of the war and what had resulted from it, but he said that it would be better to reconcile themselves with the Union in order to bring prosperity to Mississippi as well as the nation. He declared that it would be misleading to admit that the state voluntarily abolished slavery, but that it would be noble to show that it was done gracefully. Humphreys explained that Blacks must be elevated to the highest standards of civilization, but that they could not be granted political or social equality with the Anglo-Saxon race. He terminated his message by saying that the government must continue to be that of the White man's.²⁸

The Mississippi Legislature had already appointed a three-member committee to study the laws of the state and to identify the changes which had occurred in them as a result of the Thirteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution. The committee was also directed to make suggestions as to what changes should be made in the laws that would enable the state to provide adequate protection for Blacks and, at the

same time, rid the state from the burden of supporting delinquents, loafers, and other paupers. The committee had the liberty of using its own discretion without outside influence. After substantial research, the committee reported that it had carefully reached its decision without opinions from third parties. Moreover, its findings were distinct in that they were based upon the unique situation within the state and that its suggestions would promote the best interest for two different races in the state. These recommendations, discussed later, would soon become public knowledge and unfavorable consequences would develop.²⁹

As the legislature continued its study of the committee's report and considered related matters, Governor Humphreys carried on negotiations with President Johnson. The governor had been notified that violence had erupted in Meridian, Mississippi, resulting from the actions of Black troops. Humphreys relayed the message to the president and told him that the legislature was willing to allow Blacks to testify in court providing that the government withdraw the federal troops. The governor explained that the legislature was afraid that one concession would lead to another. He wanted to know if there was any guarantee that he could give the legislature on the matter. Furthermore, a committee report on the subject had told the legislature that citizens were unhappy because Black troops were stationed in their homes and in public buildings without their consent. Such situations, the committee added, led to violence and other injuries on the part of the troops who disguised the action as military orders.³⁰

In his reply to Governor Sharkey, the president said that the troops would be withdrawn from the state when he felt that the state authorities had peacefully restored order and no longer needed the

soldiers. He pointed out that any necessary measures to prevent subordination of the state government would be taken by the troops while they were present. Regarding the governor's statement about concession, the president advised that the federal government did not require any concession on the part of the state legislature except that it comply with the United States Constitution by passing laws giving Blacks equal protection under the laws without reference to color. The president assured the governor that the federal government did not desire to compromise or to dictate to Mississippi what course of action it should take, but on the other hand, he suggested that the state government follow a course of action that would normalize relations between the state and the Union. Johnson also stated that he hoped that the legislature would adhere to his advice, for it was only given in good faith toward restoration to the Union. Moreover, he warned that there must be mutual confidence between the states and the federal government, a confidence in which the federal government trusted its citizens.³¹

To assure that Mississippi would follow his instructions, the president sent an agent to the state with orders to remove Humphreys and to reappoint Sharkey as provisional governor. But Sharkey refused to go along with the plan. Sharkey told the agent that the people had elected Humphreys to run the government and that he would not serve as governor again under any circumstances. However, the federal adviser explained that if Sharkey assumed the responsibility for civil affairs in the state, it would eliminate the president's problems with the Radical Republicans. But that suggestion came to no avail.³²

Believing that the only way to remove the federal occupation troops and to restore the functions of the state's civil government was to open

the courts to Blacks, Governor Humphreys told the legislature that a separate judicial system should be organized in which Blacks would be allowed to testify. The governor stated that it would be an insult to the state judiciary system to refuse to protect the innocent by not accepting Black testimonies. Therefore, he strongly recommended that the testimonies of Blacks be accepted not for their sake alone, but also for the welfare of the state against the vices of both Blacks and Whites.³³

Acting upon the advice of the governor and the committee's report regarding Blacks, the Mississippi Legislature began to prepare laws regulating the actions of Blacks in the state. The committee's report contained specific suggestions concerning the existing laws in the state as they related to Blacks and the Thirteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution. First, the committee suggested the creation of courts throughout the counties with a probate judge accompanied by two justices of the peace to be chosen by the justices in each county. Second, the committee emphasized that crime and other vices which resulted from the war and emancipation needed immediate attention and stricter enforcement of the laws than the existing system provided. The report also contained recommended bills that would amend the vagrant laws and regulate relations between Black apprentices and their employers.³⁴

The legislature responded by passing a law entitled "An Act to confer Civil Rights on Freedmen, and for Other Purposes." According to the provisions of this act, Blacks could marry only within their own race, could not own or rent property except in cities or towns, but could possess personal property. The law required that each Black have

a labor contract and have legal evidence of possessing a home through ownership. Blacks were granted the right to sue and be sued, needed permission from their employers to leave their jobs, and were not allowed to carry arms. Dependent children of Blacks were required to apprentice themselves under an employer, often their former owner, until they were eighteen years of age. In addition, Blacks were denied the right to vote or hold public office, could not serve in the militia or on a jury, and could not hold meetings.³⁵

Blacks were quick to register their dissatisfaction toward this law. Blacks, both men and women, refused to work unless they were paid decent wages. The seriousness of these activities led the military authorities to take positive action. The military nullified the section of the law pertaining to the right to own arms and to purchase or rent land. In addition, a group of Blacks appealed to the federal government by sending a delegation to Washington to explain the situation within the state. They presented a petition which stated that they were being reenslaved by the so-called Black Code Laws. Charles Sumner, a United States senator from Massachusetts, received the petition and suggested that some action be taken immediately. Congress answered by refusing to seat senators or representatives from any former Confederate state until it decided that it was ready for representation. As a result of that act, Sharkey and Alcorn were not allowed their seats as congressmen from the state.³⁶

On December 14, 1865, Senator Thaddeus Stevens of Pennsylvania, directed the formation of a committee of fifteen, composed of members of both houses of Congress. The committee consisted of nine congressmen and six senators. This organization assumed the responsibility of

handling all legislation pertaining to reconstruction in the following months. In February of 1866, Congress passed a bill that extended the life of the Freedmen's Bureau, an organization formed during the war to care for freed slaves. Though Johnson vetoed the measure, the law of 1865 which established the organization had not expired, so it continued.³⁷

As Congress received further information concerning the Black Code Laws, it continued to pass legislation in opposition to such measures. In April, Congress passed the Civil Rights Act of 1866 over the president's veto. This law conferred upon all people equal protection of life and property. It also guaranteed everyone the right to enter into contracts, to sue and be sued, and the right to inherit property. These civil rights were provided without reference to race, color, or previous condition of servitude. Anyone who violated this act was subject to federal prosecution. The spring and summer of 1866 witnessed events which led to more congressional acts. In the month of May, a clash occurred between Black troops of the Third United States Artillery Regiment and members of the police department in Memphis, Tennessee. When the melee was over, about forty-six Blacks were dead and more than eighty had been injured. A similar event occurred in July in New Orleans. When a group of delegates assembled to repeal the Louisiana Constitution and to extend the franchise to Blacks, a riot erupted which left some fifty persons dead and more than 150 wounded. Congress renounced these incidents as the worst massacres in the nation's history. Following these events and the Republican victory in the national congressional election of 1866, Congress would pass more stringent policies in the coming year.³⁸

On March 2, 1867, Congress passed a reconstruction act which stated that the former Confederate states should hold state conventions for the purpose of drafting new state constitutions. Furthermore, each state was to send delegates elected by male citizens regardless of race, color, or previous condition of servitude. In addition, the United States Constitution extended the franchise to all males who were eligible to vote for delegates to the convention. On March 26 of the same year, Major General E.O.C. Ord took command of the Fourth Military District, comprising the states of Mississippi and Arkansas. An instant reaction was registered against this action in Mississippi. Ex-governor Sharkey and Robert J. Walker, a citizen of the state, drew up a bill of complaint against Ord and President Johnson, protesting the constitutionality of the act. The petition consisted of an extensive history of the state describing the rights of the state and its citizens as a member of the Union. The argument went on to explain the duty of the United States Supreme Court to protect the states against such acts. When the case came before the United States Supreme Court, it ruled that the case was beyond its powers to handle. But Governor Humphreys, nevertheless, issued a proclamation to the citizens explaining that their allegiance to both federal and state constitutions were the same until further changes occurred.³⁹

On the day of his appointment, Ord published and circulated General Order Number 1, giving an explanation of his assignment as commander of the Fourth Military District. He told the citizens of Mississippi and Arkansas that qualified officers of the state government were requested to apprehend and punish anyone guilty of breaking the law under the reconstruction act of March 2, 1867. Likewise, he reminded them that all

necessary orders to carry out this act would be issued by his office from time to time. Ord received a warm reception from some people of the state who viewed him as an intelligent soldier who performed his duties according to his convictions. But there were others who felt that he would show favoritism toward the South by allowing them to continue their own policy of reconstruction. This attitude prevailed because Ord was a native of Maryland and partially because he had served in Mississippi under General William T. Sherman of the Union Army.⁴⁰

Some of the discreet citizens of Mississippi demonstrated a measure of cooperation early in the spring of 1867. On May 4, an interracial meeting was held at Gallatin in Copiah County. Here the members adopted resolutions promoting mutual and peaceful reconstruction between the races and for the educational and economic development of the state and nation. Ord then began to establish voter registration boards throughout the state. Each board had the responsibility of registering potential voters in the several counties under its jurisdiction. Whenever an individual was placed on a board, he had to take an oath stating that he had not taken up arms or aided in any way against the Union. Each county was divided into precincts in order to simplify the task of registration. Registrars were required to give each voter a certificate certifying his qualifications as a voter. The registrars also had to explain who was or who was not eligible to vote and why.⁴¹

Ord tried to implement a program that would be satisfactory to both races. Because there had been extralegal means used in land sales and crop production on the part of large plantation owners, some Mississippi residents registered complaints. In response to these, Ord issued a circular order designed to reduce crop cultivation and to protect the

debtors and creditors from increasing agricultural sales. As a result of the order, on June 12, 1867, the sale of land, crops, and any other materials associated with farming was suspended. Moreover, the law protected all those who owed debts prior to January 1, 1866, and gave them an extension until December 31, 1867. The small White farmers were elated over this act, for it allowed them to avoid eviction from their land.⁴²

In his relations with the Mississippi governor and other politicians, Ord warned that physical or vocal subversive action on their part would be viewed as legal grounds for their removal from office. He made it understood that this warning applied to other residents of the state as well. This action infuriated both conservative and radical elements of the state. The general demonstrated his seriousness in this matter when an incident occurred involving W. H. McCradle. McCradle was the editor of the Vicksburg Daily Times, and Ord arrested him for criticism of congressional actions and for Ord's policy of implementing them. When the case came before the United States Supreme Court, Congress denied the court the right to handle cases dealing with writs of habeas corpus. Hence, the case of *ex parte* McCradle gained nothing more than further animosity from the conservatives in the state. But Ord went even further when he removed men from office whom he charged were interfering with congressional reconstruction. Most of those removed were local officials, and the number amounted to about twenty-five. Nevertheless, he faced difficulty in finding replacements for those vacancies.⁴³

Ord's relations with Blacks in Mississippi was of a different nature. There were numerous occasions in which he displayed firm action toward Blacks while trying to maintain discipline within the state. In

the later part of 1867, there was extensive gossip of Black revolt. In an effort to prevent such an incident, Ord contacted one of his commanders in the state, directing him to supply a list of names of anyone guilty of inciting riots by means of speaking to Blacks or by disturbing the peace by arousing Blacks against Whites. In December of 1867, Ord received a report that Blacks were holding a meeting in Oakland, Mississippi. The message also contained a statement that they were armed and had intentions of starting a rebellion. Acting instantly on the tip, the general ordered military authorities under his jurisdiction in Granada to appoint an able commander and twenty quality men to go to Oakland and check on the matter. The commander also had orders to apprehend those who headed the conspiracy.⁴⁴

As December of 1867 was the end of harvesting for the season, many Blacks did not have jobs. Crime increased during this period, especially the theft of livestock. It was common belief among Blacks at this time that land would be allotted to them. In the wake of that opinion, a marginal number refused to sign labor contracts for the next year and some refused to leave the plantations. At times there were signs of insurrection, which forced the authorities to take action. Governor Humphreys was the first to react to these activities. He informed Blacks that he had learned of their intentions of seizing land for the purpose of establishing farms and of their hopes that Congress would devise a plan for distributing it among them. Likewise, he added that Blacks had avowed that if Congress did not organize such a system by January of 1868, then they would proceed to take land themselves, even if it meant going to war, an act of which they felt sure of succeeding. But the governor warned them that they could not succeed, and he advised them

that the first sign of such an act would mean an end to all of their hopes and the destruction of their race. This caution was also verified and upheld by General Ord. Ord told the Blacks that Congress had no intention of taking land for them, and he warned that any attempt on their part to do so would lead to their arrest or death. Finally, he told them to go back to work and to try to live in peace with the White race.⁴⁵

Meanwhile, Ord turned his attention to the task of voter registration. That job was somewhat peaceful except for a few minor disturbances. One man was arrested and imprisoned for ninety days because he had attempted to stop registrars from performing their duty. He had also made an attempt to prevent Blacks from registering by telling them that it was a scheme by the government to send them overseas to fight. Ord would send troops to areas where he suspected trouble would develop. On August 8, 1867, he sent a company of men to Woodville, near Natchez, where he anticipated disturbances. He ordered them to make preparations to remain there indefinitely. The general went even further by directing the commanders in various districts to close all taverns and other places where alcoholic beverages were sold on days when political meetings were held. In addition, he used a congressional act, in conjunction with the reconstruction acts, which authorized the clerk of the United States House of Representatives to require selected newspapers to print the laws relating to voter registration and other political procedures. Emanating from this action, the Vicksburg Republican, the Meridian Chronicle, and the Corinth Republican were chosen.⁴⁶

Voter registration came to an end by September 15, 1867, and there were more than 136,000 registered voters, the majority of whom were

Black. Late in October, Ord held another registration which lasted for five days, and more than 3,000 voters were added to the registration books. In the past, historians have based their findings on a previous and incorrect voter registration list that stated that there were only 106,000 registered voters. These figures were also used to attack and discredit Ord, charging that his apportionment was unfair. But those charges are invalid, for those who made them miscalculated by some 30,000 voters, and obviously never analyzed Ord's apportionment record. In fact, when all the registered voters were tabulated, there was a sum total of 139,327.⁴⁷

The success of registration led several political groups to plan their strategies for the coming election. The Republican Party held a convention in Jackson on September 10 and 11, 1867. The meeting was composed of both Black and White delegates. As the convention proceeded to carry on its deliberations, one of the White delegates made a motion that the word "Colored" be used by the name of each Black delegate. A Black delegate objected to the amendment. Another delegate made a motion, which passed, that the original amendment and the motion be tabled. Hence, the delegates continued with their proceedings. They adopted six resolutions which stipulated their support for the Republican Party and their obligation to uphold the principles and all other functions that concerned the party.⁴⁸

There were also two other groups who met in Jackson. All of the conservative groups in the state promoted efforts to get Whites to register, but they held different views about reconstruction. One group calling themselves the "Conservative Reconstructionists" advocated the nomination and election of conservative members to the convention, while

the so-called "Constitutional Union" group proposed to stay away from the polls on election day. A split developed between these factions because they could not agree upon the best method of defeating reconstruction. Disregarding the conservatives' plans for defeating reconstruction, Ord set the first Tuesday in November, 1867, as the date for an election for the purpose of deciding upon a date for a convention to draft a state constitution and to elect delegates to the convention. There were one hundred delegates to be chosen from the total number of registered voters in relation to the apportionment plan in the state.⁴⁹

The election took place on November 5, 1867, and there were 76,016 votes cast, of which 69,739 supported a constitutional convention, while 6,277 voters opposed it. Thus, the convention was set for January 7, 1868, in Jackson. There were 6,311 votes in excess of the amount required by Congress for a convention. Ord was reassigned to San Francisco, California, by President Johnson on December 28, 1867, and replaced by General Alvin C. Gillem.⁵⁰

When the war ended in Mississippi, the conservatives in the state were determined to organize a new government based upon the antebellum pattern. President Johnson shared this desire to a certain extent. Though he was somewhat lenient in his policy, he made an exception by suggesting limited enfranchisement for Blacks. But for reasons of their own, Mississippians would not allow themselves to bestow this civil right upon Blacks. Perhaps the White leadership of Mississippi considered Blacks too inexperienced to participate in politics or that they were incapable of such a task. On the other hand, perhaps they feared that the 79,176 Black voters would eventually control their lives

politically. Regardless of what their reasons were, they and their descendents would eventually experience the beginning of Black participation in politics in the state.

FOOTNOTES

¹American Annual Cyclopedia and Register of Important Events of the Year 1867 (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1873), p. 517; James T. Currie, "The Beginning of Congressional Reconstruction in Mississippi," Journal of Mississippi History, Vol. XXXV, No. 3 (August, 1973), p. 277; Compendium of the Ninth Census (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1872), pp. 61-62.

²American Annual Cyclopedia and Register of Important Events of the Year 1865 (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1873), p. 578.

³Ibid., p. 579; Sadie D. St. Clair, "The National Career of Blanche Kelso Bruce" (Doctor of Philosophy Dissertation, New York University, 1947), p. 27.

⁴Ibid., pp. 28-29.

⁵American Annual Cyclopedia and Events of 1865, p. 578; Winbourne Magruder Drake, "The Mississippi Reconstruction Convention of 1865," Journal of Mississippi History, Vol. XXI, No. 4 (October, 1959), p. 226.

⁶Ellis Paxton Oberholtzer, A History of the United States Since the Civil War (5 vols., New York: Macmillan Company, 1936), Vol. I, pp. 31-33; Drake, "The Mississippi Reconstruction Convention of 1865," Journal of Mississippi History, Vol. XXI, p. 227.

⁷Jessie B. Mosley, The Negro in Mississippi (Jackson: Hederman Brothers Publishers, 1950), p. 33; Drake, "The Mississippi Reconstruction Convention of 1865," Journal of Mississippi History, Vol. XXI, p. 227.

⁸Journal of the Mississippi Constitutional Convention of 1865, as Amended With the Ordinances and Resolutions Adopted by the Constitutional Convention, August, 1865 (Jackson: E. M. Yeger, 1865), pp. 3-7.

⁹American Annual Cyclopedia and Events of 1865, p. 581.

¹⁰Charles Madison Bacon, "A History of Hinds County Mississippi During Reconstruction, 1865-1875" (Master of Arts Thesis, Mississippi College, 1959), p. 22; Drake, "The Mississippi Reconstruction Convention of 1865," Journal of Mississippi History, Vol. XII, p. 233.

¹¹Ibid., p. 234.

- ¹² American Annual Cyclopedia and Events of 1865, p. 581; Oberholtzer, A History of the United States Since the Civil War, Vol. I, p. 121.
- ¹³ Ibid.; J. S. McNeily, "From Organization to Overthrow of Mississippi's Provisional Government, 1865-1868," Publication of the Mississippi Historical Society: Centenary Series, Vol. I (1917), pp. 9-10, cited hereafter as P.M.H.S.
- ¹⁴ American Annual Cyclopedia and Events of 1865, p. 581.
- ¹⁵ Drake, "The Mississippi Reconstruction Convention of 1865," Journal of Mississippi History, Vol. XXI, pp. 237-239.
- ¹⁶ American Annual Cyclopedia and Events of 1865, p. 581; Drake, "The Mississippi Reconstruction Convention of 1865," Journal of Mississippi History, Vol. XXI, p. 250.
- ¹⁷ Ibid., pp. 251-252.
- ¹⁸ McNeily, "From Organization to Overthrow of Mississippi's Provisional Government," P.M.H.S., Vol. I, pp. 10-11.
- ¹⁹ American Annual Cyclopedia and Events of 1865, pp. 581-582.
- ²⁰ Oberholtzer, A History of the United States Since the Civil War, Vol. I, p. 135; American Annual Cyclopedia and Events of 1865, pp. 582-583.
- ²¹ Ibid., p. 584; Oberholtzer, A History of the United States Since the Civil War, Vol. I, p. 135.
- ²² Pardons Issued to Mississippians by President Johnson, September-October, 1865, William L. Sharkey Papers, Mississippi State Archives, Jackson, Mississippi; McNeily, "From Organization to Overthrow of Mississippi's Provisional Government," P.M.H.S., Vol. I, p. 10.
- ²³ American Annual Cyclopedia and Events of 1865, p. 584.
- ²⁴ Joel H. Berry to F. A. Wolfe, November 1, 1865, Joel H. Berry Papers, Mississippi State Archives.
- ²⁵ McNeily, "From Organization to Overthrow of Mississippi's Provisional Government," P.M.H.S., Vol. I, pp. 11-13; American Annual Cyclopedia and Events of 1865, pp. 584-585.
- ²⁶ McNeily, "From Organization to Overthrow of Mississippi's Provisional Government," P.M.H.S., Vol. I, pp. 17-18.
- ²⁷ Governor Humphreys to the State Legislature, December 1, 1865, J. L. Power Papers, Mississippi State Archives.
- ²⁸ American Annual Cyclopedia and Events of 1865, p. 585; Edith Haas Beckman, "Reconstruction in Mississippi," Mississippi State Archives Collection, p. 2.

²⁹McNeily, "From Organization to Overthrow of Mississippi's Provisional Government," P.M.H.S., Vol. I, pp. 18-19.

³⁰Ibid., p. 22.

³¹American Annual Cyclopedia and Events of 1865, p. 585.

³²McNeily, "From Organization to Overthrow of Mississippi's Provisional Government," P.M.H.S., Vol. I, p. 23.

³³American Annual Cyclopedia and Events of 1865, p. 586.

³⁴McNeily, "From Organization to Overthrow of Mississippi's Provisional Government," P.M.H.S., Vol. I, p. 19.

³⁵Bacon, "A History of Hinds County Mississippi During Reconstruction, 1865-1875," pp. 24-25; Benjamin Brawley, Negro Builders and Heroes (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1937), p. 132.

³⁶Bacon, "A History of Hinds County Mississippi During Reconstruction, 1865-1875," pp. 25-27.

³⁷Oberholtzer, History of the United States Since the Civil War, Vol. I, pp. 160-165.

³⁸Ibid., p. 178; Edward A. Lewis, A History of American Political Thought from the Civil War to the World War (New York: Macmillan Company, 1937), p. 50; Oberholtzer, A History of the United States Since the Civil War, Vol. I, pp. 380-383.

³⁹Emma Lou Thornbrough, ed., Black Reconstructionists (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1972), p. 1; Richard L. Hume, "The Black and Tan Constitutional Conventions of 1867-1869 in Ten Former Confederate States: A History of Their Membership" (Doctor of Philosophy Dissertation, University of Washington, 1969), p. 325; American Annual Cyclopedia and Events of 1867, p. 514.

⁴⁰McNeily, "From Organization to Overthrow of Mississippi's Provisional Government," P.M.H.S., Vol. I, p. 293; Currie, "The Beginning of Congressional Reconstruction In Mississippi," Journal of Mississippi History, Vol. XXXV, p. 268.

⁴¹American Annual Cyclopedia and Events of 1867, p. 515.

⁴²Currie, "The Beginning of Congressional Reconstruction In Mississippi," Journal of Mississippi History, Vol. XXXV, p. 270.

⁴³Ibid., pp. 268-269.

⁴⁴Ibid., pp. 270-271.

⁴⁵American Annual Cyclopedia and Events of 1867, pp. 518-519.

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 516; Currie, "The Beginning of Congressional Reconstruction In Mississippi," Journal of Mississippi History, Vol. XXXV, p. 272.

⁴⁷Ibid., pp. 272-276; American Annual Cyclopedia and Events of 1867, p. 518.

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 516.

⁴⁹Currie, "The Beginning of Congressional Reconstruction In Mississippi," Journal of Mississippi History, Vol. XXXV, p. 273; American Annual Cyclopedia and Events of 1867, p. 517.

⁵⁰Ibid., pp. 519-520.

CHAPTER II

BLACK LOCAL LEADERS IN MISSISSIPPI

The Mississippi Constitutional Convention that convened on January 7, 1868, represented a total population, according to 1867 figures, of 724,718. Of these 381,258 were Blacks and 343,460 were Whites. Blacks were in the majority by 37,798. There were 139,327 registered voters in December, 1867, and of these 79,176 were Black, while 60,151 were White. Blacks were in the majority by 19,025. In spite of a majority in both population and registered voters, Blacks represented only sixteen percent of the one hundred delegates who attended the convention.¹

Of the sixteen Blacks who attended the convention, four counties sent two each while each of the remaining counties sent one. John C. Brinson, Cyrus Myers, Charles Caldwell, Henry Mayson, William T. Combash, Doctor Stites, Albert Johnson, and Thomas W. Stringer were from Rankin, Hinds, Washington, and Warren counties, respectively. Amos Drane, Charles W. Fitzhugh, Emanuel Handy, Henry P. Jacobs, Wesley Lawson, J. Aaron Moore, Matthew T. Newsom, and Isham Stewart, came from Madison, Wilkinson, Copiah, Adams, Lawrence, Lauderdale, Claiborne, and Naxubee counties, respectively.²

Some historians have cited seventeen Blacks that attended the convention. For instance, William Leonard, a delegate from Yazoo County was listed, whereas J. Aaron Moore was not, but all other works identified Moore as a delegate. Moreover, one historian named George Stovall

of Carroll County as a Black delegate, making a total of seventeen. So there seems to be some indecision concerning Leonard, Moore, and Stovall. The convention journal listed all of the delegates but did not make distinctions by race. Nevertheless, sixteen has been the generally accepted number.

Among the Black delegates, two had always been free and one had escaped from slavery. Thirteen were former slaves, at least six were ministers, and one was a blacksmith. There was no available information on the nativity of eleven of the delegates prior to their coming to Mississippi. Mayson and Stewart were natives of Mississippi while Combash and Jacobs came from Maryland and Alabama respectively. Stringer was born in the South but grew up in Ohio. Some of these men were more influential than others at the convention, especially Stringer who was perhaps the most prominent person among them. Likewise, Stringer, Jacobs, and a few others went on to become outstanding leaders in state politics while others went in different directions.³

Brinson, Caldwell, Drane, Fitzhugh, Combash, and Handy all underwent different experiences following the convention. Brinson, one of the delegates of unknown origin unsuccessfully ran for the state house of representatives in 1868 following the convention. Caldwell also lost in his attempt to win a seat in the lower house in the same year, but in the state election that followed, he succeeded in winning a seat in the state senate. Unlike Caldwell, Drane was not fortunate in his bid for the state lower house, but he went on to become a delegate to the National Union Republican Convention which met in Jackson on September 8, 1869. The three delegates mentioned above were of unknown origin, but Combash was originally from a border state. Immediately after the

convention, he sought a position in the state senate, which came to no avail, and in 1871 was hung by the Ku Klux Klan. Fitzhugh and Handy were also delegates, but no information is available on their nativity. However, Fitzhugh later became a state representative and was also a Methodist Episcopal Church minister. Handy lost in his first effort to become a state representative, but he was successful in a second trial.⁴

Seven other Black delegates had similar experiences following the convention. Jacobs was originally from the South and had escaped from slavery to Canada in 1856. He failed in his first campaign as a state representative in 1868, but won in his second race. He also became active in religious activities in the state. Johnson, another delegate with an unknown background and a minister, missed in his endeavor to become a representative in 1868. Mayson was originally from the South and, like several others, was disappointed when he came short of winning as a representative. Moore made two attempts before successfully becoming a representative. He was also affiliated with the Episcopal Church. In 1871, he barely escaped death in the Meridian riot. Myers unsuccessfully ran for a house seat in 1868 while Newsom, a Methodist Episcopal Church minister, shared the same fate in 1868, but succeeded in the following election. Of these seven delegates, only Jacobs and Mayson's nativity was known.

The experiences of the three remaining Black delegates were no different than their counterparts. Stringer ran twice before he became a successful state senator in 1870. Stewart failed in 1868 when he sought a state representative spot, but succeeded later at the same task and also became a member of the state senate. Finally, Stites

became a member of the state house after failing in his first attempt in 1868.⁵

Of the other remaining eighty-four members, all White, sixty-seven were Republicans and the remaining seventeen made up a homogeneous mixture of various parties such as Democrats, Whigs, Union Conservatives, Constitutional Union, Union, and other political factions. Six of the delegates were of unknown origin; three came from Illinois and one from Pennsylvania. Two came from Massachusetts and two from New York, while one was a native of Indiana and another came from Wisconsin; nine had served in the Union Army. Only thirty-seven were residents of the South and nineteen were natives of Mississippi. Five Mississippians had lived in other Southern states.⁶

During the first two days of the convention, the delegates were only concerned with rules, regulations, and the formation of committees. On the first day, Mayson, a Black from Hinds County, made a motion that the secretary read General Order Number 42 from the headquarters of the Fourth Military District which regulated the convening of the convention. The motion carried, and then Mayson was also appointed assistant secretary of the convention. B. B. Eggleston of Lowndes County was elected president of the convention. Fitzhugh, a Black delegate from Wilkinson County, was appointed a member of the Credentials Committee. When the roll was called on the first day, Drane and Stites, two Black delegates, were absent. On the second day, the Credentials Committee reported that all of the delegates who were present had sufficient papers. Hence, the convention continued its proceedings.⁷

A few weeks after the convention convened, a controversy developed between the Black delegates and the press. Newspaper reporters were not

allowed to attend meetings, because they had used the word "Colored" to describe the Black delegates in their papers. They were also denied admission to the convention for their refusal to address Blacks as mister. On the last day in January, 1868, a motion was made to keep all reporters out of the convention who had made discriminatory remarks when referring to the members. Most of the Blacks commented on the resolution. Mayson stated that the embarrassment of being called Colored had left him speechless. Combash proclaimed that the fact that they were not addressed as gentlemen was not a major concern to him, but that they were of the Black race and were proud of it. He concluded that they only wanted to be treated with respect. However, the motion to keep all reporters out was lost.⁸

The most controversial subjects of the convention were those relating to race, property, and educational requirements for voting. In addition, the proceedings concerning civil and political rights for Blacks were the subject of much debate. The topic pertaining to Black participation on juries caused heated discussions. Some suggested that Blacks serve on juries, while others suggested a plan by which they would serve in cases involving them only and vice versa. Not only were these issues debated extensively, but they were the most deplorable parts of the new state constitution. Alston Mygatt, a delegate from Warren County, and temporary president of the convention, had already addressed the convention on the topic of partisan legislation. He said that they had assembled to forget hatred, racism, and other repugnant emotions, for their purpose was to draft a constitution that would provide equality for all people. In spite of this plea, animosity was a prevailing factor during the convention.⁹

When the delegates took up the subject of education, they began by establishing a state board of education with a superintendent of public education as its head. They stipulated that the superintendent would be elected by the eligible voters of the state and that his qualifications and term in office would be the same as a senator in the state. The board's authority and functions would emanate from state law, and the legislature had powers to appoint additional members to assist in public instruction. Stringer, a Black delegate from Warren County, offered a resolution to the education amendment. He suggested that the legislature provide for a free system of public education in the state in which all children ranging from six to eighteen years of age could attend. Moreover, he pleaded for a funding system by taxation or other means and a compulsory attendance law. His resolution was referred to the Education Committee. Jacobs, a Black from Adams County, proposed a resolution that no state funds should ever be used to support non-public schools, which was also turned over to the Education Committee.¹⁰

Early in March, 1868, the members of the constitutional convention continued their discussion on education. This time the discussion was centered around the superintendent of public education, who would be appointed by the state board of education with the consent of the state. It was likewise pointed out that the legislature would have the right to make the office of county superintendent of schools elective in various counties. Also, the term of office of county superintendent of schools would be two years following the year 1872, and his salary and duties would be determined by the state. Upon the adoption of this amendment, Stringer, a Black delegate, again made a motion to amend it.

Stringer also moved that by law parents or anyone who had children old enough to attend school should send them to school no less than four months a year until the child reached the age of fifteen. At that moment, Stovall of Carroll County submitted an amendment. He begged for the establishment of segregated schools for both races in each district. He further added that if there were not a sufficient number of students for the school to function, then the Black race would send their children to a school in the adjacent district and still receive their share of the funds as they would have in their own district. Jacobs, also a Black, made a motion that the amendment be allowed to lay on the table, but his motion was lost. Eventually, the convention established a school for all children between the ages of five and twenty-one with no provisions pertaining to integrated or separate schools. This problem would be left up to the legislature to solve.¹¹

Having completed educational matters, the convention turned its attention to matrimonial proceedings. Basing his opinion upon physiological analysis, Stovall, a White delegate, introduced a resolution declaring that interracial marriages among Blacks and Whites were subject to the transmission of fatal hereditary defects, whereas children of a single race would not contract such terminal illnesses. He warned that such unions would eventually lead to the termination of both races in the South unless interracial marriages were stopped. He therefore suggested that an article in the constitution be passed prohibiting such marriages, and that if they continued, those found guilty of indulging in such would be imprisoned for not less than five years. Stringer made a motion to table the resolution, but it was lost.¹²

Four days later, Stovall's resolution came up again. This time,

Newsom, a Black delegate, asked to amend the previous resolution, which was agreed to by Stovall. Newsom requested that all individuals convicted for miscegenation or for illegally living together should be fined a minimum fee of \$1,000 and not more than \$5,000 each. Moreover, he suggested that persons refusing to honor the fee should be confined in prison for at least five years and not more than ten, during which they would be subject to strenuous labor. In addition, he wanted to deprive them of civil liberties such as voting and testifying in court for their refusal to pay the fine. As an inducement to aid in the apprehension of violators, he explained that anyone giving information of such lawbreakers should receive half of the fine, while the remaining portion would be used for the support of public education. Before closing, Newsom said that in a situation where the person found guilty of the crime failed to pay it and was sentenced to prison, then the person who gave information leading to the conviction should receive fifty dollars for cooperating with the state.¹³

Two other resolutions were acted upon before the debates on marriage came to an end. On March 11, 1868, Stringer, a Black delegate, displayed a resolution to the effect that persons who had been living together disguising themselves as husband and wife should be considered by law as legally married and that their children be recognized as their legitimate offspring. Furthermore, concubinage and adultery would be prohibited in the state. Stites, a Black also, added that White men who had been living with Black women under false pretensions of marriage, should be charged with a crime greater than that of adultery, unless they are legally married. He suggested that the legislature pass laws that would stop such crimes and take other measures such as fines,

imprisonment, or the denial of citizenship against men guilty of such action. While Stringer's resolution was adopted, Stites was lost.¹⁴

Other matters which caused considerable dispute were suffrage and office holding requirements. Several plans were proposed to keep Blacks from holding office, including a scheme to read and property qualifications. Stringer, a Black delegate, introduced a resolution regarding voting. He recommended universal voting privileges for all males regardless of color, race, or previous condition of servitude. However, he felt that exceptions should be made for those who had taken a part in the war against the federal government and for those who had committed a crime against the statutes of any state in the United States. In relation to requirements, he suggested that all persons should be twenty-one years of age and should have resided in the state for one year and at least six months in the county prior to an election. In addition, Stringer stated that the legislature should enforce this article by the passage of necessary laws regarding it. His resolution was referred to the Bill of Rights Committee.¹⁵

In 1865, the Mississippi Legislature had passed a civil rights bill but it denied Blacks the right to own or rent property, and the federal government opposed it on the grounds that it was unconstitutional. Nevertheless, property ownership became an issue during the constitutional convention of 1868. Caldwell, a Black delegate, produced a resolution regarding property ownership. He pointed out that several White people had pretended to be the former owners of many Blacks who owned land and that those owners had claimed ownership of the property belonging to Blacks. He stated that the owners declared that Blacks acquired such land while they were still slaves and that the former owners took

the land to which they claimed ownership under the law. He stated that property had been stolen in that way without regards for justice. He likewise stated that the law had failed in its efforts to protect Blacks from such injustice. He therefore suggested that all land that had been taken by such means should be returned and that an indemnity be proposed for property that could not be restored. Caldwell pleaded with the convention to ask General Gillem to act on his resolution by restoring property to the rightful owners or by compensating the owners for the equal value of the property. He concluded by asking that the secretary send the general in charge a copy of the resolution. Though it was moved at first that the resolution be tabled, it was finally passed.¹⁶

The major issues having been acted upon, the constitutional convention took up minor topics. Jacobs, a Black, proposed a resolution stating that all people should have access to public transportation facilities regardless of color or race. Stringer, also a Black, asked that the legislature enact laws by which planters would be required to obtain a license to sell their goods. In addition, he introduced an ordinance in which residents asked for compensation for the loss of their slaves and for the aid they gave in the war. The first proposal was referred to the Legislative Department Committee and the second to the General Provisions Committee.¹⁷

Meanwhile, the press reacted to the constitutional convention. According to the Vicksburg Daily Herald, the whole matter of enfranchising Blacks was a scheme by Congress to control and govern the ideals and beliefs of the White race in the South. Moreover, it stated that the attempt to place the Blacks above the Whites would be fatal to the system

of government that existed in the United States.¹⁸

In spite of such criticism, the convention went on with its proceedings and the United States Congress was busy enacting legislature of its own. One such act passed by Congress in 1868 was the Fourteenth Amendment. It declared that all persons born or naturalized in the United States were citizens and that they were entitled to due process of law. The Fourteenth Amendment was actually a guarantee against the violation of the Civil Rights Act of 1866. It was also a requirement for reinstatement to the Union. Ratification of the amendment by the Mississippi convention was forthcoming.¹⁹

Meanwhile, the delegates began to modify some of the issues that had plagued them during the constitutional convention. As a final measure, the convention approved a provision which established a school system in the state. The provision maintained that a school should function in each district for at least four months a year and that any district refusing to maintain a school would not receive its share of revenues for that year. The act passed by a vote of 39 to 22. Moreover, the delegates adopted a provision that created secondary schools and an agricultural college; the state legislature, however, would implement the final action on these provisions, but the members of the convention had laid the foundation. Another measure which received some attention shortly before the convention adjourned was the assurance that Blacks would have the right to use public transit facilities. Though that issue had met much opposition earlier, it was finally adopted on May 3, 1868, when many of the delegates had left the convention.²⁰

An evaluation of the convention's work showed that Blacks voted to establish integration in places of public entertainment. They supported

legislation for integrated transit systems, and they opposed an attempt to disfranchise Blacks. On the other hand, Blacks were willing to support measures that would deny political rights to former Confederates. Furthermore, they used the method of bloc voting in an effort to eliminate or make it a crime for the practice of concubinage. As a whole, they voted with their race with the exception of Combash, who voted differently on several occasions. At one time, he opposed the tabling of an amendment for adding the word White as a requirement for service on the jury. Likewise, he supported an amendment for separate schools. Nevertheless, Black representation at the convention was diversified as to background. Many were former slaves, some were free-men of the South, and others came from the North. To a great extent, all of them were modern-minded individuals. The fact that Blacks had no chairmanships at the beginning of the convention accounted for the lack of influence among them. Nevertheless, they still had the privilege of being the first Blacks to attend a constitutional convention in the state.²¹

The convention adjourned on May 18, 1868, and June 22 was set for the date to ratify the constitution and for the election of new state officials. The Democrats who opposed the constitution began to plan for the defeat of the document. Humphreys, the Democrat's nominee for governor told his supporters that the ratification of the constitution would lead to the control of the state by Blacks. In addition to Humphreys for governor, the Democrats nominated Charles A. Hooker for attorney general, and other officials were placed on the ticket. The Republicans also nominated an entire ticket in the state, including B. B. Eggleston for governor. But unfortunately for the Democrats, a change of command over the military district was made during the summer. As a

result, Humphreys was moved from the executive office on the grounds of hindering reconstruction.

When the vote for ratification was counted, there were 63,860 against the document while 56,231 voted in favor of it. Thus, the constitution was defeated by a majority of 7,629 votes. As a result of that defeat, Hooker, who had been nominated for attorney general, lost his position just as Humphreys had, and Adelbert Ames of Massachusetts was appointed governor, and Jasper Myers was appointed attorney general. Actually, Mississippi was still out of the Union.²²

When the Republicans learned of the defeat, they charged that fraud had been used at the election and asked that an investigation be conducted. However, General Gillem refused to allow an investigation because he felt that the election had been a fair one. But the Republicans continued to claim that violations occurred. They proclaimed that the adoption of the constitution was prevented as a result of threats, intimidation, and other means of violence on the part of the Ku Klux Klan in an effort to keep Blacks away from the polls. They also charged that soldiers had deliberately left the polls unguarded. Others said that the constitution was not ratified because of the objectionable clauses which disfranchised Whites and established integrated schools. The Democrats declared that both races opposed those clauses. Furthermore, they stated that the election was fair and that Blacks voluntarily voted against the constitution. In spite of countercharges by both parties, President Johnson was hesitant to act on them.²³

In his state of the union message on December 9, 1868, President Johnson told Congress that the federal government had been reduced to a military regime headed by despots who were determined to place Black

above the Whites in the South. In concluding, he said that those measures had endangered the friendly relations which existed between the people of the states. However, the president's attitude did not stop the Republican's quest for an investigation.

When General Gillem refused to conduct an investigation, the Republicans organized a five member party committee to investigate the charges. William H. Gibb, the chairman of the group, directed the investigation. The committee reported that fraud was used in the constitutional convention election of 1868 and that other extralegal means were employed. The report also stated that the constitution would have passed by a 3,000 majority vote. Hence, the committee suggested that seven counties be thrown out or discounted. In addition, a Republican state convention meeting was held in Jackson. A committee of sixteen members was formed. This group had the responsibility of going to the nation's capital and convincing Congress that the constitution had been ratified.²⁴

Meanwhile, the Democrats' plan to end reconstruction had already been disturbed with Ames' appointment as governor which emanated from Ulysses S. Grant's election as president in the fall of 1868. Moreover, Ames had begun to dismiss officials of the state and was following a strict reconstruction policy. Moreover, in his inaugural address on March 4, 1869, Grant declared that the question of suffrage would probably be the greatest concern of the public and that it would likely cause some discontent as long as some of the citizens were deprived of this privilege in any state. He added that he would like to see the problem settled immediately, and he wished that it could be done by the ratification of the Fifteenth Amendment to the United States

Constitution.²⁵

President Johnson had delivered his farewell address the day before Grant gave his inaugural message. Johnson told Congress that he had served the people with a measure of accountability and that he had done nothing to regret during his administration. He stated that he had not offended anyone and that there was no blood on his hands because of the previous war or any responsibility for it. Johnson went on to say that his aims had been those of peace and his efforts were to bring unity among the people. Finally, he urged the people to forget about the past and to uphold the principles of the government as one nation under the United States Constitution. However, partisan politics continued to be a major factor.²⁶

The committee of Mississippi Republicans which had been authorized to go to Washington arrived there on April 24, 1869. The group held a discussion with Grant and explained their findings concerning the election. The president told the committee that the constitution should be resubmitted and that the voters should be allowed to vote separately on each of the restrictive clauses. On April 7, Grant sent a message to Congress explaining his actions regarding the Mississippi Constitution and Congress approved the plan three days later. The president designated November 30, 1869, as the date for resubmission of the constitution to the voters of Mississippi. While both the Democrats and the Republicans awaited that date, they began planning for a heated campaign.²⁷

Three factions were involved in the campaign of 1869. The Democrats who had changed their name to the National Constitutional Union Party, nominated Louis A. Dent, the brother-in-law of President Grant,

for governor. They felt that this strategy would win Grant's support and divide the Republican vote. On the other side of the spectrum, the Democratic-Republicans had a scheme of their own. Their plan was to unify the Black vote. They nominated Thomas Sinclair, a Black man, for secretary of state. However, both of these plans failed, for Grant refused to endorse the National Constitutional Union Party and Blacks viewed Sinclair as a pawn. While those parties were carrying on political maneuvers, the Republican Party was structuring a ticket that would attract the masses.²⁸

All three parties supported the plan for revising the state constitution. But the Republicans rallied their support for James L. Alcorn, a native of the state, and nominated him for governor. Alcorn indicated that he would work to perpetuate Black interest while Dent emphasized that he was hesitant about advocating further liberties for Blacks. To make their ticket more appealing, the Republicans placed James Lynch, a Black man, on it. They also added new White politicians and old officials of the state. They completed their slate by endorsing a number of Blacks for the state legislature.²⁹

As the campaign became intensified, splinter groups devised new tactics and approaches. In Yazoo County, the Democrats changed its party's name and supported a Conservative National Republican slate. In an effort to split the Black vote, they nominated Ruben Pope, a Black candidate. Pope and the Democrats propositioned Albert T. Morgan, a neophyte who was in the race for the state senate on the Republican ticket. Morgan was also running with several Black candidates. Morgan accepted the Democrats' proposition and met them in a debate. Some five hundred people, mostly Blacks, gathered to hear the discussion.

Morgan told the Blacks that he was no stranger to them and that they knew where he stood. He explained that he was well aware of their problems and despair and that if they would forget the Democrats, and put some faith in him, he would improve their situation. At that point, W. D. Gibbs declared that Northerners were the only ones that really hated people because of their complexion. He pointed out that Frederick Douglass, the most outstanding of all Blacks, had recently been denied admission to a Northern hotel.³⁰

Following Gibb's remarks, Republican candidate Morgan answered with some flamboyant language of his own. He said that in 1867 the Democrats refrained from voting because Blacks had earned the privilege of doing so. Then too, he said that many of them had pledged death rather than vote with Blacks. In addition, Morgan added that they had opposed the constitution of 1869 and at this time they were contradicting themselves by supporting Dent, the brother-in-law of a man whom they had stigmatized and denounced as a murderer. Morgan's denunciations of the Democrats became so strong that the opposition resorted to the use of profanity in their attack upon him. As a result, shots were fired which led to the death of one White man, and a Black man was critically injured. Thus, both groups decided to discontinue the debate.³¹

There were other methods used to obtain the Black vote. Public eat-outs, musical entertainment, and illuminated marches were tried to canvass the Black vote. For example, Blacks represented only thirty percent of the population in Simpson County, and things were relatively peaceful. But other techniques would follow, especially after Grant made it clear as to which party he would support in the state. In August, 1869, Grant wrote to Dent and told him that he felt that his

party would be defeated in the election. The president acknowledged that it would be in the best interests of the state and of the nation if the Conservative National Republican Party was defeated. He told Dent that he believed that his intentions for accepting the party's nomination were positive ones, but that he would regret to see him defeated by action of his office. Furthermore, Grant said that he would support the Republican Party and added that he hoped that all factions would abandon their animosities and unite in support of one ticket before the election took place. Grant concluded that he wished his brother-in-law well, but that he could not let personal emotions influence his public duty. However, Grant's advice came to no avail, for Dent's reply to him denounced the Republican Party as a hypocritical organization designed to subjugate the people of the South and to institute programs for its personal benefit. Hence, the Democrats opposed the ratification of the constitution and avowed a never-ending battle against the adoption of the Fifteenth Amendment.³²

With this determination in mind, the Democrats launched an allout effort to defeat the constitution on election day. For example, Blacks would occasionally reveal their ballot at the polls and the commissioners would substitute it for one they usually kept up their sleeve. When this method became ineffective, they resorted to stuffing the ballot box. Because the box was sometimes kept in an enclosed area where no one could enter, the supervisors would often exchange a Republican ballot for one of the Democrats. In addition, they would use various organizations to keep Blacks away from the polls. The "Minute Men," the "Red Coats," and other groups were active in such practices.³³

Though the Democrats made a gallant attempt in their struggle to

defeat the constitution, their efforts were not enough to overcome a Republican victory at the polls. The constitution was ratified by a vote of 105,223 to 954. However, the restraining clauses were all rejected except the one which denied the state credit to be lent to individuals or business firms. The clause which disfranchised former Confederates was overwhelmingly rejected. The vote for governor amounted to a total of 127,246, of which Alcorn received 71,763 to Dent's 55,483. The majority of Alcorn's votes were cast by Blacks, while Dent received his largest number from White voters. In the fifth district alone, Alcorn received 14,868 to Dent's 7,035. Yet, Alcorn only had a majority of 16,280 votes. Many Blacks did not vote, and the majority of the Whites refused to vote for either candidate.³⁴

As a result of a military order, the state legislature convened on January 11, 1870, for the purpose of taking the necessary measures to rejoin the Union. A few days after the legislature had organized, provisional governor Ames sent a message to that body recommending the ratification of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments to the Constitution of the United States. The Fourteenth Amendment passed in the state senate by a vote of twenty-three to two, and by a vote of eighty-seven to six in the state house of representatives. Likewise, the Fifteenth Amendment passed unanimously in the state senate while the state house of representatives passed it by a ninety-three to one vote. On February 12, 1870, a bill to readmit Mississippi to the Union was introduced in the United States Congress. The bill was debated and discussed for several days regarding other related matters, but on February 17 the bill was passed. Thus, Mississippi's readmission was forthcoming.³⁵

When the legislature convened for the first time in 1870, there

were thirty-three members elected to the senate; seven were Democrats while twenty-six were Republicans. There were 107 in the lower house; eighty-two were Republicans and twenty-five were Democrats. But the most astonishing thing was the presence of Blacks in the legislature for the first time in the history of the state. Of the 140 legislators, there were thirty-five Blacks, of which five were senators and thirty were representatives. The Republicans had a substantial majority in both houses.³⁶

Many of the Blacks elected to the state legislature of 1870 had attended the constitutional convention of 1868. For example, Jacobs, Newsom, Handy, Mayson, Moore, Stewart, Johnson, and Stites had attended the convention. Actually, fifty percent of those who went to the convention were elected by the lower house for the 1870 session. There were also new Black members in the house of representatives such as Merrimon Howard of Jefferson County, Richard Griggs of Issaquena County, A. K. Davis of Noxubee County, John R. Lynch of Adams County, and several others were elected as representatives. Like some of the Blacks in the house, Stringer and Caldwell had also attended the constitutional convention in 1868, and both were elected to the senate for the 1870 session. The other three Blacks in the senate were Hiram R. Revels of Adams County, Robert Gleed of Lowndes County, and William Gray of Washington County, all elected for the first time. A substantial number of these men became influential leaders in state and national politics while others played important roles but received little publicity.³⁸

The Black politicians in the legislature would perform their duties well and their roles were unquestionably important, but the legislators at the national and state levels were miles away while the

grass-root voters at the local level had a daily involvement in political affairs. Unlike their representatives in Washington or Jackson who could not witness what was going on, local voters visited the county courts while trials were in session; they also needed to go to the court house to register their complaints concerning taxes. In other ways also, local voters were the real challengers of politics at the time. Furthermore, the voting population was responsible for the election of those who represented them at all levels of government.³⁹

Though forty Blacks were elected to the first legislature, they were not represented in proportion to their number. In addition, they had not recognized the importance of their presence and the power which they possessed. Thirty-three of the sixty-one counties had Black majorities, but it was only in the densely Black populated Delta counties that elected all Blacks to the state legislature in 1870. However, that was not always the case, even as early as the 1870s, the Democrats controlled Marion County, and they elected J. M. Wilson, a Black man, to the house of representatives. Nevertheless, Blacks would demand more representation in the forthcoming legislature. But local politicians were effective beginning with the legislature of 1870 and continued throughout the reconstruction era.⁴⁰

In virtually every county where there was a large Black majority, two-thirds of the offices were held by Blacks. This was especially true for those counties along the Mississippi River in the Delta which stretched some three hundred miles. In reality, almost all the counties in the state had Blacks serving in some political capacity. They occupied the offices of sheriff, chancery and circuit clerks, superintendents of education, and other minor offices. In some counties, there

were Black policemen, and the chief of police in Jackson was Black at one time. Blacks served on grand juries, and at times all twelve jurors were Black. Sometimes the entire board of supervisors was Black. But they did not hold these positions in most cases without some knowledge of their duties.⁴¹

Realizing that Blacks would need training in citizenship and politics, a number of organizations were formed to prepare them for these tasks. Blacks were eager to prepare themselves as citizens as well as for political purposes. One of the most effective organizations to work with the Blacks was the Loyal or Union League. This was an interracial group that stressed unity among its members, it taught Blacks how to read, to write, and to vote. The league was organized in the North during the war to combat the activities of the Copperheads and the Knights of the Golden Circle, subversive groups that opposed the war policies of the United States. The league received supplementary aid from other organizations. One of those was the Black Council, which became one of the most active groups in the league.⁴²

Another interesting aspect of the league was its constitution of three major articles and a ritual. Article one described the name of the organization, while the second article explained its objective. Essentially, the object was to preserve freedom in the United States by perpetuating the laws of the government and by defending the nation against its enemies regardless of race or color. The third article identified the councils within the league and the rules regulating their elections. Perhaps the most sacred part of the document was its ritual, by which each potential member had to take an oath promising loyalty to the league. In fact, the overall purpose was geared in part toward the

maintenance of the Republican Party. At one time, there was a league in every Black community in Mississippi and the grand council was located in Jackson. The Freedmen's Bureau, a war-time organization, was also active in preparing Blacks politically.⁴³

The effectiveness of the league and similar organizations was reflected in the performances by Blacks in their positions throughout the state. It appeared that the office of sheriff was the most important position at the local level. Several factors accounted for the significance of this office. The sheriff was partially responsible for the selection of the jurors; he appointed one of the three election registrars; and he also collected the state and county taxes. As a supplement to these duties, part of his salary came from the fees which resulted from the services rendered by him. The remuneration of this office amounted to an annual sum of \$20,000 in some counties and \$15,000 in others, although the average income was almost \$5,000.⁴⁴

Only twelve Blacks held the position of sheriff during the reconstruction era. They included William McCary and Robert H. Wood of Adams County, Bruce of Boliver, J. J. Evans of Claiborne, W. H. Harvey of Hinds, John Brown of Coahoma, Peter Crosby of Warren, Spencer Watkins of Monroe, Merrimon Howard of Jefferson, Sumner of Holmes, Scott of Issaquena, and Winslow of Washington. According to St. Clair, there were only twelve sheriffs, but Sillers stated that J. E. Ousley of Bolivar County held that position in 1875. The information available supplied only the last names of the last three individuals listed above. Bruce, Crosby, and Woods were perhaps the most outstanding of all the sheriffs; Bruce was the most publicized and influential of all.⁴⁵

Another position of power and importance in local politics was the

board of supervisors. They had to direct the construction and the renovation of buildings and bridges. They also evaluated and distributed the funds received from taxes throughout the counties. Transportation facilities such as roads and highways came under their supervision. Finally, the board had to appoint members on the levee commission, draw up contracts, and handle loans for the counties.⁴⁶

An enumeration of Blacks who served on the board of supervisors consisted of a varied and countless list throughout the state. Louis Stubblefield and James J. Joor of Bolivar County served between the years 1869 and 1890. In fact, Bolivar County had Black officer holders long after most Blacks had been eliminated from office, especially at the state level. In DeSoto County where there was a total of 6,892 voters in 1871, 3,534 of which were Black, but only three Blacks served on the board between 1874 and 1876. W. R. McCorkle served for two terms, the first term in 1874 and the second in 1876. Austin Bell became a member in 1874 and J. A. Albritton was elected in 1876. Even in affluent Hinds County, Charles Caldwell, Edward Hill, and Charles Morgan were the only three to serve on the board. There were also other municipalities where representation on the board of supervisors was less than that in the rural areas.⁴⁷

In some counties where the Black population was smaller, even larger numbers of Blacks served on the board of supervisors. That situation occurred in Pontotoc County in 1870. Of a total population of 12,525 in 1870, 3,012 were Black. Moreover, there were only 1,470 Black males who were twenty years of age and over, while White males of the same age numbered 3,202. Yet, Sam Duke and Edward Miller served on the board. A similar situation existed in Yalobusha County, except that

Blacks were in the majority. There was a fluctuation in population between 1870 and 1880 in Yalobusha County. The population in 1870 was 13,254 persons, of which 7,052 were Black and 6,202 were White. The change in population resulted from the creation of Grenada County. In 1880 there were 7,533 Whites in Yalobusha County and 8,116 Blacks, and there the Black majority continued for a few years after 1880. Still, there were only three Blacks on the board of supervisors. Henry Vann served from 1872 to 1873, and Samuel Carr and Randolph Eggleston were elected in 1874. Hence, with a marginal majority, Blacks held only three supervisor positions.⁴⁸

In Monroe County, the Black voting bloc was able to elect candidates to all offices in the county. Of the five member board of supervisors, three members were Black. Price Hogan, an educated preacher, was elected to the board in 1870. He directed a variety of building projects, including the Tombigbee River bridge at Aberdeen. Joe Spencer Watkins and George Strong were also elected to the board. Price Hogan was elected again in 1872 along with George Strong.

Like Yalobusha County, Lawrence County had a total of three Blacks who served on the board of supervisors. Although Whites outnumbered Blacks in voting power, Blacks nevertheless had sufficient representation on the board. In 1869, there were 1,177 White voters in the county and only 908 Blacks. When modifications were made regarding the voters in 1869, there were 1,360 White voters to 1,090 Black voters. Between 1871 and 1875, Ruben Fields, Morris Brown, and Parson Smith were elected to the board of supervisors. Brown served from 1871 to 1872 and was elected again in 1873. Whites were in the majority in the population, for in 1870 there were 3,678 Whites and 3,042 Blacks.

Although the Black population had increased by 1,431 in 1880, the Whites were still in the majority. In that year, there were 4,937 Whites in the county and 4,473 Blacks. Thus, a smaller population did not always mean underrepresentation.⁵⁰

Like several other counties, Lafayette County was fortunate in having Blacks on the board of supervisors in the midst of a superior White population. In 1870, there was a total of 10,819 Whites in the county to 7,938 Blacks. Whites were also in the majority by 1880, with a total of 11,385 persons in a Black population of 10,286, yet, Blacks placed members on the board between 1869 and 1874. Jerry Fox was elected in 1869 and served until 1871, while Mack Avent became a member in 1873 and remained to the end of 1874.⁵¹

Panola County had a total population of 21,752 in 1870, of which 12,585 were Black and 8,167 were White. As a result of a majority of 4,418, Blacks had four members on the board of supervisors. John Wilson served from 1871 to 1873, Lang Hunt from 1872 to 1875, Jerry Hibbler from 1874 to 1877, and Peter Shegog served during 1874 and 1875. Black representation on the board terminated in 1877 when Jerry Hibbler's term ended following his reelection in 1876. Marshall County had a total population of 29,416 in 1870, of which 16,499 were Black and 12,917 White. Thus, with a majority of 3,582 people, there were only three Blacks on the board. Joseph Turnstall, Jerry Dean, and Anthony Tate were all elected in 1874. The board of supervisors and the office of sheriff were perhaps the most important positions at the county level, but there were other minor positions held by Blacks.⁵²

Such positions as constable, justice of the peace, magistrates, and others were held by Blacks at the local level but not to a great

extent. For example, in Lawrence County between 1871 and 1875, Joe Allen was the only one to ever serve as justice of the peace during the reconstruction period. Likewise, a Black man named Hightower was elected to that office in Scott County, and he was the only one to serve between 1871 and 1875. However, Nath Carr was elected constable during that period.⁵³

Another position which Blacks held was that of circuit and chancery clerk. Though most of the Black officials were Republican, occasionally a few were elected as Democrats. In 1876, Felix Eldridge and M. G. Littlejohn were elected circuit and chancery clerks, respectively, on the Democratic ticket in Ponola County. J. E. Ousley of Bolivar County served as circuit clerk for several years following his term as sheriff in 1875. Nelson Glass and J. I. Ingram were magistrates during this period in Bolivar County.⁵⁴

A number of local Black leaders held several offices simultaneously or at different times. Joe Spencer Watkins, who was sheriff of Monroe County, also served as coroner of the county and as a member of the board of supervisors. Bruce was another official who held different positions. He was superintendent of education in Bolivar County and also served as treasurer of the county. Other treasurers of Bolivar County were W. A. Johnson, William Murray, J. I. Ingram, and Dave Barnes. All of these men served as treasurers between 1869-1890. G. C. Smith served as superintendent of education during this period in the county.⁵⁵

Other local Black leaders who held minor offices were James G. Randle and Wes Sykes of Aberdeen County. Randle served as city clerk and it has been reported that Sykes served as mayor of Aberdeen, but no known evidence substantiates this claim. However, facts have shown that

Robert H. Wood was the first Black to be elected as mayor in Mississippi during the reconstruction era.⁵⁶

In Copiah County, W. Emmanuel Handy, a Black who attended the constitutional convention of 1868, became constable following the convention. In the same year, a Black named Mortimer was elected superintendent of education. Zack Ingram, a Black of Benoit in Bolivar County, was a leading figure in local affairs. He served as justice of the peace and was also a large property holder. There were many other Blacks who held offices at the local level but their identities are unknown due to a lack of surviving records.⁵⁷

Blacks were often charged with corruption and graft, especially in counties with a large Black population. For example, in Madison and Issaquena counties where the entire boards of supervisors were all Black at times, such claims were common. At one time in Yazoo County all the clerks and treasurers were Black as well as three of the five members of the board of supervisors. But corruption charges were groundless, for an investigation showed that considerable progress had been made, especially in Yazoo County. Even James W. Garner, the Southern historian, gave Mississippi a clean record regarding corruption. Likewise, Vernon L. Wharton, who also wrote on the period, stated that graft in Mississippi was low in comparison to other states and that a measure of honesty existed. Though local politics were perhaps the most important in the state, many used them as a stepping stone to higher positions at the state and national levels of government.⁵⁸

In 1868, Blacks officially participated in Mississippi's government for the first time in the history of the state. Though they had registered as voters the previous year, they had not been active in the

passage of legislation that would affect their lives as well as the lives of others in the state. When the constitutional convention convened on January 7 of 1868, a number of Blacks attended as delegates. Although they were not represented in proportion to the number of Black voters in the state, they nevertheless managed to be very effective as beginners in politics.

By 1870, Blacks served in various offices throughout the state. Because of their inexperience in politics, it was necessary to prepare them for these duties. This task was performed by such organizations as the Loyal League and the Freedmen's Bureau. As a result of this training, Blacks began to assert themselves as local leaders, especially in the densely populated counties. Though many of them were charged with graft, they were honest in comparison to other states. The skills that they obtained at the local office level prepared them for positions at the state and national levels of government.

FOOTNOTES

¹J. L. Power, "The Black and Tan Convention," P.M.H.S., Vol. III (1900), p. 78; Currie, "The Beginning of Congressional Reconstruction In Mississippi," Journal of Mississippi History, Vol. XXXV, p. 277.

²James T. Currie, "Conflict and Consensus: Creating the 1868 Mississippi Constitution" (Master of Arts Thesis, University of Virginia, 1969), pp. 83-84.

³Hume, "The Black and Tan Constitutional Conventions of 1867-1869 in Ten Former Confederate States: A History of Their Membership," pp. 331, 377-380.

⁴Ibid., pp. 377-378.

⁵Ibid., pp. 379-380.

⁶Power, "The Black and Tan Convention," P.M.H.S., Vol. III, p. 78; Hume, "The Black and Tan Constitutional Conventions of 1867-1869 in Ten Former Confederate States: A History of Their Membership," pp. 329-330.

⁷Journal of the Proceedings in the 1868 Constitutional Convention of Mississippi (Jackson: Stafford Printers, 1871), pp. 5-6.

⁸William C. Sallis, "The Color Line In Mississippi Politics, 1865-1915" (Doctor of Philosophy Dissertation, University of Kentucky, 1967), p. 113.

⁹Ibid., pp. 106-107; Power, "The Black and Tan Convention," P.M.H.S., Vol. III, pp. 78-79.

¹⁰Mississippi Journal of the 1868 Constitutional Convention, pp. 47-48.

¹¹Ibid., pp. 315-316; Sallis, "The Color Line In Mississippi Politics 1865-1915," p. 108.

¹²Mississippi Journal of the 1868 Constitutional Convention, p. 199.

¹³Ibid., p. 212.

¹⁴Sallis, "The Color Line In Mississippi Politics, 1865-1915," p. 109; Mississippi Journal of the 1868 Constitutional Convention, p. 212.

- 15 Sallis, "The Color Line In Mississippi Politics, 1865-1915," pp. 110-111; Mississippi Journal of the 1868 Constitutional Convention, p. 46.
- 16 Jackson Weekly Clarion, December 10, 1865; Mississippi Journal of the 1868 Constitutional Convention, pp. 314-315.
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- 23 Hume, "The Black and Tan Conventions of 1867-1869 in Ten Former Confederate States: A History of Their Membership," p. 353; Sallis, "The Color Line In Mississippi Politics, 1865-1915," p. 132.
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- 1869 (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1875), pp. 457-459.
- ³³ Thomas, "History of Simpson County Mississippi 1824-1962," pp. 92-98.
- ³⁴ American Annual Cyclopedia and Events of 1869, p. 461; Jackson Weekly Clarion, September 5, 1872.
- ³⁵ American Annual Cyclopedia and Events of 1869, p. 462.
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- ³⁷ Milton Meltzer, Freedom Comes to Mississippi: The Story of Reconstruction (Chicago: Follett Publishing Company, 1970), p. 99.
- ³⁸ Journal of the House of Representatives of the State of Mississippi (Jackson: Kimball Raymond and Company, 1870), p. 4.
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⁴⁹ John E. Rodabough, "A History of the Negroes of Aberdeen and Monroe County, Mississippi, 1790-1916" (Master of Arts Thesis, Mississippi State University, 1964), pp. 26-27.

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⁵¹ Julia Kendel, "Reconstruction In Lafayette County," P.M.H.S., Vol. XIII (1913), pp. 265-267.

⁵² J. W. Kyle, "Reconstruction In Panola County," ibid., pp. 25, 94; Ruth Watkins, "Reconstruction In Marshall County," P.M.H.S., Vol. XII (1912), pp. 207-208.

⁵³ Magee, "Reconstruction In Lawrence and Jefferson Davis Counties," P.M.H.S., Vol. XI, p. 181; Forrest Cooper, "Reconstruction in Scott County," P.M.H.S., Vol. XIII (1913), p. 135.

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⁵⁶ Rodabough, "A History of the Negroes of Aberdeen and Monroe County, Mississippi, 1790-1916," p. 27.

⁵⁷ John Robert Sartin, "History of Copiah County to 1900" (Master of Arts Thesis, Mississippi College, 1959), p. 87; Sillers, History of Bolivar County Mississippi, pp. 276-277.

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CHAPTER III

BLACK STATE LEADERS IN MISSISSIPPI

Although the thirty-five Blacks in the state legislature in 1870 were not represented in proportion to the total voting population, they asserted themselves during their first term as legislators. Caldwell was one of the three tellers in the senate during the first session of 1870. From four to six members served on the twenty senate committees, and at times, one Black served on as many as three different ones. Stringer was a member of the Judiciary, Education and the Railroad Committees. Caldwell served on the Militia and Banking Committees, while Gray and Gleed were members of the Immigration, Commerce, Printing, Agriculture, and the Benevolent Committees, respectively.¹

Following the adoption of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments, the legislature was faced with the task of electing United States senators. There were three seats to fill, one of which began on March 4, 1871; a second one was an unexpired term beginning on March 4, 1869, and a short term vacancy which started on March 4, 1865, and terminated in 1871. For the unexpired term, the Blacks in the senate supporter Stringer of Warren County. But he received only one vote on the first ballot from a total of 120 votes, of which sixty-one votes were needed for election. Thus, the first effort to elect a Black senator ended in failure.²

Blacks usually stood behind a solid ticket when they voted for the

remaining two positions. Alcorn and Ames, both Whites, were nominated for the United States Senate, and on both occasions Blacks unanimously supported each candidate in the senate. Alcorn was elected in the senate by acclamation while Ames received twenty-two votes in the upper house. On the following day, the assembly met in joint session and the Blacks again endorsed both candidates in both houses. Alcorn received a total of 120 votes, more than enough for the required sixty-one, while Ames' total numbered ninety-four. Alcorn was elected for the regular term beginning in 1871 and Ames for the one beginning on March 4, 1869. Due to the fact that Stringer was not elected for an unexpired term, Blacks had to find another candidate. But this time, they were divided in their efforts to support a candidate, but after several ballots, they elected Hiram R. Revels, a Black, for the short term ending in 1871.³

In addition to those achievements, Blacks contributed to other accomplishments in the legislature during 1870. They were partially responsible for the repeal of the code of 1857 regarding free Blacks, slaves, and mulattoes. In addition, the Black Codes were abolished. The legislature pledged to put an end to all laws which discriminated against citizens because of race. However, Blacks were not as fortunate when the topic on education arose. It was suggested that Blacks be admitted to the free schools in the state, including the University of Mississippi at Oxford. But Governor Alcorn strongly opposed this on the grounds that he did not favor integrated schools. He told the members of the committee that White citizens would kill the Blacks and their children before they accepted such a plan. He also declared that the citizens would do the same to anyone who would attempt to enact

legislation of this nature. Finally, he suggested a plan for the establishment of a Black school.⁴

Before 1865, Alcorn had acknowledged that he favored Black equality, and that one day an outstanding Black leader would eventually emerge and help Blacks to enter the mainstream of American life. Although he had opposed emancipation and interracial marriages, he sanctioned the idea of enfranchising qualified Blacks. On the other hand, he was opposed to social equality. Alcorn proclaimed that political equality did not imply social equality, for he explained that the lower class of his own race did not utilize these privileges. In his inaugural address as governor of Mississippi, he stated that the "palmy days of my life belong to Mississippi." Moreover, Alcorn said that a twenty-five year attachment to the state had brought about a love that bound him to it. In his conclusion, he indicated that a "sacrifice of conviction made by me in a wrestle with the madness which plunged her into ruin, has bound my soul to hers in a common lot of suffering, and sorrow, and humiliation." In spite of Alcorn's change of attitude, Blacks continued to push for equality.⁵

Some of the work of the framers of the Mississippi Constitution of 1868 was left for the legislature to complete. One such topic was public accommodations. On this, Blacks voted to protect the rights of all minorities in places of public entertainment, on common carries, and other public facilities. Blacks also supported education. They continued to vote as a caucus, for there was a small increase of Blacks in the legislature. For example, in 1871, there were thirty-eight in the legislature, an increase of three. But they were not very active in conjunction with their number, even though they served on various committees. But

their system of voting in a bloc made their presence known, and they were very effective when this system of voting took place. Nevertheless, subsequent elections would be more fruitful regarding an increase in the number of Blacks.⁶

That increase began as early as 1871, particularly at the local level. In the general election of that year, Blacks took control in those counties where they had a majority and also in those counties where they were in the minority by the use of coalition politics. In such counties as Yazoo, Isseguena, and Jefferson, they increased their numbers in almost all of the major local positions. There were also gains at the state level, for as Blacks became more assertive, they demanded more. During this period of control by Blacks, some Whites became convinced that Blacks did not want to dominate. As a result of this attitude, much racial animosity disappeared, and even an attempt to form a coalition with the White elite class was made, but unfortunately it ended in failure.⁷

By 1872, the Republicans canvassed the state by electing all but one of the congressmen from a total of six in the congressional election of that year. Realizing that it was their votes who put the Republicans in office, Blacks began to clamor for more representation. They reasoned that they should have positions in proportion to their number. Others asked why a greater number of Blacks were not nominated? Yet, there were those who proclaimed that the time had come to end the situation in which Whites held the offices while Blacks supplied the votes. This demand on the part of Mississippi Blacks for political power would eventually lead to a division in the Republican Party.⁸

Political disunity became dominant in state affairs in 1873. The

first county convention to be held by the Republicans in 1873 occurred in Warren County. Blacks attending were cognizant of the increase in their political power, and they were likewise mindful of the fact that Ames' record had been one of honesty in his relations with Black people. All of these things were emphasized at the county convention, and the Black delegates unanimously supported Ames for governor. However, they made it clear that they wanted the offices of treasurer, secretary of state, and lieutenant governor for Blacks. Moreover, the delegates chose Blacks for other major offices at the county level such as sheriff, treasurer, circuit, and chancery clerk. These demands led some of the White delegates to push for offices for White politicians. As a result, Blacks nominated a White man for the assessor's office and one for the legislature.⁹

Though the delegates would eventually accomplish some of these demands, it would happen only after heated discussion took place. When the Republican state convention took place, Blacks refused to support two White candidates for reelection, but fought for the office of lieutenant governor for a Black man to fill and two other state positions for Blacks. It was reported that some of the radical Black delegates from Warren County mounted the desks with guns in their hands and recommended that the office of superintendent of education go to a Black man. Whatever the case, a White conservative was removed and a Black was nominated for superintendent of education. In addition, another Black was chosen for secretary of state. But the major problem was that of selecting the lieutenant governor. In relation to that, Republicans had secretly planned to elect Ames for governor for a short term, and then return him to the United States Senate. This meant that whoever

received the nomination for lieutenant governor would later become governor. But the pressing obstacle of this plan was the demand by the Black caucus for the office of lieutenant governor. The question was raised as to whether the White power structure would accept a Black governor. Following a discussion, the White delegates answered in the affirmative, provided that the nominee be a man of their choice. But Blanche K. Bruce, the individual they had in mind refused, and they had to settle for A. K. Davis.¹⁰

With the most controversial issues of the Republican state convention completed, the delegates turned their attention to the subject of school integration. They emphasized that an agreement had been made pledging not to rush school integration, but they reminded the delegation that that compromise was approaching its end. Moreover, they stated that they were abreast to the fact that the present law in the state made no difference regarding the rights of all children in the state to have equal access to education and to extend equal educational privileges in all public institutions, including those of secondary and advanced levels. But they warned that if any of the schools refused to give students equal privileges because of race or color, they would fight for these liberties through the proper channels of law. The delegates concluded that they would support the present schools in the state and the state system of education.¹¹

While the Black Republicans were demanding more political representation, other members of the party opposed their quest for additional offices and an increase in their power. A substantial number withdrew from the party and the majority of the old educated conservative class would not reckon with the growing number of Black political positions.

Some of the Democrats joined their ranks and, under the auspices of Alcorn, formed another party. But their efforts were fruitless, for in the following election Alcorn opposed Ames for governor and the Blacks supported Ames on the Republican ticket. When the votes were counted, Alcorn had lost by a 19,000 majority. Ames polled 69,000 votes to Alcorn's 50,000. As a result of the leadership of John Brown, a Black sheriff, Alcorn lost in his home county. In fact, the election of 1873 culminated in the apex of Black politics in the state. Blacks represented forty-two percent of the total legislature. Of the 115 members in the lower house, there was a total of fifty-five Blacks. Nine of the thirty-seven senators were Black. In addition, the speaker of the house was Black after the legislature held an election of officers in January of 1874. Blacks were elected as secretary of state, superintendent of education, commissioner of agriculture and immigration, and lieutenant governor; even another Black United States senator was elected.¹²

Perhaps the most influential Black politician in Mississippi during the genesis of Black politics was James Lynch. He was an educated man from Pennsylvania, and before coming to Mississippi, he assisted in creating schools in Savannah, Georgia. A minister by profession, he came to Mississippi as director of the predominantly Black Methodist Episcopal Church in Jackson. He also became affiliated with the Freedmen's Bureau upon coming to the state. Immediately; he became very popular in the state, due primarily to talents he possessed. Not only was he popular among Blacks, but Whites respected him as well.¹³

Lynch's first political experience in the state began in 1867 when he was a delegate to the Republican state convention of that year.

Shortly after the meeting began, one of the delegates suggested that the word "Colored" be used to identify the Black delegates by placing it by their names. Lynch responded to this motion by proposing an amendment that the color of each delegate's hair should also be described. However, both proposals were defeated, and the delegates continued their proceedings.¹⁴

Lynch's next activity in politics came in 1869 when he was the only Black candidate for secretary of state on the Alcorn ticket. He has been described as the most powerful and prolific orator in the Republican Party in the campaign of 1869. His speaking ability made him the most sought after politician during the entire campaign of that year. Not a single Democrat desired to debate with him. W. H. Handy, a leading Democrat, expounded on Lynch's ability to hold an audience while speaking to it. According to Handy, he was an excellent speaker, eloquent and expressive in delivery. Blacks adored him, and they would walk miles to hear him address an assembly. In most cases, his audiences numbered from one thousand to five thousand. Handy concluded that the tone of his speech would hold his listeners' attention to the point that they would give a simultaneous response.¹⁵

On December 23, 1869, Ames issued Special Order Number 277, naming Alcorn and Lynch as governor and secretary of state. As a result of this action, Henry Musgrave, auditor of public accounts, along with other state officials resigned their positions. The period between December, 1869, and January 11, 1870, when the legislature convened, Ames and Alcorn engaged in a bitter dispute over Special Order Number 277. Even so, both Lynch and Alcorn took their offices.¹⁶

As secretary of state, most of Lynch's time was occupied with

making reports and signing various bills, and other legislative matters relative to his office. In April of 1870, he signed two pieces of legislation affecting private citizens. On April 14, he signed a bill that changed the name of Rebecca Lyons. On the following day, another act was endorsed which removed the civil disabilities of James Weathersby Goddold of Franklin County. Similar activities were performed in the months of May and June. In May, he confirmed acts making Jeff Mitchell of Panola County a member of the board of supervisors, and Guilford Vaughn of the same county became an alderman. On June 6, T. J. Wooten of Panola County received his confirmation as constable. Ruben Fields of Lawrence County and George M. Buchanan of Marshall County became supervisor and sheriff, respectively. On June 26 of that year, Lynch endorsed into law an act which made certain illegitimate children of James Anderson of Holmes County his legitimate offspring. Perhaps hundreds of other documents of this nature were signed by Lynch while he was in office, but he also made annual reports concerning other activities in the state.¹⁷

On June 9, 1871, Lynch made a report regarding printed material and distribution of public documents in the state for the year 1870. He reported that his office had spent a total of \$53,556, and that \$32,000 of this amount went for public printing. In addition, his annual report showed that a grand total of 4,356 public documents had been distributed to various governmental departments for the year 1870. For the year 1871, Lynch reported that the archives room of the state building was severely damaged by moisture and the old state seal was worn out. Regarding the seal, he told them that a new one had been purchased from New York City at a price of thirty-five dollars and that the old room

formerly used for geological purposes on the third floor was being used for the archives room. He gave similar reports on other state affairs such as the number of pardons made in the state, the number of appointments for the year, and patents that had been issued. Lynch suggested that his office be allowed to exchange reports with other states, and that the other state agencies, such as the insane asylums, institutions for the deaf and dumb, educational institutions, and others in the state be supplied with public documents as other offices had received. Lynch finished his report with the statement that much of the work of his office had been underwritten by his personal finances, but he hoped that the report would be satisfactorily received and would reflect his efforts in office, his ultimate objective.¹⁸

In relation to public printing for the year 1871, Lynch reported that expenditures amounted to a sum total of \$127,848.12. The report consisted of a statement showing that 8,968 public documents had been distributed during the year; of the total number of documents parceled out in the state, 435 were code laws, senate, and house journals. The receipts in the treasurer's office for sales amounted to \$1,637.50.¹⁹

A bitter dispute soon developed over the nominations for Congress in the district conventions in the 1872 state election. Many people felt that the conflict between Alcorn and Ames would decide the outcome of the election in the state. But to the contrary, Alcorn joined the liberals in the senate in their support for Grant, but steered clear of the state campaign of that year. Most of the Blacks were opposed to the incumbent congressmen from the state and two of them entered the race in 1872 for Congress. Lynch, the most outstanding Black at the time, was defeated by George C. McKee, another candidate for Congress,

following a vigorous campaign in the Vicksburg district. Lynch died shortly after his defeat.²⁰

Both the defeat and death of Lynch became the subject of criticism. A leading Black paper in the state proclaimed that his defeat resulted from corruption and a subsequent shock from which he never recovered. Moreover, the press stated that Lynch's death emanated from the ungratefulness of his own people, for Blacks allowed the most brilliant leader of the Black race to become the prey of Carpetbaggers. In addition, Lynch had been killed by both Carpetbaggers and Blacks. In closing, the press stated that the political power that Blacks had would soon be destroyed by the same group who were filling their pockets and making plans to depart from the state. John R. Lynch, a Mississippi Black, who succeeded in winning a seat in Congress in the same election, commented that his death was a serious loss to the Republican Party, the state, and especially to the Black people.²¹

I. D. Shadd, speaker of the Mississippi House of Representatives, offered resolutions in the house in honor of Lynch. Shadd said that one of the greatest statesmen that had ever lived had passed from their midst. He pointed out that Lynch's work and qualifications for the office which he filled had done much in promoting reconciliation and goodwill. Shadd continued that to his bereaved widow and children, the legislature extend a measure of sympathy, and that the goodness possessed by Lynch would guide them in their future life. The speaker asked that the resolution be printed in the house journal and that a copy of it be sent to the widow and her family. A memorial statement was also drawn up for Lynch. Essentially, the memorial stated that the house paused in sympathy with those who mourned Lynch's death, and

shared their sorrow as well.²²

Although the state constitution of 1890 prohibited the passage of special laws for the purpose of allotting plots of land belonging to the state to anyone, Lynch became the first Black to be buried in a White cemetery in the city of Jackson and the only person to be honored with a monument by a legislative act. Both houses of the legislature approved an act donating \$1,000 or more for a monument to be placed over the site where Lynch was interred.²³

In March, 1900, the state legislature passed an act by a vote of 94-0 which authorized the Ladies Auxiliary Cemetery Association of Jackson to remove the monument and remains of Lynch's from the White cemetery to a Black one in the city. It was reported that Lynch was buried in Greenwood Cemetery, but the records of that cemetery do not list him. Thus, a question remains as to whether his body was removed. There were those who doubted if it was, while others felt that it was placed in some Black cemetery. Records indicate that the monument is still in the original cemetery where it was first erected. Nevertheless, the memories of Lynch's office and his services were immortalized equally well by another secretary of state in the person of James Hill.²⁴

James Hill was born about two miles from Holly Springs, Mississippi, in Marshall County. He had been the slave of J. Hill, a plantation owner in the state. He received an informal education from two of his master's daughters, and during the war he became the servant and J. H. and W. B. Hill, the sons of his former master. Following the war, Hill joined the Republican Party. Although he became a Republican, he never abandoned his former owners. When the Hill family faced strenuous situations during the postwar era, he would often pay a visit. On one

occasion when sickness occurred in the family, Hill gave them financial support. He was highly respected as a capable Black by those who knew him. Though he never received a formal education, he continued studying while working for a railroad. However, he aided in sending a younger brother to Oberlin College.²⁵

Hill's political career began in 1871 when he was elected to the legislature. Immediately, he became a prominent politician in the Republican Party. When he was nominated for secretary of state, many were elated over having his name on the ticket. In comparison to other Blacks in the state at the time, his intelligence was rated above average. It was felt that he would perform with dignity for himself as well as the public. Hill served as sergeant-at-arms when the first reconstruction legislature convened and the following year he became a legislator. He was elected secretary of state in 1874.²⁶

Like Lynch, Hill's work consisted of signing bills, confirming appointments, making annual reports, and other matters related to the office of secretary of state. Between May and August of 1875, Hill was occupied with the confirmation of various positions throughout the state. Charles E. Morris of Philadelphia, J. L. Travis of Choctaw County, and John W. Randolph of Sunflower County were confirmed as commissioner of deeds, tax collector, and circuit clerk, respectively. Similar duties were performed in the following months.²⁷

One of the most important pieces of legislation signed by Hill was an act regulating the rules pertaining to the registration of voters and other related matters. The law repealed a previous one of 1873. The new code stated that registrars were to hold registration sessions for not less than three days and that there should be five days in

county seats. The law also stated that circuit judges had the authority to remove registrars who did not perform their duties according to the law. In addition to confirmations and other matters, Hill gave annual reports.²⁸

In one of his first annual reports, Hill presented several exhibits showing the distribution of public printing of the various state departments, the division of public documents, sales of the state, and a revision of the law code of 1871. After these presentations, Hill recommended that the law regarding the sale of state lands be clarified. He pointed out that the previous law in relation to the sale of property had provided for a method of keeping records for the sale of land, but the law of 1875 had failed to do so and his office did not possess records of such sales. Hill told the governor that he made the suggestion because a number of citizens had indicated an interest in settling on land. Finally, he explained that as a result of the 1875 code, regulating the leasing of state property in the city of Jackson, he had leased land amounting to \$3,272.75.²⁹

In his fourth and final report, Hill displayed more exhibits, outlining the functions of his office in relation to what the law required to be reported by his department. Next, he emphasized the fact that he had requested that an office for the state land commissioner be established. As a result, he added that the legislature was to be commended for creating such office and for choosing a man well qualified to fill the position. Because the topic of property ownership was complicated and valuable to the state and its people, Hill stated that both had gone without notice in the past and that the lack of attention and fraud had damaged land sales. He suggested that a separate land

department be established and that the person in charge have undisputed authority over the entire state. Hill explained that such an arrangement would be beneficial to those buying land, establishing ownership of it, and it would be a great asset to the state. In his final statement, Hill said that his term in office would terminate following the report and that he wished all others who were leaving or coming into new positions a rewarding future. Having completed his term as secretary of state, Hill became a powerful figure in state politics, particularly during the latter part of the Bourbon period and the Populist era.³⁰

Though Hill obtained more power during the post-reconstruction era, he had made a name for himself during the early 1870s. He was perhaps the most powerful Black leader in the state and his influence was exemplified when he persuaded Blanche K. Bruce to run for the United States senate. On a return trip from the Republican National Convention in 1872, Bruce stopped by the capitol building in Washington, D. C., where he was accompanied by Hill. As the two approached the senate chamber, they located the two seats of the senators from Mississippi. Bringing Bruce's attention to one of them, Hill wanted to know if he was interested in obtaining one for himself. Bruce replied that he did not understand his inference. Hill explained that he wanted to know if Bruce would like to fill the seat as a senator from the state of Mississippi. Bruce answered that it was impossible. Hill explained that he would put Bruce in office, because he was unbeatable. Shortly after, Bruce was elected to the United States Senate.³¹

It appeared that Hill's influence was not as effective when the use of it applied to himself. Prior to the Republican state convention in Jackson on August 25, 1875, Hill again used his influence by getting

the railroads to give reduced rates to those delegates who would be attending the conference. Hill became a candidate for the United States Congress from the Fifth Congressional District of Mississippi on the Republican ticket.³²

In one of his campaign speeches, Hill told his listeners that he did not represent a color line because the people in his district were not interested in such a candidate. He proclaimed that his interest in making the race was the same as any other candidate. If elected, he added that he would represent everybody in his district, and that he was concerned for all the citizens. Moreover, Hill stated that defeat for him would mean that the state and its people, both Black and White, would be defeated. He avowed that his platform promoted equality for all and that he would campaign upon that principle. His speech was received with a loud ovation. However, his campaign fell short of victory, for he was defeated by a 5,338 majority. His Democratic opponent received 13,020 votes to his 7,682 votes. Hill carried only two counties, and he narrowly won by a vote of 1,232 to 1,230 in Clarke County, while he received 682 in Wayne County to the opposition's 589. Hill would make two more unsuccessful attempts for a congressional seat at the national level. On the other hand, he was more successful as a political leader at the state level.³³

During the Bourbon period, Hill engaged in national and state politics, a feat which enabled him to amass more power than he previously held. At times, he participated in factional politics among both races as well as the two major parties. In 1888, he used his influence to dissolve the powerful triumvirate in the state which he and other leading Blacks had built. When the Republicans made preparations to

secure delegations from Mississippi to their national convention, the other Black leaders made plans by which all of them could attend, but Hill would often endorse a different candidate, and he would sometimes scratch a delegate's name from the slate and substitute another of his choice to attend the convention. On one occasion, Hill removed Bruce's name and added Stringer's name. That episode ended a relationship between Bruce and Hill which was never again the same.³⁴

The political power that Hill possessed earlier was minimal in comparison to the political power which he obtained during his campaign for Grover Cleveland's reelection in 1892. He was named postmaster at Vicksburg by President Cleveland, an appointment which brought about criticism from the citizens in the city. Some of the critics stated that Hill was not a citizen of Vicksburg and that the post office was the largest and most important in the state. Some felt that violence would occur if Hill should accept the position. Unfortunately, his position was never confirmed in the United States Senate. Nevertheless, he served for several months and remained a powerful figure.³⁵

Several factors accounted for Hill's political strength. He served as a link between federal and state relations. No one could expect to obtain a federal position in the state without his endorsement. Those attributes gave him power, prestige, and a substantial following. However, under Benjamin Harrison's administration between 1889 and 1893 he faced several problems. Hill made a number of recommendations for personal friends to be appointed to federal positions in the state. But on each occasion the other Black leaders blocked those appointments. Hill retaliated by using his influence to support Harrison's enemies. Although he held a political post under the administration, he felt that

by opposing Harrison, the influence of the other Black leaders would be destroyed in the state. Otherwise, he did not have anything personal against Harrison. Those political maneuvers would soon lead to shortcomings in Hill's political career.³⁶

In 1895, Mark A. Hannah, a prominent politician from Ohio, made a bargain with Hill. Hill agreed to sponsor a delegation from Mississippi in support of the William McKinley ticket. In return, Hannah would contribute financial aid for the Hill political machine in the state. Hill used this opportunity to discredit the other Black Republican faction in the state and to strengthen his political wing by winning renomination on the National Republican Committee in the state. Hill made it appear that the other Black segment was disloyal to the Republican ticket. But Hannah later learned that the quarrel was for local control of the state between the two factions and for membership on the national committee. Not only was Hill receiving money from McKinley's supporters, but he accepted funds from other sources under the pretense of being a McKinley supporter, a practice he had engaged in under the Harrison administration. At this point, Hill's party was undoubtedly the strongest faction in the state, for he publicly announced that the rival faction would be removed from future politics in the state. To further strengthen his wing, he won the sympathy of the Democratic Party. That support resulted from the fact that Hill recruited Isiah T. Montgomery into his organization. Montgomery, a Black from Bolivar County, supported the disfranchise clause at the state constitutional convention of 1890, while the opposition group had opposed it.³⁷

When the national convention met in 1896, Hill's organization cast only 2,147 votes for McKinley's ticket while the opposing Black machine

had a total of 2,702. Even in his own district of Vicksburg, Hill accumulated only 182 votes for McKinley's electors. Though the opposing wing fought hard to send more delegates to the convention, Hill made maneuvers that got a majority of his delegates seated; he was again selected as a member of the national committee. But when one of his delegates cast a vote against McKinley, that enhanced the rupture of Hill's future career in politics. But at the moment, his supporters were jubilant over their victory. The opposition segment accepted defeat at first and some of them pondered the idea of joining Hill's organization, but the leaders of the opposition party came up with an instant plan of retaliation.³⁸

Hill used many tactics to remove his rival party from the state. First, he conspired with the leading Democrat authorities to eliminate the leader of the counter group from politics on the grounds that he was no longer a resident of the state because of a short period of absence from it. However, that came to no avail. Shortly after McKinley took office in 1897, he summoned Hill to the capital for a conference. He wanted Hill's approval of a list of individuals for federal appointments. He quickly approved three people belonging to his organization, but he gave a negative response to the remaining three, for they were supporters of the opposition. Nevertheless, the president appointed three to each party wing. This was disappointing to Hill, as it accentuated the power of the other segment group.³⁹

For himself, Hill anticipated an appointment as collector of internal revenue for the districts encompassing the states of Mississippi and Louisiana, with headquarters at New Orleans. But things did not turn out as he expected. The political bosses reminded him of the

bipartisan transactions which had taken place. They called Hill's attention to the fact that he made agreements with the Hannah organization and that he did not honor his promises. For that action, Hill was appointed to the office of finance collector in Jackson. Hill was shocked, for he had worked hard and hoped for the internal revenue position. From that point, things seemed to go from bad to worse for Hill.⁴⁰

When plans were made to attend the Republican National Convention of 1900, Hill was stripped of members in relation to the number of delegates that would attend the convention from his organization. Apparently he recognized that he was losing influence and power as a politician in the state, for he held a conference with the leading member of the opposing Black machine in the state. He apologized for the position he had taken and for the action he had performed in opposition toward the other group. His apology was accepted and both leaders agreed to work together. Hill explained that he believed that plans were being made to displace Blacks in the party and that he was afraid he would lose his political job. He said that he had made a terrible mistake which almost destroyed both of their careers. Furthermore, he claimed that he had been betrayed by those who called themselves his friends. In addition, he said that in his opinion no Black would have any influence in the party in the future. In closing, he asked John R. Lynch to forget about the past and try to work as a team to salvage the wreck facing them.⁴¹

Lynch agreed to work with him, and he made a compromise with Hill by which he pledged to support the Lynch organization. Hill agreed to support the candidate who would be succeeding him on the national

committee. This was a difficult decision for him to make but it was the only action that would save him from political destruction. Nevertheless, he kept his promise because that was part of the arrangement in order for him to attend the convention as a delegate. But following McKinley's assassination, Hill's position in the party was all but over. When Theodore Roosevelt took office, he was displeased with Hill's services and conduct. He displaced Hill with a member of Hill's own faction. Lynch pleaded with the president to keep Hill in the party, but Roosevelt did not acquiesce. Meanwhile, Hill was almost bankrupt; his health had broken, and he never recovered from the incident. He died shortly after. Thus, ended the saga of a man who was perhaps Mississippi's most powerful Black politician during his times.⁴²

Lynch and Hill were obviously the most influential Black secretaries of state, but there were three other Blacks who served in that position. Hiram Rhodes Revels of Adams County served from December, 1872, to September, 1873, filling Lynch's vacancy following his death in office. H. C. Carter took office on September 1, 1873, and left on October 20 of the same year. However, Carter took office again on November 13, 1873, and continued until January 4, 1874. According to Allan Smith, another writer who has done research on the topic, M. M. McLoad took office on October 20, 1874, and served until November 13 of the same year. Nevertheless, their terms were short due to the fact that they completed unexpired tenures.⁴³

Another Black leader who held a major office at the state level was Alexander Kelso Davis. Davis came to Mississippi in 1869 and settled in Noxubee County, where he became a lawyer. He was elected to the legislature in 1869. When the legislature convened the next year,

Davis became a member of the House of Representatives Ways and Means Committee dealing with salaries and revenues for state officials. As a representative, he became a progressive legislator. Davis introduced more than twenty-five bills and resolutions in the house. One of his bills requested that an extension be made to the time for payments of debts in Noxubee County and another called for the passage of legislation that would establish a uniform system to lower tolls in the state and rates on railroads, chiefly the Ohio and Mobile. Actually, Davis may be considered the most eminent in the house among his race at the time, excluding John R. Lynch.⁴⁴

Davis' performance as a legislator was partially responsible for elevating him to the office of lieutenant governor. When the Republicans held their state convention in 1873, Blacks demanded the office of lieutenant governor for themselves. Because Blacks had supported Ames with a measure of devotion, he decided to concede to their request. But he had to look about for a Black that was qualified. It was finally decided that Bruce was the man for the position. However, when they approached him with the suggestion, Bruce declined to accept the position. His refusal led the Republicans to pick between two other candidates in the persons of Davis and H. C. Carter. Though it was felt that neither of them was qualified for the position, Davis was their final choice.⁴⁵

Immediately after taking office, Davis began to assert himself, and the press helped his cause by being liberal toward him in its columns. However, the press realized that much of its business depended upon Davis' supporters. In addition, the press was anticipating the possibility of Davis becoming governor in the next state election. With

both of those facts in mind, the Vicksburg Daily Times stated that Davis had promoted a program of impartiality and that his tenure in office had been one which made no distinction in favor of any race. Therefore, his action as acting governor was satisfactory with the Republicans.⁴⁶

In relation to courts in the state, Davis appealed to both races for mutual and peaceful support in solving judicial problems. Ames had appointed a number of chancellors to the courts; many of these were his associates from the North and a substantial number of citizens were dissatisfied with them. Davis issued a proclamation on September 22, 1874, telling the people that the courts would dissolve the existing evils and that they could also help by casting their votes at the polls. Davis further stated that there was no racial cleavage in the state and that the government did not adhere to such principles, and that anyone who attempted to promote racial discord would find his effort destroyed by the people of the state. Davis was insinuating an end to the harassment of Blacks, and to the Blacks he was indicating the necessity of upholding the Republican Party.⁴⁷

In the same proclamation, Davis showed concern for corruptions in government, mob violence, and burdensome taxation. Davis called upon the Black and White citizens of the state to work as a unit in order to eliminate the unbearable corruption in state government, following his critical denunciation of such practice. He warned that the security of both races was the same and that animosity should never break that bond. Davis continued that everybody in the state shared the pains of repugnant government, and that these evils could only be corrected through the mutual efforts of both races. Regarding mob violence, the lieutenant governor posted bounties for the capture and indictment of

anyone suspected of promoting or dealing in mob action. Believing that mob violence undermined justice, he asked the people to aid in the apprehension of guilty parties in bringing them to justice. To relieve oppressive taxation in the state, Davis told Blacks and Republicans to stop the passage of excessive taxation. He warned Blacks that Whites were entitled to the same rights; because they possessed most of the land, they were not to be burdened with heavy taxes. He added that all property rights were to be honored and that everyone had the right to request that the government be just in taxation. Before closing, Davis pleaded with both races to be considerate of the rights of each other so that a misunderstanding would not lead to animosity among them.⁴⁸

When the lieutenant governor's time was not occupied in an effort to ease strained relations among the citizens, he was busy performing other duties of his office. On August 24, 1874, Thomas H. Barrentine of Lowndes County was charged with the murder of Mrs. Ann Thomas of the same county, near Caledonia, Mississippi. Davis advised the authorities to put forth maximum effort to apprehend the fugitive and he offered a \$500 reward for the arrest and conviction of Barrentine. Davis took action on another case resembling that of Barrentine's. C. E. Bavins, a native of Mississippi, was accused of homicide in the state and had taken refuge in Texas. On October 7, little more than a month after the Barrentine incident, Davis contacted the governor of Texas and asked him to extradite Bavins to Mississippi.⁴⁹

In July of 1875, Davis became acting governor. As acting governor, Davis performed several tasks, many of which were severely criticized. One of his first acts while serving in this capacity was the issuance of a proclamation removing all restrictions against Union and

Confederate soldiers who had been convicted for crimes during the war. In the same month, a new board of trustees was appointed at Alcorn University. Because Davis and Ames were not on friendly terms, it was believed that Davis made the appointments. That opinion prevailed because Davis was a member of the board, and the appointments were made during the time that Ames was on vacation. In addition to the new board at the university, Davis removed Ames' personal secretary, canceled a number of job appointments that had been made, and selected men of his own choice.⁵⁰

With these actions behind him, Davis attacked the systems of registration laws and tax collections. As August of 1875 was the month for the county election, every effort was made to register Blacks. The Republicans were not pleased with the existing laws regarding registration and they desired a revision of them. Acting upon information received from the attorney general that the laws regarding registration were unconstitutional, Davis called a special session of the legislature and informed them of the need to revise the laws. Likewise, the Mississippi Supreme Court had ruled that there were no laws regulating the collection of taxes in the state in reference to the bonding of those who collected them. Hence, Davis told the legislature that it was imperative that acts be passed for the bonding of those who collected taxes.⁵¹

In the midst of his political activities, various charges were made against Davis. On June 11, 1875, Davis sent a message to the sheriff of Lowndes County informing him that he was issuing a pardon to Thomas H. Barrentine, the same individual for whom he had offered a \$500 reward the year before. Davis explained that he had good and

sufficient reasons for taking such action. However, the Columbus Index charged that Davis was the recipient of a bribe while acting as governor in June of 1874. Davis asked the authorities, namely the legislature, to look into the accusation. There has been speculation regarding the lieutenant governor's motives for asking for an investigation. One opinion was that Davis anticipated a political turnover in the next state election and that a current investigation would eliminate any chances for a future interrogation. Nevertheless, an investigation was scheduled.⁵²

In speaking of the investigation, the Jackson Daily Mississippi Pilot, a Republican publication, lamented that the charges against Davis should be thoroughly investigated, for in its opinion the whole matter was based upon groundless facts. On the other hand, nothing less than an honest and complete probe into the matter would satisfy Davis, the people, or his party. Thus, the press stated that it would refrain from printing anything that would damage his chances for a fair hearing, for condemnation by the press would influence public opinion against Davis. The paper suggested that the public withhold its criticism in order for the lieutenant governor to have a fair trial.⁵³

On February 17, 1876, five articles of impeachment were brought against Davis in the House of Representatives for high crimes and misdemeanors. Article One stated that Davis accepted \$600.00 from W. E. Gibbs as a bribe to grant a pardon to Thomas H. Barrentine. Article Two charged that Davis received \$500.00 from J. Dowsing on June 14, 1875, when he delivered the pardon. Article Three and Article Four were replicas of the previous ones. Article Five accused Davis of paying A. G. Packer \$600.00 for the pardon.⁵⁴

In defense of the charges, Davis stated that the circuit court in Lowndes County had conducted a thorough investigation into the charges of bribery against him and that the findings showed that there were no grounds for a trial. Davis said that he was innocent of all the accusations and that when he issued the pardon, he did it in an unadulterated manner, using his own judgment exclusive of his authority as acting governor of the state. Though Davis denied all charges, the impeachment trial continued.⁵⁵

The senate began its hearings on the matter two days after charges were brought before the house. During the course of the trial, J. S. Rhodes, Ames' secretary, appeared as a witness. Rhodes verified the fact that Davis entered the governor's office on May 21, 1875, and that he officially took over as acting governor on June 6. Rhodes stated that Davis had him make out a pardon for Barrentine and that Gibbs received the pardon on May 23, the same time in which Davis was paid \$500.00. Rhodes further stated that the first pardon issued by Davis was not accepted and that he gave Barrentine another one after he became acting governor.⁵⁶

The trial terminated on March 13, 1876, and Davis was convicted as charged. Thirty-four votes were cast against Davis, while four members voted not guilty. Of the thirty-four guilty votes, six were Republican and one of those was cast by a Black man. All of those who voted in favor of Davis were Black Republicans. Ten days later, a twenty-five to four vote was cast in favor of removing Davis and to prohibit him from holding political office in the future. However, his sentence was delayed because Governor Ames' impeachment trial started on March 14 of the same year. Due to the fact that Ames was still qualified to

appoint another lieutenant governor, it was felt that he would appoint a Republican if Davis was removed. Therefore, the Democrats changed the date of Ames' trial and scheduled another one two weeks from March 14. During this interval, the law which gave the governor the authority to appoint state office holders was revoked. While these proceedings were going on, Davis resigned as lieutenant governor. Hence, Mississippi's first and only Black lieutenant governor and acting governor's political career had come to an end.⁵⁷

Another person whose political experiences were similar to those of Davis was Thomas W. Cardoza, a Black. He came to Vicksburg from New York following the war; there he became an influential politician. Although Cardoza was hardly known outside of Warren County, his education enabled him to obtain the position of state superintendent of education. Because of his intelligence and experience, it was believed that he would do a creditable job as superintendent. His strong support of the Republican Party in Warren County was in part an inducement for his nomination for the position.⁵⁸

Before his election to the office of superintendent of education, Cardoza was clerk of the circuit court in Warren County. After the election of 1873, he resigned as circuit clerk because of his new position as superintendent following the election in October of the same year. In fact, his nomination resulted from a heated debate during the Republican state convention in 1873. The Black delegates took an opposite stand when two White incumbents were placed on the ticket for another term. The Black faction of the party demanded three of a total of seven state positions, one of which was state superintendent of education. After further disputes, Cardoza was placed on the ticket.⁵⁹

As circuit clerk, Cardoza made two transactions involving witness certificates and the collection of revenues. He issued a number of documents to individuals in order that they could verify that they had performed as witnesses, which would allow them to receive remuneration for these duties. From July through September of 1873, Cardoza collected a sum of \$956.85 from individuals who purchased land that had gone back to the state because of delinquent taxes not paid by the original owners. As a result of those transactions, he would be investigated.⁶⁰

When he became state superintendent of education, Cardoza proclaimed that considerable improvements had been made in the area of education in comparison to the prewar system. He added that sixty-nine of the total of seventy-four counties in the state had enacted some means of taxation for education. Regarding teachers and school houses, he explained that there were a total of 3,000 teachers in the state and that they were graduates of creditable eastern and northern institutions. After a brief statement concerning the term and teacher salary, Cardoza said that the schools were satisfactory and modernly equipped. In his conclusion, he gave a description of the various sources from which funds were derived and other schools in the state were identified, including the University of Mississippi, Alcorn, and Tougaloo Universities.⁶¹

When Cardoza presented his annual report, he declared that public education had grown to the approval of the citizens and that many of the previous problems had begun to disappear. Furthermore, he advised that when the school authorities received sufficient power to enforce laws regulating education, a school system would emerge in the state

second to none among other states that promoted education for their citizens. To perfect such a system, he pointed out the importance of the task that must be performed by the county superintendents at the local level. The fact that the state was not densely populated, and the difficulty involved in finding qualified persons to fill this position, accounted for the invaluable services of this office. Lastly, he stated that his report did not include the presentations of the county superintendents. His justification was that their narratives were too spacious and that they duplicated each other. Cardoza made several suggestions in relation to changing some of the school laws in order to prolong immediate innovations in the future.⁶²

In addition to his position as superintendent of education, Cardoza also served on the state board of education and on the board of trustees of Tougaloo University. While serving on the board at Tougaloo, he was elected as treasurer for the institution on January 1, 1875. On June 30, 1874, the state had appropriated \$4,500 in warrants to the Tougaloo fund. Receiving the warrants, Cardoza deposited a portion of them in the Capitol State Bank at Jackson in exchange for \$2,500 in cash. Eventually, he would face impeachment charges for this action.⁶³

In March of 1874, Cardoza had devised a plan by which Warren County could obtain a greater amount of money for the county school fund. He observed that the superintendent of Hinds County had accumulated large sums of money by the use of school funds taken from poll taxes and other sources of income for educational purposes. He made a bargain with C. E. Bent, a White man and superintendent of Warren County schools, in which they could add \$4,000 to the joint educational

in Warren County. The plan called for the transferal of a smaller amount of money to the city and county treasurers of the school district and the teachers fund than the legislature had appropriated. In order to make the scheme work, the county superintendent would report a larger student enrollment to the state superintendent than he had given to the county assessor. Hence, the superintendent would give the state auditor a larger figure than actually existed. At the time, the legislature allowed \$1.80 for each pupil and Warren County fraudulently reported more than 4,000 students. Bent explained that he went along with the plan for the purpose of bringing additional funds into the county in order to enhance the education of the children. Although Cardoza never got possession of any of the proceeds from the action performed, subsequent investigations connected him with the matter.⁶⁴

During the first session of the legislature in 1874, Cardoza used his influence in an attempt to get a bill through that body. He was interested in the passage of the bill because it would allow him to purchase textbooks and other school supplies for the state. In fact, he had the Pilot Publishing Company in Jackson to print some 2,000 books, school registers, and other materials for the state schools. Likewise, Cardoza purchased thousands of books, ledgers, and registers from the E. T. Hobart and Company out of Saint Louis, Missouri, in 1874 for educational purposes.⁶⁵

As early as the summer of 1875, embezzlement charges against Cardoza began to circulate. Just as it had done during Davis' trial, the Jackson Daily Pilot refrained from printing anything incriminating about Cardoza. According to this publication, Cardoza would be acquitted if innocent and convicted if guilty. The paper stated that it

did not want to poison the public's mind against the superintendent. It added that its columns would be open in Cardoza's defense because the majority of papers were opposed to the Republican Party. It concluded that every man was entitled to a hearing.⁶⁶

On February 16, 1876, proceedings began against Cardoza in the legislature. Twelve articles of impeachment were brought against him. Cardoza was charged with the theft of state funds received from the sale of land while serving as circuit clerk of Warren County in 1873. He was also accused of embezzling funds belonging to Tougaloo University and for using state money to purchase unnecessary school supplies, of which a portion of the funds were retained for himself. Another article accused him of plotting to use the monies of the teachers' fund of Warren County for his own benefit. In the midst of the proceedings, Cardoza asked to resign if the proceedings would stop. On the following day, March 22, 1876, he resigned, and the house voted 64 to 12 to end the trial.⁶⁷

Perhaps the most courageous of all the Black leaders in the state was Charles Caldwell, a native of Hinds County, Mississippi. Caldwell lived in Clinton, a small community near Jackson, where he had been a slave and a blacksmith. He has been described as a person who possessed considerable intelligence and an informal education. These factors enabled him to become a leading figure in the Republican organization. In addition to being the most influential Black delegate at the constitutional convention of 1868, he became a member of the Hinds County board of police. As a member of the board, he had the responsibility of assessing taxes as well as police functions. He remained on the board until 1870.⁶⁸

Following the convention of 1868, a series of demonstrations occurred in Jackson. Caldwell shot and killed the son of a Judge Johnston, a prominent citizen in Jackson. When he stood trial, the jury acquitted him because he had acted in self defense. Caldwell was perhaps the only member of his race to commit such an act without punishment in Mississippi at that time. In 1870, he resigned from the board as a result of his election to the state senate, a position he held until 1875.⁶⁹

Caldwell lost little time in asserting himself as a senator, for one of the first measures he supported was a bill which placed restrictions upon the printing of certain articles by the pro-Democratic newspapers. He explained that the press had been encouraging the killing of Blacks who held offices in the state and who had been putting forth an honest effort to perform their duties. He stated that he believed in peace and that the press advocated everything but peace. Therefore, he voted for the law, which eventually passed.⁷⁰

He was more effective the following year. He supported an amendment that would allow two senators to be chosen from the seventh district in the state. Caldwell was also appointed to the committee to inform the governor of the progress of the legislature and for the purpose of communicating with the governor's office. The committee had emanated from a motion that Caldwell made.⁷¹

Perhaps the most important piece of legislation he supported was an amendment to a bill that would protect the rights of all minorities in public places of entertainment, on common carriers, and other public accommodations. The act, which passed, stipulated that anyone who denied a person the equal enjoyment of such facilities would be fined

or imprisoned. He usually attended most of the sessions, for at one particular time he was absent only five times during the year, and the longest was two days for sickness.⁷²

Caldwell was even more daring outside the halls of the legislature. He was a captain and commander of Company A, Second Regiment, Mississippi Infantry. Prior to the election of 1875, the state was plagued with a number of riots. When Grant refused to send troops, Governor Ames organized militias. Some of the militiamen were without arms, and had been detained by civilian police authorities. One group was located in Edwards, a small town between Jackson and Vicksburg. Ames ordered Caldwell to deliver arms to the men. Caldwell left Jackson on the morning of October 9, 1875, with 102 men and an additional 100 guns along with ammunition. Spending one night on the road, he delivered the equipment the following day. On his return trip to Jackson, he picked up another militia company, and when he reached the city there was a total of three hundred men, of which over half were armed. The Democrats warned the people to steer clear of Caldwell, because he would fight to his death, and any disturbance may bring federal troops, as he was also an agent for the governor.⁷³

On the day of the election, the streets were filled with Democrats who carried their guns with them. When Caldwell's Black colleague suggested that they forget about voting, Caldwell told him to keep his mouth closed and that they would vote regardless. They went to the polls and cast their ballots. The Modocs, a militant White group, had previously warned Caldwell that he would be killed. One night while Caldwell was out, some fifty members of this group went to his house. They left shortly before sunrise, but before they departed they told

his wife to inform Caldwell that they had orders to kill him. They warned that they would do it regardless of how long it took, even if it took months or a year. They concluded that Caldwell belonged to the Republican Party and that he had been defending the Blacks.⁷⁴

On December 25, 1875, Caldwell went into the town of Clinton to learn about his nephew who had been threatened earlier that day. After dinner he returned to Clinton. This time an acquaintance of his, Buck Cabell, invited Caldwell to drink a toast in celebration of Christmas. While the two men stood in the basement of Chilton's store, they touched their glasses, apparently a signal for the assassins. Caldwell was shot in the head as he stood with his back to the window. Not quite dead, he lifted himself up and told the assassins not to forget that they were killing a gallant man and that when he was dead be mindful of the fact that he was not a docile man. At that instant, some forty shots rang out, delivering the fatal blow.⁷⁵

Robert H. Wood was elected as mayor of Natchez in 1870, a position which enabled him to become one of the most powerful leaders in his area. When John R. Lynch was running for the United States Congress from the Sixth Congressional District, Wood exercised his leadership ability in helping Lynch to win the election. But the role he played in Lynch's election would end his career as mayor. When Wood ran for reelection, some of the Republicans refused to support him because Wood had opposed their candidate, L. W. Perce, who ran against Lynch as a nominee for Congress. Instead of endorsing Wood, Perce's group stood behind an independent ticket, ruining Wood's chances for reelection.⁷⁶

Failing in his attempt to regain the office of mayor, Wood had to settle for another position. Lynch, feeling somewhat obligated to Wood,

recommended to United States Senators Ames and Alcorn that he be appointed as postmaster of Natchez. Agreeing that Lynch had such right to name a person from the district, the senators confirmed the position for Wood. He served in that office for three years, then resigned in 1877 to take another position.⁷⁷

Wood was elected as sheriff and tax collector of Adams County on November 6, 1877. His term as sheriff was brief, ending on the first Monday in January of the following year. However, he exemplified a measure of credibility while serving in that capacity, for he collected more than \$11,000 during his short term. At a time when charges of embezzlement were common, an examination of his record showed that he withstood the honesty test. A study of his personal possessions, such as horses, carriages, stables, and other criteria of wealth, revealed that Wood was low on the scale of affluence. Even the amount of taxes he paid indicated that he did not rank high in possessions.⁷⁸

Perhaps the most controversial Black during this time was Isiah T. Montgomery, born on May 21, 1847, at Davis Bend, a small village near Vicksburg. He had been the slave of Joseph Emory Davis, the brother of Jefferson Davis. He learned to read and write as a youth from his father and from members of his owner's family. His learning was also buttressed from the experience he received as a private secretary in the Davis' home. These qualities allowed him to escape the cruel side of the slave system. Even more enriching to the fulfillment of his intellectual growth was his occupation as a United States mail carrier during the war.⁷⁹

In 1886, Montgomery purchased 840 acres of land from the railroad in Bolivar County. The following year the site was called Mound Bayou;

Montgomery declared that it was a haven for Blacks. The colony emanated into an all-Black settlement of 2,000 citizens, with some 6,000 Blacks living in the surrounding area. Mound Bayou became the center of Black life in the region, as it was operated entirely by Blacks. Apparently, the founding of Mound Bayou occurred because of the previous success Montgomery had in leading a group of Blacks to Nicodemus, Kansas, where he first established a settlement.⁸⁰

His political experience began following his father's appointment as justice of the peace by General Ord. Some of the White citizens protested against the act. As the criticism swept through the community, Montgomery told the citizens that his father was not interested in the position and that his father would not handle cases involving members of their race. During James G. Blaine's presidential campaign in 1884, Montgomery attended the Warren County Republican convention as a delegate. In the same year, he was a delegate to the party's district congressional convention. Here he made his first public speech on behalf of R. F. Beck, a Republican politician. Following his presentation, Montgomery became an elector for the Republican ticket. In 1888, he was a member of the party's county committee in Bolivar County, where he worked to promote the fusion system in county elections.⁸¹

On July 29, 1890, Montgomery obtained his first elective position. He was elected as a delegate to the Mississippi Constitutional Convention, being the only Black man to attend. His work at the convention was somewhat depressing, for it repealed all the acts such as the Emancipation Proclamation and the three amendments to the United States constitution which recognized the freedom, citizenship, and the right to vote for Blacks in the state. Realizing that part of the purpose of

the convention was to remove Blacks from the political scene in the state, Montgomery, nevertheless, supported measures which reduced Black voting power considerably. It appeared that Montgomery regretted what he had done some years later when James Hill wrote to him concerning William L. Hemingway, a White who served as state treasurer. Hemingway was convicted and imprisoned on charges of embezzlement. When new, exonerating evidence was discovered in the case, several leading citizens petitioned the governor to pardon him. Hill sent a list containing the names of the petitioners to Montgomery. He acknowledged to Hill that he was surprised to receive such correspondence. But subsequent activities on Montgomery's part showed no signs of regret.⁸²

In addition to supporting disfranchisement, Montgomery presented a memorial to the convention on September 26, 1890. The essence of the document pleaded for additional funds to improve the levee in the state. Montgomery pointed out that the lives and property of the people depended upon the upkeep of the levee. He added that the citizens were paying high taxes on it while railroads were being exempt except for a small tax, which was inadequate for the support of the levee. He suggested that the state pass just and fair taxes to be levied on railroads that were operating in the state and for those that would be running through the Mississippi River Delta in the future. Last, he stated that the rail lines would be useless without adequate levee protection. To assure that positive action would be taken toward this request at the national level, Montgomery had already accompanied a Republican committee and other citizens to Washington in May of that year to present the case to Congress. He was a member of the sub-committee which presented their case to the Senate Committee on Commerce. They

asked for federal assistance in relation to controlling the flooding of the Mississippi River.⁸³

When the convention convened, Montgomery became a member of the Black faction of the Republican Party headed by James Hill. It was felt that the Democrats in the state supported Hill's political machine primarily because of Montgomery's role at the convention. Montgomery continued to be active in the Republican Party. During the presidential campaign of 1896, he ran on the Republican ticket in an effort to become an elector. Although he received 214 votes, that was far short of the number needed to be elected. Montgomery held one other position after he failed to be elected as an elector. Booker T. Washington, a nationally-known Black leader, recommended him for a federal position. As a result, Montgomery was appointed to the office of receiver of public revenues at Jackson, replacing his friend and colleague, James Hill. He held that office for a brief period before he resigned.⁸⁴

There were other Blacks such as G. W. Gayles, Richard Griggs, T. W. Stringer, and Henry P. Jacobs who may be viewed as minor leaders because they did not receive publicity like some of the other politicians. Several of these men held various positions, while other affiliated themselves with the church, a reason why many were not well known. Yet, some had attended the constitutional convention of 1868 in which they made names for themselves. Though these leaders lacked the recognition of other state officials, their positions, influence, and support in Mississippi was significant in Black politics in the state.

G. W. Gayles of Wilkinson County was one of the most versatile of the minor Black leaders. He received an education as a youth under the auspices of Elizabeth Powell of New York, who had been employed as an

instructor in the state. Gayles became a Baptist minister in 1867 and organized the Kindling Altar Church in Bolivar County. Like others who found it hard to separate religious functions from politics, it was not long before Gayles became involved. From September, 1869, to November, 1870, Gayles held four political offices. His first position was an appointment to the board of police in Bolivar County by Ames, who was brevet major-general of the Union Army. Ames made the appointment on September 17, 1869. On August 2 of the following year, Alcorn, governor at that time, appointed Gayles as justice of the peace of Bolivar County. Serving in that position almost a month, he was appointed supervisor on August 29, and the following November, Gayles was elected to the lower house of the state legislature.⁸⁵

Gayles served in the house for four years, until 1874, when he turned to religious activities. After a religious affiliation of several years, in 1877 he was once again elected to the legislature. This time, however, he served in the senate. Gayles was the last Black to be elected to the upper house in the state during the Bourbon and Populist periods. He was reelected several times and served until 1894. The various positions held by Gayles enabled him to win much recognition and have considerable influence in the state.⁸⁶

T. W. Stringer and Henry P. Jacobs were also political as well as religious leaders. Stringer settled in Vicksburg in 1865, where he was head of the African Methodist Church. He had previously been connected with religious activities in Ohio and Canada. He was elected to the senate in 1870 and was influential enough to make his presence known. As a member of the levee committee, Stringer made a minority report in relation to warrant payments for Issaquena County. He pointed out that

Issaquena County had failed to pay the warrants for work done on the levee in the county. He provided documents showing that the debt had been ignored for ten years and that the persons involved were asking that an act be passed to meet the delinquent debt.⁸⁷

When he was not occupied as a senator, Stringer gave his support to other Black leaders. During the Bourbon period, he spent four months at the national capital campaigning and negotiating on behalf of James Hill, who was running for the United States Congress. Stringer avowed that Hill would be elected, even if the cost ran as high as \$100,000. He emphasized the fact that the Republicans had at least nominated a Black man for Congress and that the country was safe in the hands of Black people.⁸⁸

Much like Stringer, Henry P. Jacobs found it hard to keep his religious activities out of politics. Jacobs received a rudimentary education as a slave in Alabama. Using his learning skills, he forged his own pass and fled to the North along with his wife, three children, and a brother-in-law. He spent several years in Canada and Michigan before trekking to Mississippi. He settled in Natchez during the war and organized Baptist groups in the area. Jacobs used religion as a means for political gains, for he authored the resolution of his Baptist association which endorsed the Republican Party. The document upheld loyalty to the Republicans and avowed to disassociate themselves with any party opposed to equality for Black people. Jacobs' political training resulted from the experience he obtained as a delegate to the constitutional convention of 1868. That experience was repeated as a member of the legislature.⁸⁹

Richard Griggs was another state official who did little as a

leader but held an important position. Griggs was elected as state commissioner of immigration and agriculture in 1873. In his first report, Griggs gave a vivid description of the state. According to his explanation, the state was located between thirty-one and thirty-five degrees north latitude, bound by the Gulf of Mexico to the south, while the Mississippi and Pearl Rivers bordered the state to the west. The state of Alabama served as the eastern boundary. The state was 120 miles wide and 330 miles in length. Within its borders there were 35,520 acres of land and a population of 827,922. In reference to agricultural land, Griggs reported that there were four geological areas in the state and that the Mississippi River Delta was the richest of all the sections. He claimed that only the Nile Valley could compare with the delta area in relation to fertility. Griggs went on to identify other facilities in the state, such as churches, government land, and transportation that awaited to serve immigrants coming into the state.⁹⁰

Municipal politics proved to be an effective area of Black participation. For instance, Natchez had a population of some 9,000 citizens and half of these were Black. Yet, Blacks had a slight voting majority. There were three Blacks on the board of aldermen. Natchez politics produced the first Black United States senator and congressman, and the first Black mayor of the state served at Natchez. Thomas W. Cardoza, Peter Crosby, G. W. Walton, W. B. Lewis, Oscar Speed, and Henry Hunt were all officials in the Vicksburg municipal government. Cardoza was the circuit clerk, while Crosby served as sheriff. The other officers were members of the board of supervisors. When Cardoza became state superintendent of education, Ames appointed another Black, A. W. Dorsey as circuit clerk. In Jackson, Charles Morgan and Peyton Robinson

served on the board of police and as magistrate, respectively. William Fuinip went from municipal politics to become assistant secretary of state and John D. Worls held the office of state librarian. Among other Black leaders in the city of Meridian, were J. Aaron Moore and William Sturgis. Moore was a delegate to the convention of 1868 and Sturgis was mayor. Hence, evidence shows that Robert H. Wood was not the only Black mayor in the state.⁹¹

Though there was adequate representation in municipal politics, the leaders at the county and local levels were more effective. This was due primarily to the support of the voters who were in the majority in thirty-two of the sixty-one counties at the time. This was especially true in Yazoo County, where the treasurer, chancery, and circuit clerk, and three of the five supervisors were Black. In Bolivar County, at one time, all the local positions in the county were held by Blacks, except those of the chancery and circuit clerk.⁹²

Supplementing the office holders at the local level were those Blacks who held no major offices but were effective as leaders. However, some occupied insignificant positions in both Republican and Democratic clubs. Ben Statham, John Golding, John Cooley, Frank Mayhew, Bob and Austin Dudley, were all members of the Democratic Party in Grenada County. Bob Reed was also a member of the Democratic Party and denounced the Republicans in Grenada County. Gilbert Burney, Alexander Phillips, and Jobe Humphreys were members of the Republican Party in Lafayette County who rallied support for their party. In Panola County, J. H. Pierce, C. A. Yancy, J. H. Piles, Louis Bert, Joseph Boyles, Scott Martin, and John Brown belonged to the Republican executive committee. These men were active in the recruitment of voters for their

party and occasionally denounced the Democratic Party. These were only a fraction of local Black leaders in the state who participated during the reconstruction era.⁹³

Thus, from the inception of their political experience at the state level, only thirty-five Blacks served in the legislature in 1870. Though that number was not in proportion to the voting population, they were strong enough to place from four to six percent on the various committees. Facing those odds, Blacks resorted to the method of bloc voting which proved most effective. Employing such a system, they were successful in the election of two senators, the abolishment of the Black Codes, and the election of the first Black United States senator. In 1871, three more Blacks were added to the legislature, making a total of thirty-eight. Not only was there an increase at the state level, but a greater number served at the local level. These increases lead to an attempt to form a coalition between the races as some of the racial animosities disappeared in the state. By 1873, Black representation had increased to a total of fifty-five in the legislature. From that number, several Blacks exercised considerable influence in the state.

James Lynch, James Hill, Alexander Kelso Davis, Thomas W. Cardoza, Charles Caldwell, Robert H. Wood, and Isiah T. Montgomery were among those Blacks who served as secretary of state, lieutenant governor, superintendent of education, senator, mayor, and convention delegate, respectively. These individuals performed significant roles in state politics and most served with unblemished records, excluding Davis and Cardoza who were impeached for conduct unbecoming of their positions. There were also minor office holders who were not as influential as others, but who played invaluable roles in relation to their support of

Black politics in the state.

An analysis of state and local politics reveals that local Black leaders were far more effective than the state leaders. There were only a few cities, such as Jackson, Natchez, Vicksburg, and Meridian where Black municipal politics were strong. But in counties such as Yazoo, Bolivar, and others where Blacks held all the county positions at times, their services proved most effective as a result of the large number of voters at the local level. In addition, there were Blacks in the counties of the state who merely associated themselves actively with the two major parties and did not hold political office. Inasmuch as Black local and state politicians performed well, they sent individuals to the national level who were equally effective in their functions.

FOOTNOTES

¹Senate Journal of the State of Mississippi at The Regular Session Thereof, Held in the City of Jackson, 1870 (Jackson: Kimball Raymond and Company, 1870), pp. 5, 79-81.

²American Annual Cyclopedia and Events of 1869, p. 462; Mississippi Senate Journal of 1870, p. 32.

³Ibid., pp. 24-26, 29-31, 38.

⁴St. Clair, "The National Career of Blanche Kelso Bruce," pp. 53-54; Charles J. Smith, "James Lusk Alcorn: A Biography," James Luck Alcorn Papers, Mississippi State Archives; Carl N. Degler, The Other South (New York: Harper and Row, 1974), pp. 325-326, 242.

⁵James L. Alcorn Inaugural Address, March 10, 1870, James L. Alcorn Papers, Mississippi State Archives.

⁶Senate Journal of the State of Mississippi, Regular Session (Jackson: Kimball Raymond and Company, 1872), pp. 558-559; Jessie Thomas Wallace, A History of the Negroes of Mississippi from 1865-1890 (New York: Johnson Reprint Company, 1970), pp. 61-66.

⁷Ibid., pp. 69-73.

⁸Meltzer, Freedom Comes to Mississippi: The Story of Reconstruction, pp. 148-150.

⁹Bennett, Black Power U.S.A.: The Human Side of Reconstruction, p. 222.

¹⁰Ibid., pp. 222-223.

¹¹Ibid., p. 226.

¹²Meltzer, Freedom Comes to Mississippi: The Story of Reconstruction, p. 150; Bennett, Black Power U.S.A.: The Human Side of Reconstruction, pp. 226-227.

¹³Ibid., pp. 96-97.

¹⁴American Annual Cyclopedia and Events of 1867, p. 516.

¹⁵John Hope Franklin, ed., Reminiscences of an Active Life: The Autobiography of John Roy Lynch (Chicago: University of Chicago Press,

1970), p. 68; Meltzer, Freedom Comes to Mississippi: The Story of Reconstruction, p. 97.

¹⁶"Lynch, James, Secretary of State, December, 1869, to December, 1872," Mississippi Archives Collection.

¹⁷Correspondence of the Secretary of State, 1870, Mississippi State Archives Collection; Jackson Mississippi Weekly Pilot, August 12, 1870.

¹⁸Senate Journal of the State of Mississippi, Regular Session (Jackson: Kimball Raymond and Company, 1871), pp. 254, 262; Journal of the House of Representatives of the State of Mississippi, Regular Session (Jackson: Kimball Raymond and Company, 1871), pp. 15-17.

¹⁹Ibid., pp. 57-62, 73-74.

²⁰"Lynch, James, Secretary of State, December, 1869, to December, 1872," Mississippi State Archives Collection.

²¹Ibid.; Franklin, ed., Reminiscences of An Active Life: The Autobiography of John Roy Lynch, p. 68.

²²Mississippi State Session Laws (2 vols., Jackson: Mississippi Printer, 1873), Vol. I, p. 1142; Senate Journal of the State of Mississippi, Regular Session (Jackson: Kimball Raymond and Company, 1873), p. 26.

²³"James Lynch, A Negro, Was Secretary of State from December, 1869-December, 1872. He died in 1872," Unidentified Source Dated November 16, 1872, Mississippi Archives Collection.

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵"Hill, James, Secretary of State, January, 1874, to January, 1878," Mississippi State Archives Collection; Meltzer, Freedom Comes to Mississippi: The Story of Reconstruction, p. 135.

²⁶Franklin, ed., Reminiscences of an Active Life: The Autobiography of John Roy Lynch, p. 117; Meltzer, Freedom Comes to Mississippi: The Story of Reconstruction, p. 135.

²⁷Correspondence of the Secretary of State, 1875, Mississippi State Archives.

²⁸Laws Relating to Registration in the State of Mississippi Called at a Special Session of the Mississippi Legislature, Convened in the City of Jackson, July 27, 1875 (Jackson: Pilot Publishing Company, 1875), pp. 1-7.

²⁹Annual Report of the Secretary of State of the State of Mississippi for the Year 1875 (Jackson: Pilot Publishing Company, 1876), p. 4.

³⁰Annual Report of the Secretary of State of the State of Mississippi for the Year 1875 (Jackson: Pilot Publishing Company, 1876), p. 3.

³¹Kenneth Eugene Mann, "Black Leaders in National Politics," (Doctor of Philosophy Dissertation, Indiana University, 1971), p. 79; Brawley, Negro Builders and Heroes, p. 128.

³²Jackson Weekly Pilot, August 21, 1875; Jackson Daily Mississippi Pilot, September 28, 1875.

³³Jackson Weekly Pilot, September 4 and November 20, 1875.

³⁴Franklin, ed., Reminiscences of an Active Life: The Autobiography of John Roy Lynch, pp. 321-325.

³⁵Ibid., pp. 349-353.

³⁶Ibid., pp. 353-355.

³⁷Ibid., pp. 378-379, 381-385.

³⁸Official Records of the Secretary of State Election Returns, 1871-1900, Mississippi State Archives; Vicksburg Daily Commercial Herald, November 6, 1896; Franklin, ed., Reminiscences of an Active Life: The Autobiography of John Roy Lynch, pp. 386-391.

³⁹Ibid., pp. 392-397.

⁴⁰Ibid., pp. 399-401.

⁴¹Ibid., pp. 409-412.

⁴²Ibid., pp. 414-420.

⁴³Mississippi Official and Statistical Register, Dunbar Rowland, ed. (Nashville: Brandon Printing Company, 1912), p. 28; Allan Smith, "Techniques Used in the Overthrow of Republican Rule in the State of Mississippi in 1875" (Bachelor of Arts Thesis, Prairie View A & M College, 1950), p. 66.

⁴⁴Franklin, ed., Reminiscences of an Active Life: The Autobiography of John Roy Lynch, p. 116; Nollie Wade Hickman, "Alexander K. Davis and His Relations to the Reconstruction Period in Mississippi," Mississippi State Archives Collection, pp. 2-3.

⁴⁵Franklin, ed., Reminiscences of an Active Life: The Autobiography of John Roy Lynch, pp. 115-116.

⁴⁶Hickman, "Alexander K. Davis and His Relations to the Reconstruction Period in Mississippi," p. 7.

⁴⁷Ibid., pp. 15-16.

⁴⁸Ibid., pp. 16-18.

⁴⁹Impeachment Trial of Alexander K. Davis (Jackson: Power and Barksdale, 1876), p. 19.

⁵⁰Hickman, "Alexander K. Davis and His Relations to the Reconstruction Period in Mississippi," p. 20; Bennett, Black Power U.S.A.: The Human Side of Reconstruction, p. 227.

⁵¹Hickman, "Alexander K. Davis and His Relations to the Reconstruction Period in Mississippi," pp. 21-23.

⁵²The Impeachment Trial of Alexander K. Davis, p. 7; Hickman, "Alexander K. Davis and His Relations to the Reconstruction Period in Mississippi," pp. 23-24.

⁵³Ibid., p. 23; Jackson Daily Mississippi Pilot, August 28, 1875.

⁵⁴Journal of The House of Representatives of the State of Mississippi, Regular Session (Jackson: Kimball and Raymond Company, 1876), pp. 281-285.

⁵⁵Hickman, "Alexander K. Davis and His Relations to the Reconstruction Period in Mississippi," p. 30.

⁵⁶Ibid., p. 32.

⁵⁷American Annual Cyclopedia and Register of Important Events of the Year 1876 (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1878), p. 560; Hickman, "Alexander K. Davis and His Relations to the Reconstruction Period in Mississippi," pp. 32-33.

⁵⁸Franklin, ed., Reminiscences of an Active Life: The Autobiography of John Roy Lynch, p. 117.

⁵⁹American Annual Cyclopedia and Register of Important Events of the Year 1874 (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1875), p. 568; Bennett, Black Power U.S.A.: The Human Side of Reconstruction, p. 222.

⁶⁰Elsie Timberlake, "Did Reconstruction Give Mississippi Her Public Schools?," P.M.H.S., Vol. XII (1912), p. 92; Mississippi House Journal, p. 404.

⁶¹Richard Griggs, Guide to Mississippi (Jackson: Pilot Publishing Company, 1874), pp. 23-24.

⁶²Annual Report of the State Superintendent of Education (Jackson: Pilot Publishing Company, 1875), pp. 5-6, 17.

⁶³Senate Journal of the State of Mississippi, Regular Session (Jackson: Kimball and Raymond Company, 1876), p. 406.

⁶⁴Mississippi House Journal of 1876, pp. 253-254.

⁶⁵Mississippi Senate Journal of 1876, pp. 411-413.

- ⁶⁶Jackson Daily Mississippi Pilot, July 28, 1875.
- ⁶⁷American Annual Cyclopedia and Register of Important Events of the Year 1875 (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1877), p. 561.
- ⁶⁸Meltzer, Freedom Comes to Mississippi: The Story of Reconstruction, p. 132.
- ⁶⁹Bacon, "A History of Hinds County, Mississippi, During Reconstruction, 1865-1875," p. 38; Herbert Aptheker, To Be Free, Studies In American Negro History (New York: International Publishers, 1968), p. 171; Bacon, "A History of Hinds County, Mississippi, During Reconstruction, 1865-1875," p. 44.
- ⁷⁰Mississippi Senate Journal of 1870, p. 504.
- ⁷¹Mississippi Senate Journal of 1871, p. 634; Mississippi Senate Journal of 1873, pp. 3-5.
- ⁷²Mississippi Senate Journal of 1872, pp. 558-559; Mississippi Senate Journal of 1871, p. 112.
- ⁷³Aptheker, To Be Free, Studies in American Negro History, p. 181.
- ⁷⁴Ibid., pp. 184, 178.
- ⁷⁵Ibid., pp. 185-186.
- ⁷⁶Franklin, ed., Reminiscences of an Active Life: The Autobiography of John Roy Lynch, pp. 102-105.
- ⁷⁷Ibid., p. 106.
- ⁷⁸Annual Report of the Auditor of Public Accounts to the Legislature of Mississippi for the Year 1877 (Jackson: Power and Barksdale, 1878), p. 70; Annual Report of the Secretary of State for the Year 1877, p. 19; Adams County Personal Tax Roll, 1870-1873, Roll No. 302, Mississippi State Archives.
- ⁷⁹"Isiah T. Montgomery: His Early Life as a Slave and Path to Success," Mississippi State Archives Collection.
- ⁸⁰George Sewell, "The Montgomerys," Mississippi State Archives Collection.
- ⁸¹Ibid.
- ⁸²Ibid.; Mosley, The Negro in Mississippi, pp. 43-44; Montgomery to Hill, April 18, 1894, William L. Hemingway Papers, Mississippi State Archives.
- ⁸³Journal of the Proceedings of the Constitutional Convention of the State of Mississippi, Begun at the City of Jackson on August 12,

1890, and Concluded November 1, 1890 (Jackson: E. L. Martin Printer, 1890), p. 284; "Isiah T. Montgomery: His Early Life and Path to Success," Mississippi State Archives Collection.

⁸⁴ Franklin, ed., Reminiscences of an Active Life: The Autobiography of John Roy Lynch, p. 385; Biennial Report of the Secretary of the State to the Legislature of Mississippi for the Years 1896-1897 (Jackson: Clarion Ledger Print, 1897), p. 58; Franklin, ed., Reminiscences of an Active Life: The Autobiography of John Roy Lynch, pp. 18-20.

⁸⁵ W. J. Simmons, Men of Mark: Eminent Progressive and Rising (New York: Arno Press, 1968), pp. 594-595.

⁸⁶ Ibid.; Smith, "Techniques Used in the Overthrow of Republican Rule in the State of Mississippi in 1875," p. 67.

⁸⁷ Meltzer, Freedom Comes to Mississippi: The Story of Reconstruction, p. 133; Mississippi Senate Journal of 1870, pp. 568-569.

⁸⁸ Jackson Weekly Clarion, August 23, 1882.

⁸⁹ Wallace, A History of the Negroes of Mississippi From 1865-1890, p. 113; Franklin, ed., Reminiscences of an Active Life: The Autobiography of John Roy Lynch, p. 50; Robert Steven Newberry, "John Roy Lynch: A Political Biography" (Master of Arts Thesis, University of Wisconsin, 1970), p. 10.

⁹⁰ Griggs, Guide to Mississippi, pp. 5-7, 34.

⁹¹ Bennett, Black Power U.S.A.: The Human Side of Reconstruction, p. 228; American Annual Cyclopedia and Events of 1874, p. 568; Hartly, "Reconstruction Data from the 1870 Census," Journal of Mississippi History, Vol. XXXV, p. 63; Dorothy Lorie Smith, "History of Lauderdale County, Mississippi" (Master of Arts Thesis, Mississippi College, 1961), pp. 56-58.

⁹² Wallace, "A History of the Negroes of Mississippi From 1865-1890," pp. 68-69; St. Clair, "The National Career of Blanche Kelso Bruce," pp. 57-58.

⁹³ Brown, "Reconstruction in Yalobusha and Grenada Counties," P.M.H.S., Vol. XII, pp. 225-226; Kendal, "Reconstruction in Lafayette County," P.M.H.S., Vol. XIII, pp. 248-249; Kyle, "Reconstruction in Panola County," P.M.H.S., Vol. XIII, pp. 70-71.

CHAPTER IV

BLACK NATIONAL LEADERS FROM MISSISSIPPI

Hiram Rhodes Revels, the first Black man to serve in the United States Senate, became the subject of conflicting opinions. A few Democrats measured him in terms of money, stating that he was a thousand dollar Black. But a Northern Republican who reacted to that judgment commented that he represented millions of dollars. To him, the voice of the Black senator was the reverberation of such battles as Gettysburg, Vicksburg, and Shiloh. He maintained that the rumble of his feet when he walked was greater than the sound of Napoleon's army that swept over Europe. In addition, he symbolized the spoils of four years of fighting and represented the initial product of Northern victory.¹

Revels was born in Fayetteville, North Carolina, on September 27, 1827. He left North Carolina and moved to Indiana, where he attended the Quaker Seminary and the Clark County Seminary. Following his graduation from Knox College in Bloomington, Indiana, Revels was installed as a minister in the African Episcopal Church at Baltimore, Maryland. He enhanced his experience as a minister by lecturing among Black people in Tennessee, Missouri, Kentucky, Kansas, Indiana, and Illinois. After these engagements, he taught school for a period of time in Saint Louis, Missouri, and then took a pastorate in Baltimore, Maryland. When the Civil War started, he helped in the organization of the first two Black regiments in Maryland. From Maryland, he went to Vicksburg, Mississippi,

in 1864, where he served as chaplain of a Black military unit. After the war, Revels made his home in Natchez, where he would begin his political career.²

In 1868, Revels became a member of the board of aldermen in Natchez. Although the entire body consisted of Republicans, Revels was not very active as an alderman. Perhaps his greatest accomplishment while serving on the board was his support of an effort to dissolve a private school board. Because the board would not allow Blacks to attend the school under its auspices, a segment of the Black population was bitter. When he cast his vote to eliminate the board, many Whites became angry and charged that he wanted to exploit the school by using its funds to support politics in the community. Though these charges were groundless, he replied that his actions resulted from the will of the people. He continued to participate in politics somewhat haphazardly until John R. Lynch asked him to compete for a seat in the state senate.³

Lynch approached Revels with the idea of running for the senate following a split in the Black faction of the Republican Party. Henry P. Jacobs led one group while Lynch headed another. Jacobs represented his own group as a candidate for the senate and the Lynch segment stood behind J.M.P. Williams, another Black candidate for the same position. Noah Buchanan, a Black preacher, could have cast the deciding vote, but he steered clear of the incident, causing a stalemate. Feeling somewhat reluctant when Lynch first confronted him, Revels asked for time to discuss the matter with his wife. The next day he agreed to run. There was never any doubt concerning his election, for the Republicans were in the majority by five hundred votes, and more than seventy-eight

percent of the people in the county were Black. Hence, his election was forthcoming.⁴

When the state legislature convened on January 11, 1870, Revels opened the joint session with a prayer. The effectiveness of his delivery upon the body while praying led someone to comment that his prayer made him a United States senator. But contrary to this statement, it was really the element of the Black voting bloc that would enable Revels to become a senator. Revels joined the other thirty-five Black legislators in the state in their fight to remove the proscriptive laws in the state and to assure the passage of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments to the United States Constitution. Revels also aided in an effort to remove the political restrictions against former Confederates in Mississippi, a procedure that would prove unwise.⁵

Following the ratification of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments, the next item on the agenda was the selection of United States senators. The Black caucus nominated Revels after they had failed in their attempt to secure that position for T. W. Stringer on the first ballot. Failing in their first attempt to win the necessary votes for Revels in the senate, they had to wait for the support of the Blacks in the house. When the voting continued in joint session, a legislator from Hancock County voted for Revels under protest. He explained that his opposition was not out of prejudice, but as a lawyer he was not certain if Revels was eligible to serve in the senate. He concluded that he had not been a citizen of the United States for nine years as the United States Constitution required.⁶

In spite of the opposition, Revels was elected on the fifth ballot on January 20, 1870, by a vote of 81 to 38. Revels had been nominated

on the third ballot when J. W. C. Watson, another Republican, withdrew from the contest. Historians have recorded that Revels was elected to fill the vacant seat of Jefferson Davis but that is contrary to historical fact, for both of the Mississippi seats in the United States Senate were vacant.⁷

Revels arrived in Washington ten days following his election. He was greeted by a mass segment of the Black population. Foremost among the receptionists were Dr. Charles Purvis, a prominent citizen, and George T. Dowsing, a noted businessman, who sponsored a series of luncheons and other engagements. In addition to the Black reception, John W. Forney, a leading White Republican, held an interracial ball in Revels' honor. As the party lingered, Revels was greeted by President Grant and other cabinet officials. When the social events subsided, Revels was about to face another experience of a different nature. As he attempted to take his seat in the senate, opposition concerning his credentials occurred, and the Democrats instantly began to register complaints. The protest was initiated by Senator Willard Saulsbury of Delaware. The affair would last for three days before Revels would be seated.⁸

There were two arguments introduced in relation to Revels' credentials. The first one raised the issue that Revels was not eligible to a senate seat because Mississippi was still out of the Union. Supporting Saulsbury in opposition to Revels were Democratic Senators John Stocton of New Jersey and Garnett Davis of Kentucky. The opposition argued that the credentials were signed by a government not recognized by the United States and therefore Mississippi could not be represented in Congress. When evidence was produced showing that President Grant

had signed a bill on February 23, 1870, to readmit the state into the Union, a vote was taken and the body accepted Revels' credentials.⁹

Even though Congress had verified the validity of the credentials, the Democrats continued their fight and the second phase of the debate ensued. This time they argued that Revels was not a citizen of the state of Mississippi nor of the nation. They stated their case to the effect that Congress had exceeded its authority in the ratification of the Fourteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution. Republican Senators Charles Drake of Missouri, William Stewart of Nevada, George Edmund of Nevada, Jacob M. Howard of Michigan, and others, spoke on Revels' behalf as they took issues with the Democrats on both occasions. The Republicans upheld the position that a number of senators from Southern states were presently serving in Congress whose papers had been endorsed by officials serving under similar governments as Mississippi. They concluded that the affair was based on animosities. Nevertheless, the Democrats continuously insisted that Revels had not lived in the state for nine years as the constitution required for senators. But their efforts came to no avail; Revels was seated on February 25 by a vote of 48 to 8.¹⁰

As Revels occupied his position in the senate, he became a member of the education and labor committees. While serving on these committees, he presented numerous petitions, bills, and made several reports. Although most of these were made in reference to the removal of political disabilities for citizens in the state, a substantial number pleaded the same for individuals throughout the South. In fact, he presented sixteen such petitions during the first session. Most of the legislation introduced by Revels was minor and very few of his petitions

became law.¹¹

The largest number of his petitions were presented during the months of February and March. Just three days after Revels was seated, he introduced three pieces of legislation. The first two petitions asked that the system which gave special privileges to citizens in Mississippi be abolished. The third petition was presented on behalf of the Black citizens of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, begging the passage of a law that would provide equal protection under the law for all citizens. In March of the same year, Revels read a resolution for the legislature of the state of Mississippi. The document requested the removal of political barriers against all citizens in the state. Three days later a similar request was made by Revels for the legislature of the state of Alabama, asking that the political charges against Samuel F. Rice of Montgomery County be withdrawn.¹²

Though most of his earlier petitions concerned the South in general, the later ones were confined to the state of Mississippi, with few exceptions. On March 8, he brought forth several petitions that had been endorsed by the Mississippi Bar Association and by other citizens from the state. The signees asked that the government relocate the United States district court from Oxford to Corinth, Mississippi. Nine days later the citizens of Carrollton requested the same except that they wanted the court moved to Holly Springs. On the same day, Revels displayed petitions for F. W. Tucker and other citizens requesting similar action but they wanted the court moved to Oklona. Two additional petitions were made in the later part of March. On March 28, Revels made a request for Susan Wilson of Vicksburg directing the government to compensate her for the use of her property during the

war. On the following day, he made demands for more than two thousand citizens of Macon and Fort Valley, Georgia. These citizens were seeking federal aid for the support of Wilberforce University. On April 28, he asked for federal remunerations for A. Burwell of Vicksburg for losses incurred during the war which stemmed from orders made by United States military commanders.¹³

Of the total number of petitions presented by Revels during his first experience in the senate, only one became law. However, he would improve his record the next year. On January 23, 1871, the senate received another petition from Revels requiring a charter for the Grand Tabernacle Galilean Fishermen, an organization in the District of Columbia. On the same day, a bill was passed that would establish the organization. On March 10 and 17, he displayed two more petitions. The first demanded the removal of political disabilities that had been incurred against M. C. Dowd of Philadelphia, Mississippi, while the second sought federal support for the blind institution in the state.¹⁴

Like the presentation of his petitions, Revels attempted to push several bills through Congress. On March 28 he introduced a bill that would give a right of way to the New Orleans and North Eastern Railroads. The legislation would also encourage the construction of the lines by granting a substantial amount of land. Revels brought another bill before the body on July 2 which he claimed to be of the utmost importance. The bill begged for the removal of political restraints against A. E. Reynolds, a prominent White citizen of Corinth, Mississippi. Civil and federal disabilities had been imposed upon Reynolds in relation to violations of the Fourteenth Amendment of the United States Constitution. After three readings, the bill was passed. A

third bill was introduced on December 15 suggesting that the federal government provide aid for the construction and improvement of the levees in Mississippi.¹⁵

Revels' activities in Congress also included the making of reports. While serving on the education committee, he made a report at the request of William Hamlett Morgan, an American citizen, asking that a committee be organized to investigate "Comstock's system of phonetics". The report also suggested that the committee decide if the course should be taught at the United States academies at West Point and Annapolis. Just seventeen days later, on March 18, he made another report supporting legislation that would give the Marine Hospital at Natchez to the state for the support of education.¹⁶

In addition to the presentation of major and minor legislation, Revels voted for numerous bills, excluding those he introduced. One such act which he considered paramount among them was the bill to execute the Fifteenth Amendment, especially as it related to Mississippi. Unfortunately, he was absent when the bill was voted on, but it passed anyway. However, he did vote in favor of another bill in which he had great enthusiasm. When the bill concerning the annexation of Santo Domingo came up, two camps developed in the Republican Party over their support of it. As the debate progressed, Revels voted for the bill, stating that he would like to see the extension of the American flag over all of the neighboring lands in the area. Revels also supported other measures during the second session, such as the tariff, income tax law, and legislation pertaining to naturalization.¹⁷

Perhaps Revels' greatest performance in the senate resulted from a number of speeches he made on several measures. The state of Georgia

had met the requirements for readmission to the Union; while it awaited Congress' passage of the measure, Congressman John A. Bingham of Ohio offered an amendment to the bill. Black legislators had not been awarded their positions in the Georgia Legislature and the Bingham amendment suggested that the legislature have the authority to decide who would be granted seats. To prevent such an occurrence, the Black and White legislators from the state of Georgia appealed to Revels for help. They remarked that because Revels was the only representative of their race in the senate, they wanted him to do all he possibly could to stop the passage of the Bingham amendment to the Georgia admission bill. They further explained that if the amendment passed, it would be injurious to more than 90,000 citizens in the state and would lead to violence between the races.¹⁸

Feeling somewhat reluctant but speaking to the issue, Revels remarked, "Mr. President, I rise at this particular juncture in the discussion of the Georgia bill with feelings which perhaps never before entered into the experience of any member of this body." Revels expressed that as a neophyte, it would perhaps be better for him to remain silent on the matter, but because his term was such a brief one and the nature of the issue was important to the present and future welfare of his race, he intimated that to remain passive would betray the trust that the citizens of the South held in him. Revels stated that he was not speaking only for the Black race but for the White race as well. He went on to describe what the situation would be in Georgia if the Bingham amendment should pass. Actually, he declared that all that had been accomplished would be destroyed. In conclusion, he begged that the government refrain from the support of such a measure.¹⁹

His second speech was delivered on May 17, 1870, in reference to political restraints against former Confederates. When that topic came up for debate, Revels declared that "I am in favor of removing the disabilities of those upon whom they are imposed in the South just as fast as they give evidence of having become loyal and of being loyal." He continued that he endorsed such a policy if it involved one person, a hundred, or an entire state of people as long as they were willing to accept the laws under the United States Constitution. In relation to Mississippi, he stated that the Republican Party had stood behind pardons and requested that he do the same at the national level. Thus, the state of Mississippi had been well reconstructed, and he therefore supported the removal of political disabilities in the state. A number of Republicans, both Black and White, criticized Revels for his attitude toward the amnesty question. They said that he went soft on acknowledging the real facts in relation to conditions in Mississippi and throughout the South. For example, political, social, and economic intimidation was common in such states as Louisiana, Texas, and other parts of the South since the time of Revels' election. However, it was felt that Revels could correct his mistake by properly applying himself to his high office, but that would not be the case.²⁰

Revels made his final speech on February 8, 1871, on a senate bill to supervise the establishment and function of the school system in the District of Columbia. The essence of the bill provided land for public education, but one clause stipulated that the revenues from the land would be used for the education of children ranging from six to seventeen years of age without reference to race. At that point, a member of the city trustee system stated that he felt that a misunderstanding

concerning integrated schools would probably arise and that he knew of no better time and place to bring an end to discrimination throughout the nation. Feeling a bit disturbed about the act, Senator Allen G. Thurman from Ohio pushed for an amendment to the bill that would establish separate schools for both races. When Thurman offered his amendment, Revels rose to defend the initial bill.²¹

Revels told the body that some of the Black trustees of the schools and several other prominent Blacks in the city had indicated to him that they previously would have demanded legislation to abolish segregated schools if they believed such an act could have been accomplished. But Revels declared that they were of the opinion that this would not be accomplished and thus refrained from their request. As he continued his deliberation, Revels proclaimed that discrimination in reference to race was strong in the nation and that he was afraid that it was gaining momentum. He added that regardless of how well Black people conducted themselves, whether they were obedient or not, intelligent or ignorant, lower or upper class, that prejudice existed against all Blacks throughout the nation. He said that he deplored the fact that such conditions existed and that if the amendment were defeated, Blacks would still react in a positive manner. To further strengthen his argument, Revels cited several places such as Louisiana, Maryland, and Kansas where he had experienced and seen others receive prejudice on several occasions. He pointed out that on one excursion someone asked him, "does not social equality result from mixed schools?" Revels replied that such a system would not lead to social relationships between the races. In his final statement, Revels commented, "Mr. President, I have nothing more to say. What I have said I have said in

kindness; I hope it will be received in that spirit."²²

Again Revels was severely criticized for his stand on the school situation. However, his critics were unmindful of the fact that he was speaking in opposition to the Thurman amendment, for they thought he was supporting segregated schools. It was felt that Revels should have remained neutral on the whole affair, insasmuch as he did not help Blacks, then he should not have hindered them. Some even attacked his statement concerning integrated schools and equality, stating that Blacks must have equality in all aspects of public life or their freedom was an error. However, Revels only wanted to show that such a system would not endanger the White's way of life.²³

When Revels was not occupied in the senate chambers of Congress, he used his time by lecturing or making recommendations for individuals. One example of his speaking popularity occurred on April 4, 1870, when he answered a letter explaining that it would be impossible for him to visit because of his recent speaking engagement. He did promise, however, to make a visit the following month if it would be convenient. At times, he faced difficulty as a lecturer. On one occasion he was denied the use of a building in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, when he attempted to deliver a speech to a mixed audience. But this did not dampen his spirit as he made speeches in Detroit and Brooklyn on April 7 and 11, respectively. The first speech was made in honor of the passage of the franchise amendment to the federal constitution, while the second was a duplicate of the first. But his most noted speech was delivered in Boston on May 4. Several nationally known figures such as William Lloyd Garrison, Oliver W. Holmes, and others attended the gathering as Revels spoke of the success of democratic ideologies as

they related to the idea of aristocracy. Revels made several other speeches which often lead people to engage him for addresses.²⁴

During the same month, Revels endorsed Michael Howard, a Black youth from Mississippi, so that he could attend the United States Military Academy. For that task, Revels was swamped with opposition, as some people reasoned that he had acted unwisely. The public felt that Revels' recommendation was a severe blow to the Black race as well as to the youth and his family. This reaction occurred because Howard was not admitted to the academy due to the claim that his score on the admittance test was too low. Several comments were made on the matter. Some suggested that the failure could have occurred because of discrimination or that the young man failed the examination. The final assumption was that it was hard for authorities at the school to recognize what civil rights a Black possessed that they should honor. Even with this criticism, Revels continued his services, as he used his power in helping Black laborers who had been discriminated against by finding gainful employment in the vicinity of Washington.²⁵

When Revels' term as senator expired, Governor Alcorn requested that he return to the state, as he had a new position for him. Alcorn had reference to the establishment of a school for Black people. Both Revels and Alcorn drew up the bill and Revels introduced it to the state legislature. Members of the legislature offered Revels the privilege of naming the school in his honor but he offered the opportunity to Alcorn. Thus, the school was named Alcorn University, although Revels received the appointment as president of the institution in 1871. Though the legislature approved the act on May 13 of that year, the school did not begin functioning until February 7, 1872.

Revels served as president until 1874 and was again reinstated in 1876 following a series of changes and adjustments.²⁶

In 1873, Revels was appointed as secretary of state, filling the vacancy left when James Lynch died in office in 1872. Revels performed two major tasks while serving in that capacity. First, he suggested that another person be appointed to assist the secretary so that in case of death that person might assume the duties of secretary. Second, he made an annual report for the previous year, most of which had been done by Lynch. Revels reported a grand total of \$70,830.02 for public printing expenditures and a total of \$8,502 for the distribution of public documents.²⁷

In 1874, Governor Ames accused Revels of endorsing the Alcorn ticket and publicly avowed that he desired a new president of the university. Not wanting to be dismissed, Revels resigned during the summer. As Ames looked about for a well-known individual to assume the presidency, he propositioned Frederick Douglass, a nationally-known Black, for the position. However, Douglass refused on the grounds that he had never received college training and felt that he did not qualify for the presidency. When John M. Stone, who replaced Ames as governor in 1876, took over, he reappointed Revels as president of Alcorn University. The reinstatement came as a gift for Revels' support of the Democrats in the campaign of 1875, for in that year he joined the Democratic Party. Revels remained president of Alcorn until 1882, when he moved to Holly Springs, Mississippi, where he became superintendent of the African Methodist Episcopal Church. He died in 1901 in Aberdeen, Mississippi, while attending a religious gathering. Revels was buried in Hillcrest Cemetery in Holly Springs.²⁸

Equally as important as Revels at the national level was John Roy Lynch, another Black. Lynch was born in Concordia Parish, Louisiana, on September 10, 1847. Upon the death of his father, the survivors of his family moved to Natchez, Mississippi, in 1863. After the war, he attended a private school in Natchez for a brief period. That experience allowed him to obtain an average education which enabled Lynch to work in the field of photography until 1869. In the same year, Governor Ames appointed him justice of the peace.²⁹

Because of his youth and inexperience, Lynch's position as justice of the peace was looked upon by many, including Lynch himself, as an experiment. To overcome his lack of confidence, Lynch carefully studied the manual and code which described the duties of his office. However, he was not without assistance, as he received invaluable services from some of the White citizens of the community. One White man who had served as a justice of the peace took time to acquaint Lynch with several documents and other materials pertaining to the office. Lynch declared that the help which that gentleman rendered saved him from an embarrassing situation. Lynch soon learned that the office required much more than he had anticipated, but after a careful analysis of the duties of the office, he felt a measure of confidence. Even though Lynch gained self-confidence, some people felt that the appointment of a novice to such an office was a grave mistake. Even some of Lynch's closest friends shared this opinion.³⁰

Some Whites viewed the position as an insignificant office and many Blacks saw more in it than its value. Thus, some Blacks decided to take advantage of the situation by taking the least important cases before Lynch. Others felt that because Lynch was Black, he would be

biased in his decisions. But to their surprise, Lynch proved otherwise. The majority of the complaints brought before him concerned the mistreatment of Black housewives; in most cases, the charges were made against the White female in charge of the family. In handling these matters, Lynch would send a note to the man of the house, informing him of the complaints and asking him to look into the situation. Sometimes Lynch would send the notice by the plaintiff, while on other occasions, he would have the notice delivered by his office. Usually the man of the house was working in the city, and the method Lynch used in handling the cases proved satisfying. Occasionally the man would meet Lynch on the street or sometimes write him a note, thanking him for the manner in which he had conducted the case. Other cases were similar, while still others related to marriage problems, but there were never major cases where severe penalties were involved.³¹

Upon relinquishing the office of justice of the peace, Lynch decided to run for the house of representatives of the state legislature, a position to which he was elected and served two terms, from 1869 to 1873. When joining the other thirty Blacks in the legislature in 1870, he found a position for himself on the committees on elections and military affairs. Though he worked with other Blacks as a group, Lynch was soon at odds with Governor Alcorn, who had begun a policy of removing individuals from office. As a result of the passage of a removal act in 1870, Alcorn turned many out of office who had been appointed by Ames while serving as provisional governor. Very few of the new appointments made by Alcorn were Black, and the vast majority were Democrats. Lynch immediately attacked Alcorn, stating that the removal act was unconstitutional and that Alcorn was abusing his authority. Lynch

supported a bill that would abolish the removal act. Upon losing this battle, Lynch opposed Alcorn on another issue. In an effort to build up his image, and that of his supporters, Alcorn began a program of carving out new counties in the state. To strengthen him in his scheme, Alcorn received the power to choose the officials of the new counties through acts of the legislature. Some thirty counties were created between 1870 and 1871. As most of them were located in areas where the Black population was small, Lynch again opposed the action; but like before, his fight was in vain.³²

By 1872, the tide began to turn. Lynch was then elected speaker of the house of representatives. Five other candidates were nominated for this position, but Lynch won by a vote of 63 to 49 over G. C. Chandler of Noxubee County. His greatest achievement among many while serving as speaker of the house was the construction of a bill that would apportion Mississippi into six congressional districts. Several such plans were presented to him, including one suggesting that all districts should be Republican. In analyzing the plans, Lynch finally drew up a bill which would create five Republican districts and one Democratic district. Two Democrats fought the bill, but to no avail. Shortly before the session ended, a resolution was introduced in the house which stated "that the thanks of the house be and they are hereby tended to honor John R. Lynch, for the able efficient and impartial manner in which he has presided over the deliberation of this body." At the conclusion of the session in 1873, members of both houses presented Lynch with a gold watch and chain as a token of appreciation for his impartial conduct as speaker of the house. The watch was inscribed in words to that effect. Lynch proclaimed that he would cherish the gift forever.³³

While serving his last days in the house of representatives, Lynch prepared to take his seat in the United States House of Representatives. He had already defeated Hiram Cassidy, a Democrat from the Sixth Congressional District. When the ballots were counted following the congressional election in November, 1872, Lynch had beaten his opponent by more than 6,000 votes. When he arrived in Washington, D. C., he found that there were five congressmen from Mississippi already there, including L. Q. C. Lamar, the only Democrat. There were only seven Blacks in the United States House of Representatives, but Lynch appeared to be the most unusual because he was the youngest. Lynch was only twenty-five when he won the election of 1872 and, according to facts, no one younger had previously been elected. With this accomplishment behind him, Lynch prepared to face the task before him.³⁴

As a freshman congressman, Lynch received a position on the mines and expenditures committees. Both positions were minor, and Lynch faced a disadvantage due to his lack of knowledge concerning the duties of the committee on mines. Nevertheless, he immediately began to assert himself. During the first session of the Forty-third Congress, Lynch introduced five bills and numerous resolutions and petitions. Most of the measures he produced were on behalf of individuals who registered claims against the federal government. Though most of his measures failed to pass, those which did become law indicated that Lynch had ability as a pioneer in the house.³⁵

The first bill Lynch introduced asked that the Marine Hospital at Natchez be turned over to the state and the second bill suggested that an additional term be allowed for the United States District Court in the southern judicial region of Mississippi. The third measure

requested that a time be designated for United States congressmen to be elected to the Forty-fourth Congress from the state of Mississippi. The last two bills related to private citizens. The fourth measure was presented for Mrs. Julia A. Nutt of Vicksburg, Mississippi, who registered a claim against the federal government which occurred during the war. The final bill requested the release of Mrs. Emily Miller, a citizen of the state of Mississippi. The bills which sought an extra term for the court and an election time for congressmen from Mississippi were the only two to pass.³⁶

Lynch also brought a considerable number of petitions before the house, for the most part private claims of Mississippians. For instance, he presented five such claims in the month of January, 1873. Three of the petitions were presented for Mrs. Emily Miller, D. Mead, and Priscilla W. Burwell. The first two were asking for an indemnity for cotton lost during the war and the Burwell petition wanted compensation for the government's use of his land during the war. The other two petitions represented demands from citizens of Jackson who requested passage of the supplementary civil rights bill and the citizens of East Pascagoula asked that improvements be made on the mouth of the Pascagoula River. For his own community of Natchez, Lynch requested that Black employees in Natchez be paid for their work in hospitals. All claims were referred to various committees for handling.³⁷

Lynch made two speeches during his first session in the house. The first related to the increase in congressmen's pay. The previous Congress had set a scale of \$5,000 per year, and the members of the Forty-third Congress wanted a \$2,500 increase in its salaries. As members debated the measure, those who opposed the bill referred to it

as the "Salary Grab Act." In addition to the increase, the law also contained a retroactive clause. Lynch disagreed with the opponents of the measure with reference to exploitation, but he opposed the retroactive clause and suggested an increase of \$1,000 that would become effective during the following Congress. Speaking in justification of his action, Lynch pointed out that Americans were opposed not to the increase but to the idea of making it retroactive. Lynch explained that he shared the same opinion. Therefore, he was against politicians deciding their own salaries, even if it meant to raise or to lower salaries. His second speech was a brief expression in defense of an accusation made by the New York Tribune. The paper stated that Lynch said that Blacks in the South would forever support the Republican Party without concern for the politicians or principles involved. Lynch told the body that the paper misquoted him, and that he had said that Blacks had no other alternative because the Democrats were so militant. Thus, during the first session Lynch voted only two times and made the same number of speeches.³⁸

Lynch was reelected to the Forty-fourth Congress in the election of 1875. This time, however, there was a controversy concerning the election returns in a number of the heavily populated counties. When the votes were counted, Lynch had defeated his Democratic opponent, Roderick Seal, by a comfortable majority. Seal notified Lynch that he would contest the election, but later withdrew his complaint. Lynch replied that Seal never had a case. Lynch continued his work in the house when Congress convened for the new term.³⁹

During the first two months of the new Congress, Lynch introduced eight pieces of legislation. One of the bills sought an amendment to

an act of 1823 that would give federal support to Black schools in the District of Columbia. Another measure required the removal of the customhouse from the Pearl River district in Shieldsborough, Mississippi, to East Pascagoula, Mississippi. Four other bills made claims against the federal government for various reasons, such as payment for property lost during the war and for the release of citizens who had been imprisoned. The seventh measure was a demand by the trustees of the Protestant Orphan Asylum in Natchez asking that the government compensate them for the use of their buildings during the war. The last claim was a petition seeking remuneration for the housing of Union soldiers during the Civil War.⁴⁰

Lynch did not hesitate when it came to expressing his views regarding many matters. Shortly before the end of the Forty-fourth Congress, he voted for and spoke in defense of his action on three different occasions. When the debate occurred concerning the federal government's intervention in the election of 1875 in Mississippi, several Democrats declared that things were peaceful and that there was no need to interfere. But Lynch was quick to take issues with them. He claimed that fraud, intimidation, and other illegal means were used in the election of 1875. He admitted that subversive groups such as the White League had been organized in the state for the sole purpose of eliminating Black people by killing them. Lynch stated that not all Democrats belonged to or supported the organization but that some Democrats established the group "for the purpose of securing position by the power of the bullet and not by the power of the ballot."⁴¹

Lynch also voted in favor of the Civil Rights Act of 1875. In reference to the Slaughter rulings made by the United States Supreme

Court, Lynch argued that the bill was not unconstitutional. Lynch felt that social equality was a personal matter rather than a racial one. He claimed that the measure would reconcile racial strife between Blacks and Whites. His defense of the act has been referred to as the greatest speech he made in the house because it indicated his ability to use logical reasoning in political matters. Unlike the Civil Rights Act of 1875, Lynch voted against a report that supported Rutherford B. Hayes for president following the disputed presidential election. Lynch did not like the idea of gambling with the nation's highest office and he was also suspicious of the agreement that put Hayes in the White House.⁴²

Lynch experienced a reversal in his political career in the state congressional election of 1876, as he was paired against James R. Chalmers of the Democratic Party. The Mississippi Legislature passed an act which changed the districts which Lynch had constructed and which consisted of five Republican and one Democratic district in the state. The new law redistricted the state by separating those counties that had a dense Black population. The reshaped Sixth Congressional District in which Lynch was a candidate covered the entire length of the state, along the eastern boundary of the Mississippi River. There were 148,451 people living in the district, and 112,917 of these were Black. In addition to the length of the district, its width was equal to the size of one county. The area has been called the "shoestring" or the "Black snake" district.⁴³

Though the Republicans had received substantial victories in the Black district during the preceding elections, Chalmers defeated Lynch by a 4,600 majority. He polled 15,788 votes to Lynch's 11,188 votes.

Lynch protested on the ground that fraud was used. Lynch declared that there were 15,000 more Republican voters in the district than Democrats and that an honest election would verify the fact that fraudulent methods were employed at the polls. He carried the protest before the United States House of Representatives and displayed evidence of previous elections by comparing the instant victory of the Democrats with the election of 1876. He pointed out that on one occasion he had visited the polls in his home county and had counted the number of votes cast for Republicans. But when the tallies were counted, there were less than the votes that he had observed. One of his outstanding speeches was made in connection to these charges, but the Democrats denied them by stating that the election was fair. Chalmers stated that his campaign had been more vigorous than Lynch's. Despite the Democrats' claim, Lynch continued his fight but was not allowed his seat.⁴⁴

Failing in his efforts to win the contested election seat, Lynch retired to his home in Natchez, where he participated in local politics. Lynch challenged Chalmers again in 1880, but this election produced different results. There were more votes cast in Lynch's favor, but because of an irregularity, some 5,000 of Lynch's votes were not counted. Lynch again contested the election by taking the matter before Congress. On November 22, 1880, Lynch informed Chalmers that he would register this protest against the false claim of winning the election. Lynch went on to explain to Chalmers the illegal means which were used at the polls in various counties. In reply to the charges, Chalmers denied all of them, stating that he was elected fairly and had been awarded the seat by the governor. During the course of the

investigation, Lynch produced evidence showing where thousands of his votes were thrown out or not counted. He concluded that the commissioners deliberately withheld votes from his total number and showed a fraudulent majority for his opponent. When the case came before the United States House of Representatives in April, 1882, both men presented their cases. At this time, Lynch's evidence swung in his favor, and he was awarded a seat in Congress by a vote of 125 to 71.⁴⁵

During the remainder of the Forty-seventh Congress, Lynch continued his performance of presenting bills, petitions, voting on measures, and making speeches. He was appointed to the Committee on Enrolled Bills and the education and labor committees. Because the first session was almost over when he was seated, Lynch introduced very little legislation. He presented two petitions for citizens of his home state. The first pleaded for aid for educational purposes for Adams County and the other suggested that the federal court be placed at Corinth rather than Aberdeen, Mississippi. He also presented two bills during the brief session. The first bill he introduced suggested that the state of Mississippi be divided into two judicial districts with an additional district judge being appointed. The other measure advocated an amendment to the federal election laws.⁴⁶

When the second session convened, Lynch supported a variety of measures. One measure was a bill relating to expense for contested elections. Lynch argued for a more uniform law by which each Congress could decide the amount that a contestee should be allowed in such events. He also added that only men of wealth were able to pay for a contested election under the present laws. Lynch also supported federal aid to education, especially as it applied to the South. He felt that

if schools were segregated then teachers of each race should be employed to teach their own students. When the bill for the appropriation to the District of Columbia school superintendents came up for debate, Lynch noticed a discrepancy in the bill where one superintendent would receive more revenue. He argued that each should have equal funds. Other legislation supported by Lynch included aid for the improvement of the Mississippi River, federal support for a national board of health, and a protective tariff for trading purposes.⁴⁷

Between the sessions of Congress or when Lynch was not occupied in the house, he was busy doing a number of things. If not corresponding with citizens, Lynch was lecturing or attending national conventions. On one occasion he took time to write a citizen of Natchez explaining that a change had been made in the postal system in order to improve services in that department. He also advised Black males that they should avoid contact with organizations that attempted to accomplish goals by methods which were violent and unlawful. He cautioned that Blacks should abide by the law except in cases where it was necessary to protect their families. He warned that Blacks should not perpetuate socialism, anarchy, or communism. In 1884, Lynch attended the Republican National Convention in Chicago. A caucus consisting of Theodore Roosevelt, Mark Hannah, and headed by Henry Cabot Lodge, nominated Lynch as temporary chairman of the party. The other faction of the Republican Party, under the leadership of James G. Blaine, chose Powell Clayton of Arkansas for the position. Hannah assured Lynch that he would win, and when the voting occurred, Lynch was elected. He was the first and only Black to hold such a position until 1968.⁴⁸

Lynch made two attempts to return to Congress in the elections of

1882 and 1884, but lost on both occasions. He returned to his home in Natches and promoted the fusion system among Blacks and Democrats. He also attended the Republican National Conventions of 1884, 1888, 1892, and 1900. Following a short term of service in the United States Army during the Spanish-American War, in which he attained the rank of major, Lynch died in 1939 and was buried in Arlington National Cemetery with military honors.⁴⁹

Another Black leader to obtain national prominence as a United States senator from Mississippi was Blanche K. Bruce. He was born in Prince Edward County, Virginia, on March 1, 1841. Learning to read as a slave from his master's private tutor, Bruce went to Missouri with his master during the 1850s, where he engaged in the printing trade, thereby enriching his previous education. When Bruce's master enlisted in the Confederate Army, Bruce escaped to Lawrence, Kansas. There he changed his name from Branch to Blanche. After a few months in Kansas, he returned to Hannibal, Missouri, where he founded a school for Blacks. He taught school for several months in Missouri, at which time he decided to further his education. He then traveled to Ohio where he entered Oberlin College. Facing financial difficulties after two years at Oberlin, he was employed for one year on a steamboat line running between Missouri and Iowa. He found little promise in that occupation, and when he heard rumors of greater opportunities in the South, Bruce contemplated the move. In 1868, he was invited to Mississippi, where he met James L. Alcorn. Alcorn persuaded Bruce to make Mississippi his home. In the same year, Bruce settled in Floreyville, Mississippi, in Bolivar County near the Mississippi River.⁵⁰

Little time passed before Bruce affiliated himself with politics in

the state. Adelbert Ames, provisional governor at the time, appointed him as supervisor of elections in Tallahatchie County. Two years later, Bruce became sergeant-at-arms in the Mississippi Senate. While serving in that office, he associated himself with leading figures in the state which enabled him to secure a number of positions within the next three years. By 1873, he had obtained the offices of assessor, sheriff, tax collector, county superintendent of schools, member of the board of levee commissions, and alderman of Bolivar County, respectively. When the offices of sheriff and assessor were combined in 1872, Bruce won the offices again in 1874 by acclamation.⁵¹

Bruce's most noted performances at the local level occurred while he served as sheriff and superintendent of schools. Because the county superintendent's office was limited by the Code of 1871 which placed power in the hands of the board of school directors, Bruce faced financial difficulties in financing public education. The Republicans were willing to support education, but the Democrats were opposed to the idea. Nevertheless, it appeared that Bruce received the support of the taxpayers in the county. In his first annual report, Bruce related that several citizens had paid teachers' salaries in order to keep schools open when there were insufficient funds in the county. Likewise, he stated that the taxpayers in his county had contributed more rapidly and enthusiastically than any other county. He continued by describing the number of teachers licensed in the county and the salaries they received each month. He concluded his report by extending his gratitude to the teachers for their services and encouraged the youth of the state to prepare for teaching positions. In Bruce's second report he claimed that all opposition which had previously existed toward

support for the schools had disappeared. He maintained that the school board had a positive attitude in its support and the board had approved the suggestions which he had made. Furthermore, he pointed out that more citizens were paying taxes and that all the requirements for the support of education in the county had been accomplished for the year. Before closing, he suggested that an attempt be made to improve the collection of the poll tax.⁵²

Two incidents occurred which proved Bruce's ability as a sheriff. The first took place when a Black man was convicted and sentenced for killing another Black citizen. On the date of the hanging, thousands of Blacks gathered in different groups and organizations. When Bruce learned of the gathering, he met them before they entered town and ordered them to disperse and to come in as individuals rather than groups. Hence, his orders were followed and violence was avoided. Bruce's second endeavor when sheriff materialized when he cashed in a number of warrants at their face value. Sixteen legislators had attempted to collect the certificates at full value but had failed to do so. Rumors spread that they had agreed to support Bruce in his senatorial campaigning for obtaining the par value of the warrants. It was reported that this transaction was a major factor in his nomination for senator. For his three years as sheriff, Bruce reported a total of \$59,926.09 collected in county taxes.⁵³

In 1872, Bruce attended the Republican National Convention. Before he returned to the state he visited Washington, D. C. with James Hill, the most influential Black leader in Mississippi at the time. After stopping by the senate chambers, Hill assured Bruce that he would be elected a United States senator from Mississippi, and this

occurred in the campaign of 1874. Bruce had refused an offer from Alcorn to run on his ticket for the lieutenant governor's position because he was looking for a better office. On March 4, 1875, the day Bruce was to be sworn in, Alcorn failed to escort him to the stand. It was customary for the senior senator to perform this task, but Alcorn was occupied with his newspaper. As Bruce reached the halfway mark, Roscoe Conkling, a senator from New York, accompanied him to the rostrum. Conkling also made it possible for Bruce to serve on many important committees, and because of this generosity, Bruce named his son Roscoe Conkling Bruce.⁵⁴

Operating from his appointment on the committees on education and labor, pensions, and manufacturers during his entire tenure in the senate, Bruce exercised significant influence. Like his Black counterparts who preceded him, he spoke on several issues. He delivered one of his greatest speeches on March 31, 1876. When Senator Oliver P. Morton's resolution concerning the investigation of fraud in elections in the South came up for debate, Bruce readily defended the measure, especially with relation to Mississippi. Bruce claimed that violence, fraud, and other dishonest methods were used by the Democrats in the election of 1875 in Mississippi. He declared that it was almost impossible for the Democrats to win by a 30,000 margin because they had lost two years previous by 20,000 votes. Hence, in only two years the Democrats had accumulated a gain of more than 50,000 votes. Bruce commented that he could understand if such changes had occurred within a state like New York which consisted of mass communications, transportation, and other means, but such phenomena in Mississippi were simply not possible. He went on to describe the situation within the state and

closed by asking the senate to take steps to protect the Blacks of Mississippi and their constitutional rights.⁵⁵

Bruce showed similar concern when the senate engaged in a discussion relative to the seating of P. B. S. Pinchback, the former lieutenant governor of Louisiana. There had been a controversy in the election returns in a number of parishes in Louisiana, and it was claimed that fraud had permeated Pinchback's election to the United States Senate. After a committee decided that Pinchback was the victor, another technicality arose stating that the government which had elected him was not recognized as the official legislature in the state. It was at this time that Bruce rose in defense of Pinchback. Bruce delivered an elegant message by comparing the government in Mississippi which had elected him to the government in Louisiana as being legitimate and serving the same purpose. Bruce went so far as to describe his personal relations with the former lieutenant governor, explaining that his association with Pinchback was paternalistic, and the reason that he spoke in favor of Pinchback's character. In spite of Bruce's plea, his friend was not seated. Bruce blamed the president on both occasions for failing to send troops to Mississippi to protect the voters and for his refusal to support Pinchback.⁵⁶

Bruce spoke occasionally in defense of his support for or against measures as he cast his vote. A bill to prohibit Chinese from entering the United States came up for consideration, and he voted against it. He said that he represented a people who had been denied rights as American citizens and had been able to overcome these obstacles and gain confidence in the political system. He stated, "I shall vote against the pending bill." Likewise he voted for a bill that would allow the

Ute Indians of Colorado to sell their reservations and other related matters in the state. Bruce told the senators that he favored the bill because treaties had been made and changed in order to open Indian land for settlement. He further commented that no sufficient measures had been taken to make the Indians a part of the American scene. Moreover, the destruction of the Indian race was contrary to the beliefs of a civilized nation as well as an economic wrong to the American people. He finished by saying that the time had come to recognize the Indians as other nationalities were seen in the society.⁵⁷

One of his most impressive speeches resulted in opposition to an attempt to cut off relief for Blacks in Kansas. Some English citizens had sent food, clothing, and other rations to Blacks who were suffering in Kansas. But several senators refused to allow the charity to enter the ports of New York without paying a custom duty; other senators objected to accepting the goods in general. Yet, others argued that the Blacks had made a mistake and unwisely left their homes. Bruce argued that it was strange for the senators to oppose such measures when the United States had provided relief for thousands of people in foreign countries. He called their attention to the fact that just two days previously a resolution had passed unanimously to send aid to thousands of families in Ireland. He continued that it mattered not how or why the Blacks went to Kansas, but the important point was that humans were suffering and needed help. He pleaded for an immediate approval of the measure to allow the people to receive aid.⁵⁸

The concern for private claims and other related matters in reference to the government by citizens of Mississippi and other states did not go without notice. Bruce introduced and supported a vast

number of bills, petitions and resolutions on a variety of subjects. Three among many pieces of legislation with relation to Mississippi included two petitions and one resolution making demands on the government. The first petition suggested a \$100,000 appropriation from the government which would enable 443 Black Mississippians to emigrate to Liberia. The second was a request by Henry E. Sizer of Jackson which asked for an indemnity for property which had been confiscated during the Civil War. In his resolution, Bruce asked for aid for the purpose of renovating the levees in Boliva, Issaquena, and Washington counties. All three requests were turned over to their respective committees.⁵⁹

In matters unrelated to Mississippi, Bruce's record showed that his support was equal to his enthusiasm for Mississippi related measures. Some of the bills which he introduced were measures to secure unclaimed funds in the United States treasury for purposes of promoting Black education in the United States and its territories. In another bill, Bruce wanted the government to compensate Blacks for their losses in the defaulted Freedmen's Savings and Trust Company. He made a request on behalf of residents of Alabama for government funds in order to construct an academy for education of Black citizens. Bruce also pushed for an investigation of charges that a Black youth had been mutilated at the United States Military Academy. When the matter was discussed, it was alleged that the cadet injured himself by engaging in a practice called "hazing". But Bruce reiterated that he was knowledgeable of the fact that uncivilized tactics were used against students at the institution and asked that something be done to end such action. In another regard, Bruce presented a plan by which votes could be cast by utilizing mechanical means. The idea would simultaneously protect and keep a

record of the ballot.⁶⁰

In addition to introducing and speaking in favor of numerous measures, Bruce gave his silent support through the ballot. He voted for a bill which would appropriate funds for United States deputy marshalls and for a second measure which would provide funds for the army in order to maintain order at elections in some states. He supported another bill for the creation of a commission to improve the Mississippi River and its tributaries. Near the end of his last session, he introduced few measures. From a total of six bills introduced, only one passed. This total included an act on behalf of Black women and children. However, Bruce made a fantastic record before his term in the senate terminated. During his tenure in the Forty-fourth, Forty-fifth, and Forty-sixth Congresses, Bruce voted on 602 occasions from 1,330 roll call votes. He voted in cases where there were sixteen ties and one unanimous decision. He voted with the Republican Party 390 times and against it 195 times. His career as a senator came to an end on March 4, 1881.⁶¹

Outside the senate and during his leisure time, Bruce busied himself by attending national conventions, making recommendations, lecturing, or handling other related concerns. On June 5, 1872, he attended a convention of the Republican Party in Philadelphia, and served as secretary of the convention for the Mississippi delegation. At the convention in Chicago in 1880, Bruce received eight votes as a candidate for vice-president of the United States, which emanated from the support of the delegations from Mississippi and other states. His extracurricular action on this occasion included an endorsement of Orlando Davis of Holly Springs, Mississippi, a cordial friend he

recommended to the state attorney general as a reliable person for a judgeship.⁶²

Some have alleged that Bruce was a Southern elite and did not experience many hardships because of his early training and learning. He did not do much to promote the interests of Black people while serving as senator. However, he often made comments on the race issue while lecturing, and he proclaimed that he was proud to be a Black man. He stated that he deplored the use of the word "Colored," because it could apply to any of the residents of the Asian nations. He preferred the title "Negro," for he said it represented the "Fatherland." Following his term in the senate, President James Garfield appointed him register of the treasury in May of 1881. Some ten years later Bruce received an appointment as recorder of deeds in the District of Columbia, an office he held until 1893. He returned to the office of register of the treasury in 1897 and remained there until his death in 1898. He was buried in Woodlawn Cemetery in Washington, D. C.⁶³

From the convening of the first reconstruction legislature in Mississippi, to the turn of the century, three of the state's Black politicians were elevated beyond the halls of the state legislature to the United States Congress. This task was not accomplished because Blacks were used as pawns in politics or for the purpose of appeasement, but it represented the ability of Blacks in the state and at the local level to choose able leaders. It also signified that Blacks in Mississippi possessed, recognized, and used their political power in order to accomplish their needs and demands.

Although the ideologies of those who represented the Blacks were different in many ways, they all measured up to the offices to which

they were elected. These representatives were more than persons who occupied positions to vote, make speeches, or introduce legislation. They were not just representing Mississippi, the South, or the United States, but they represented humanity. In addition, Black people viewed them as a symbol of hope and as instruments for the perpetuation of the survival of mankind.

The impact of the efforts of the three Blacks from Mississippi in the United States Congress was visible in the votes, speeches, resolutions, petitions, reports, and legislation which they favored or opposed while working in an environment foreign to their traditional experiences. Some of what these men fought for came to no avail, yet much was successful. Even with their tenures in Congress completed, their work remains on the written record and lingers in the mind of the human race.

FOOTNOTES

¹Bennett, Black Power U.S.A.: The Human Side of Reconstruction, p. 213.

²W. H. McCradle Papers, Mississippi State Archives; Biographical Directory of the American Congress, 1774-1971 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1971), p. 1599.

³Julius Eric Thompson, "Hiram R. Revels 1827-1901: A Biography" (Doctor of Philosophy Dissertation, Princeton University, 1973), pp. 52-56.

⁴*Ibid.*, p. 56.

⁵*Ibid.*, pp. 57-59.

⁶Mississippi Senate Journal of 1870, pp. 32-40.

⁷The Official and Statistical Register of the State of Mississippi, Centenary Series, Dunbar Rowland, ed. (Madison: Democrat Printing Company, 1917), p. 417.

⁸Thompson, "Hiram R. Revels, 1827-1901: A Biography," p. 63; Bennett, Black Power U.S.A.: The Human Side of Reconstruction, p. 213.

⁹Thompson, "Hiram R. Revels, 1827-1901: A Biography," pp. 69-71.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, pp. 71-76.

¹¹*Ibid.*, p. 96.

¹²Congressional Globe, Forty-first Congress, 2nd Session (Washington: Congressional Globe Office, 1870), pp. 1607, 1676, 1724.

¹³*Ibid.*, pp. 1752, 2051, 2231, 2285, 3939.

¹⁴Thompson, "Hiram R. Revels, 1827-1901: A Biography," pp. 96-97; Congressional Globe, Forty-first Congress, 3rd Session (Washington: Congressional Globe Office, 1871), pp. 662-664, 1099, 1329.

¹⁵Congressional Globe, Forty-first Congress, 2nd Session, pp. 2234, 5114; Congressional Globe, Forty-first Congress, 3rd Session, p. 116.

¹⁶Congressional Globe, Forty-first Congress, 2nd Session, pp. 1608-2738.

- ¹⁷Thompson, "Hiram R. Revels, 1827-1901: A Biography," pp. 92-95.
- ¹⁸Ibid., p. 79; Congressional Globe, Forty-first Congress, 2nd Session, p. 1856.
- ¹⁹Ibid., pp. 986-988.
- ²⁰Ibid., p. 3520; Thompson, "Hiram R. Revels, 1827-1901: A Biography," pp. 86-87.
- ²¹"Speech by Honorable Hiram R. Revels of Mississippi in the United States Senate, February 8, 1871," Mississippi State Archives Collection; Thompson, "Hiram R. Revels, 1827-1901: A Biography," pp. 101-102.
- ²²Congressional Globe, Forty-first Congress, 3rd Session, pp. 1059-1060; Robert Crudent, The Negro in Reconstruction (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1969), p. 59.
- ²³Thompson, "Hiram R. Revels, 1827-1901: A Biography," pp. 103-104.
- ²⁴Revels to a Citizen, April 4, 1870, Hiram R. Revels Papers, Mississippi State Archives; Thompson, "Hiram R. Revels, 1827-1901: A Biography," pp. 88-91.
- ²⁵Ibid., pp. 97-98.
- ²⁶Melerson Guy Dunham, Centennial History of Alcorn Agriculture and Mechanical College (Hattiesburg: University and College Press of Mississippi, 1971), pp. 14-21; Thompson, "Hiram R. Revels, 1827-1901: A Biography," p. 127; Mississippi State Journal Appendix of 1873, pp. 517, 541.
- ²⁷Thompson, "Hiram R. Revels, 1827-1901: A Biography," p. 127; Mississippi Senate Journal of 1873, pp. 517, 541.
- ²⁸Thompson, "Hiram R. Revels, 1827-1901: A Biography," pp. 143-144, 164, 155; Biographical Directory of the American Congress, 1774-1971, p. 1599.
- ²⁹Ibid., p. 1318; John R. Lynch Papers, Mississippi State Archives.
- ³⁰Franklin, ed., Reminiscences of an Active Life: The Autobiography of John Roy Lynch, pp. 59-61.
- ³¹Ibid., pp. 61-63.
- ³²Samuel Denny Smith, "John Roy Lynch, Last Survivor of Mississippi Reconstruction Politicians," Mississippi State Archives Collection, p. 2; Biographical Directory of the American Congress, 1774-1971, p. 1318; Newberry, "John Roy Lynch: A Political Biography," pp. 13-14.

³³Franklin, ed., Reminiscences of an Active Life: The Autobiography of John Roy Lynch, pp. 91-96; Mississippi House Journal of 1872, pp. 343, 863.

³⁴Smith, "John Roy Lynch, The Last Survivor of Mississippi Reconstruction Politicians," p. 3; Newberry, "John Roy Lynch: A Political Biography," p. 39.

³⁵Ibid., pp. 39-40; Congressional Record, Forty-third Congress, 1st Session (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1874), p. 74.

³⁶Ibid., pp. 112, 5, 1445, 5157, 13990-13991, 370.

³⁷Ibid., pp. 1001, 387, 1032, 938, 1255, 2890, 4594.

³⁸Smith, "John Roy Lynch, Last Survivor of Mississippi Reconstruction Politicians," Mississippi State Archives Collection, pp. 3-4; Newberry, "John Roy Lynch: A Political Biography," pp. 40-41.

³⁹Simmons, Men of Mark: Eminent Progressive and Rising, p. 1043; Newberry, "John Roy Lynch: A Political Biography," p. 76.

⁴⁰Congressional Record, Forty-fourth Congress, 1st Session (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1876), pp. 653-357, 321, 442, 1203.

⁴¹Ibid., p. 3824.

⁴²Smith, "John Roy Lynch, Last Survivor of Mississippi Reconstruction Politicians," Mississippi State Archives Collection, p. 5; Mann, "Black Leaders in National Politics," p. 46; Newberry, "John Roy Lynch: A Political Biography," p. 90.

⁴³Ibid., p. 84.

⁴⁴Ibid., pp. 88-90.

⁴⁵Ibid., pp. 91-92; House Miscellaneous Document No. 12, Forty-seventh Congress, 1st Session (2 vols., Washington: Government Printing Office, 1882), Vol. I, pp. 1-7, 10-11.

⁴⁶Newberry, "John Roy Lynch: A Political Biography," p. 92; Congressional Record, Forty-seventh Congress, 1st Session (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1882), pp. 6909, 7008, 4170, 3946.

⁴⁷Ibid., pp. 6007-6008, 3806; Newberry, "John Roy Lynch: A Political Biography," pp. 93-95.

⁴⁸Lynch to a Citizen of Natchez, January 10, 1876, William N. Whitehurst Papers, Mississippi Archives; Herbert Aptheker, ed., A Documentary History of the Negro People in the United States (3 vols., New York: The Citadel Press, 1968), Vol. III, p. 562; Jackson Clarion Ledger, October 26, 1960; Newberry, "John Roy Lynch: A Political Biography," p. 2; Simmons, Men of Mark: Eminent Progressive and Rising, p. 1045.

⁴⁹Newberry, "John Roy Lynch: A Political Biography," pp. 3, 96; Joseph J. Boris, ed., Who's Who In Colored America (New York: Who's Who In Colored America Corporation Publishers, 1927), p. 129; Biographical Directory of American Congress, 1774-1971, p. 1318.

⁵⁰William H. McCradle Papers, Mississippi State Archives; Frank E. Smith, ed., Mississippians All (New Orleans: Pelican Publishing House, 1968), pp. 45-47.

⁵¹Simmons, Men of Mark: Eminent Progressive and Rising, pp. 699-700; Brawley, Negro Builders and Heroes, p. 128; Melvin I. Urofsky, "Blanche K. Bruce: United States Senator, 1875-1881," Journal of Mississippi History, Vol. XXIX, No. 2 (May, 1967), pp. 120-121; St. Clair, "The National Career of Blanche K. Bruce," pp. 54-55.

⁵²Ibid., pp. 55-56; Mississippi House Journal of 1871, pp. 192, 205-206; Mississippi Senate Journal of 1872, pp. 816-819.

⁵³St. Clair, "The National Career of Blanche K. Bruce," pp. 58-59, 70-72; Annual Report of the Auditor of Public Accounts to the Legislature of Mississippi for the Year 1872 (Jackson: Kimball Raymond and Company, 1872), p. 126; Annual Report of the Auditor of Public Accounts to the Legislature of Mississippi for the Year 1873 (Jackson: Kimball Raymond and Company, 1873), p. 93.

⁵⁴Urofsky, "Blanche K. Bruce: United States Senator, 1875-1881," Journal of Mississippi History, Vol. XXIX, pp. 122-125; Smith, ed., Mississippians All, pp. 50-53; Brawley, Negro Builders and Heroes, pp. 128-129.

⁵⁵Congressional Record, Forty-fifth Congress, 1st Session (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1877), pp. 39, 364, 2100-2104; Urofsky, "Blanche K. Bruce: United States Senator, 1875-1881," Journal of Mississippi History, Vol. XXIX, p. 125; Simmons, Men of Mark: Eminent Progressive and Rising, pp. 700-701.

⁵⁶Congressional Record, Forty-fifth Congress, 1st Session, pp. 1444-1445; Smith, ed., Mississippians All, p. 55; Urofsky, "Blanche K. Bruce: United States Senator, 1875-1881," Journal of Mississippi History, Vol. XXIX, pp. 126-127.

⁵⁷Congressional Record, Forty-fifth Congress, 3rd Session (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1879), p. 1314; Urofsky, "Blanche K. Bruce: United States Senator, 1875-1881," Journal of Mississippi History, Vol. XXIX, pp. 131-132; Congressional Record, Forty-sixth Congress, 2nd Session (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1880), pp. 2249, 2195-2196.

⁵⁸Ibid., p. 1042; Urofsky, "Blanche K. Bruce: United States Senator, 1875-1881," Journal of Mississippi History, Vol. XXIX, pp. 136-137.

⁵⁹Congressional Record, Forty-fifth Congress, 1st Session, pp. 414, 201, 245.

⁶⁰Congressional Record, Forty-sixth Congress, 2nd Session, pp. 2303, 2249; Congressional Record, Forty-fifth Congress, 3rd Session, p. 948.

⁶¹Congressional Record, Forty-sixth Congress, 1st Session (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1879), pp. 2209, 2199, 2437; Urofsky, "Blanche K. Bruce: United States Senator, 1875-1881," Journal of Mississippi History, Vol. XXIX, p. 137; St. Clair, "The National Career of Blanche K. Bruce," p. 163.

⁶²Ibid., pp. 67, 159-160; Jackson Clarion Ledger, October 26, 1960; Simmons, Men of Mark: Eminent Progressive and Rising, p. 702; Bruce to Mississippi's Attorney General, December 15, 1877, Blanche K. Bruce Papers, Mississippi State Archives.

⁶³"A Sensible Darcy," Mississippi State Archives Collection; Mann, "Black Leaders in National Politics," p. 5; Biographical Directory of American Congress, 1774-1971, p. 655.

CHAPTER V

BLACKS AND THE DEMISE OF THE REPUBLICAN PARTY IN MISSISSIPPI

Since the inception of the William A. Dunning concept on the reconstruction era, various schools of thought have emerged. Most of these schools propagandized to a degree in their explanation of the epoch. This is especially true of the writings of some historians who have attempted to describe the Democratic redemption aspect of reconstruction in Mississippi. These events have often been distorted and because of this situation there is a need for full research treatment of the return to power of the Democrats, composed primarily of the former slaveholders and their associates.

Resentment against the participation of Blacks in politics in Mississippi was evident as early as 1865. The first reaction occurred during the constitutional convention of that year when delegates failed to ratify the Thirteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution. Although President Johnson had urged that such action be taken, it was intimated that perhaps the legislature would perform that chore. Opposition was shown again in 1867 when attempts were made to prevent Blacks from registering. In the same year, those political parties which wanted to defeat congressional reconstruction decided to stay away from the polls in order to stop approval for a constitutional convention. The resistance was continued by the Mississippi Legislature as

it passed the Black Codes after Congress refused to admit the state to the Union.¹

The attitude toward Blacks during the years immediately following the war was relatively peaceful, and there was little violence. However, by 1870, especially after the ratification of the reconstruction amendments to the United States Constitution, a change occurred. The earliest signs of violence had occurred in 1869 throughout Mississippi when a number of clubs and organizations developed across the state with the intent of barring Blacks from politics. The most noted of the groups was the Ku Klux Klan. Although this group deplored the Blacks, it defied Whites as well, particularly the Carpetbaggers who worked with the Blacks. For example, between 1869 and 1871, 112 deaths resulted from Klan activities. The reluctance on the part of Alcorn to take an active part in the suppression of such violence was partially responsible for the forthcoming split in the Republican Party.²

All of the activities of the Ku Klux Klan did not always include terrorism. On one occasion, the organization used the press to spread propaganda in an effort to prevent the election of David F. McAlexander, a Republican who was running for tax assessor in Forrest County. Blacks had avowed to vote for Alexander, but before the election the Ku Klux Klan printed an article in the paper revealing that Alexander had once published in the Southern Herald an article which announced that he had dogs trained solely for the purpose of retrieving Blacks. This article and other devices were used in addition to violence. When investigations were made, it was reported that the state authorities were prosecuting klansmen, but that it was hard to convict them because the assailants worked at night and witnesses could not identify them.

Furthermore, many left the state during the night.³

The first riot in the state occurred on March 6, 1871, at Meridian. Two different accounts explained that the trouble started when citizens from the neighboring state of Alabama came to Mississippi for the purpose of initiating racial tension. The other view proclaimed that the incident started when Blacks were appointed to the municipal government, especially William Sturgis, the Black mayor, who was hated by the Whites. Regardless of the reasons, the trouble started when several Blacks from Meridian returned from Jackson, where they had met with the governor to explain the situation. When the committee returned, it called a meeting of the Republicans to discuss the transactions in their conference with the governor. Most people attending were Black. As they assembled in the court house, the mayor and other Blacks addressed the audience. Whites in the city charged that Blacks had been directed by the governor to take control of the city. They held a meeting of their own and denounced everything the Blacks had done. A fire was set to the mayor's home; several Blacks were arrested and put on trial. While the hearing was in session, some twenty or thirty shots rang out almost simultaneously. When things returned to normal, several people had been wounded. When all the trouble ended in the city, four Blacks had lost their lives, the Black Baptist Church was burned, and the mayor and two other Black politicians escaped. The incident caused much alarm across the state, and state authorities made a request for troops, but Alcorn prevented their coming; he notified President Johnson that the situation was under control.⁴

When a congressional committee finally checked into the situation, it did not confine its work to Mississippi alone, for they held

inquiries in most of the Southern states where violence was prevalent. The committee conducted a thorough examination into charges and counter-charges for both sides. A great deal of attention was focused on the social, political, and economic conditions in the different states. When the group finished their report, they proclaimed that the Ku Klux Klan was responsible for much of the waste in the South which Southerners had called extravagance. The committee also contended that the Ku Klux Klan was made up of intelligent men who perhaps wanted to prevent Northerners and their capital from entering the South. Another version of the report stated that in its opinion the Ku Klux Klan only wanted to make Blacks dependent and defenseless in order for them to govern the states. The report concluded that Southerners wanted to regain their highly valued property in slaves and political power.⁵

More positive action was taken on May 31, 1870, when the federal government passed the Enforcement Act. The law protected the right of Blacks to vote by making it a crime for anyone who violated this right while it was being exercised. Likewise, the legislation contained a clause which prohibited a person from concealing his identity upon the public highways for the purpose of encroaching upon the civil rights of another. To reinforce the Enforcement Act, Congress passed the Ku Klux Klan Act on April 20, 1871. Section 2 of the code made it a penalty for a person or persons to deny an individual or a group the same safeguards or identical privileges or immunities under the codes. However, these laws were not effective, for Sections 3 and 4 of the Enforcement Act was declared unconstitutional and Section 2 of the Ku Klux Klan Act received the same treatment.⁶

Less racial violence occurred in 1871 and 1872 due largely to Black

ascendancy to political office. In 1871, Blacks increased their numbers in political positions throughout Mississippi at both state and local levels. Blacks exercised overwhelming control, especially at the local level in the Black counties. Some Whites at the time became convinced that Blacks did not desire to dominate them politically, and thus much racial tension disappeared as an informal coalition between the races emerged. By 1872, Republicans won substantially in the state congressional election. These gains led many Blacks to push for more representation in proportion to their constituent support. Many Blacks at the time lamented that they were tired of supplying the votes while Whites held the offices.⁷

In 1873, political friction almost dominated the county and state conventions of the Republican Party. When the county convention assembled in Warren County, Blacks demanded a number of county and state positions. Again at the state convention, trouble flared up among White delegates and the Black faction of the party. When the debate ended, Blacks had gained a number of important state offices. In addition to these positions, Blacks made other demands regarding educational opportunities. This increase in Black political power and the demands made by Blacks led to a split in the Republican Party. A segment of the conservatives in the party did not want to accede to these requests. As a result, they formed a conservative party, along with some of the Democrats. They endorsed Alcorn for governor, while the original party, along with the Black faction, stood behind Ames. Ames defeated Alcorn by a sound majority. The election of 1873 marked the high point of Black political strength in the state, for several state officials and a United States senator were elected.⁸

Although the election of 1873 was the high tide of Black politics, there was but a slight increase of Blacks in the state legislature. From a total of thirty-five Blacks in the legislature in 1871, the number increased to a total of fifty-eight after the election of 1873. Of that total, nine were senators and the remaining were representatives, excluding those who held such offices as secretary of state and other positions. Even with this increase, Blacks never dominated government at either the state or local level. Nevertheless, by 1874 Black political power began to recede in favor of the Democrats. Whites cried out for White supremacy, as they reasoned that government belonged to the White man. They were determined to curtail Black power in politics and to eliminate Republican control in the state. To effect such a plan, the press carried articles attacking Black rule, and organizations were created to aid in this task. Numerous other methods were employed in order to accomplish this goal. Blacks who voted Republican were dismissed from their jobs as economic threats became a common practice. Black porters and mail clerks were fired by the railroads. The press advised their purchasers to subscribe from Democratic Party publishers. When this kind of pressure was no longer feasible, other appeasement tactics were used to persuade Blacks to join the Democratic Party. Whites resorted to bribery by assuring Blacks that they would not be fired from their jobs so long as they supported the Democrats. Social gatherings such as picnics, barbeques, musicals, and parades were held for Blacks. When these failed, violence was used.⁹

On January 4, 1875, some of the leading Democrats in the state met in Jackson and organized what became known as the first taxpayer's convention in the state. The convention drew up a petition to present to

the legislature. It denounced the existing government and labeled the racial situation in the state as both obnoxious and evil. It demanded changes in the economy and called upon the people to rebel against the political regime. To justify these complaints, the group claimed that unnecessary tax increases were almost the same as the seizing of public property. The protestors also stated that the assessed value of land was eighteen times greater than it was in 1869 when land was assessed at only ten cents on the dollar. Hence, such increases would only lead to economic disaster. When the meeting terminated, the citizens proceeded to their respective counties and organized taxpayers' leagues throughout the state. The taxpayers pledged that they would bring about a decrease in taxes or refrain from paying them even if it means refusing to pay tax for the maintenance of state government.¹⁰

Between July and October, 1875, a series of riots took place throughout the state, emanating from political disputes. The first conflict occurred at Vicksburg on July 5, 1875. Because the fourth of July came on Sunday, a celebration was scheduled for the following day. The disturbances in July were carryovers from the hostilities which had occurred in December of 1874. A group of taxpayers had demanded that Peter Crosby, the Black sheriff and tax collector of Warren County, post new bonds. When Crosby refused, the group asked that the entire board of supervisors be dismissed for not forcing Crosby to post new bonds. Several members of the board were convicted for graft and other crimes while other members were asked to resign. The taxpayers held a conference to find out if the other members of the board had resigned and, of course, the Blacks refused to do so. Crosby went to see Governor Ames concerning the measures that the citizens had taken against the

Black officials. Ames ordered that Crosby be reinstated as sheriff and called the activities of the committee of taxpayers unlawful and rebellious.¹¹

The taxpayers were of the opinion that Ames would order the Black militia to reinstate Crosby to his position but he instead directed a group of Blacks within the county to perform the task. On Monday morning, December 7, 1874, some one hundred Blacks led by a Black man named Andrew Owens attempted to carry out the governor's orders. But they were met by a group of Whites about the same in number under the leadership of Colonel Hal Miller. The Blacks were told to disband and return to their homes or suffer the consequences. Owens answered that he had come for Crosby and that he would do nothing unless the sheriff gave the order. At the time, Crosby was confined to the court house and Owens desired a meeting with him. When he was allowed to meet with the sheriff, it was reported that Crosby told the Blacks to return to their homes. But soon fighting ensued and shots were fired from both sides. Three different conflicts occurred in the vicinity of the city before the day ended. Actually, the conflict was not settled until January 18, 1875, when federal troops were sent to Vicksburg and Crosby was finally restored to his office. According to statistics, thirty-five Blacks and two Whites were killed during the struggle.¹²

The incident on July 5, 1875, started when Cardoza, the Black state superintendent of education, was scheduled to speak during the rally in the city. Cardoza owned a newspaper in Jackson and was also editor of the publication. He had written an article concerning a prominent judge in Warren County named Cowan, who approached him that morning shortly before the ceremony began. Cowan's confrontation with Cardoza resulted

from scandalous remarks about Cowan that Cardoza had written. Conflict developed and Cardoza escaped to the courthouse where the program was held. Several of Cowan's friends followed him and a second encounter occurred. In the midst of the conflict, a shot was fired and a White man named Hill who had assisted Cardoza in his flight from the first skirmish was shot. After this incident, the people, who were mostly Black, began to disperse and a flurry of shots were fired above their heads. But unfortunately an elderly Black man, not even involved in the affair, was fatally shot on the street. Hill and the old Black man were the only two fatalities during the riot. A few days after the conflict, Governor Ames was notified that things were under control in the city and a plan was suggested to him to prevent future racial disturbances from occurring throughout the state.¹³

Following this episode, the Democrats held their state convention in Jackson on August 3, 1875. They explained that the only way to save the state from further graft would be to elect a legislature of Whites who would be devoted to the improvement of the state's economy. Because a new legislature was to be elected in November, the citizens put aside their daily activities and worked toward the task of winning control of the state government. Most of the leading Democrats in the state were present, including J. Z. George and L. Q. C. Lamar, who would emerge as the two foremost leaders during the campaign of 1875. Firey speeches were made at the gathering. As the delegates continued to plan for the election, the strategy for the entire campaign was turned over to George, who was also elected chairman of the Democratic State Executive Committee. The measures of the convention became the campaign slogan as Democrats in each county in the state pledged

themselves to uphold and to effect those principles unconditionally and without regard for reconsideration. On August 15, 1875, the executive committee assembled again in Jackson to organize its campaign tactics. The first item on the agenda was the keynote address that had been prepared by the chairman of the committee. The address has been described as a monument in political oratory. In its conclusion, an appeal was made to every able body in the state to put forth all effort to meet the coming challenge.¹⁴

On September 1, 1875, a riot took place in Yazoo City. A. T. Morgan, the sheriff of the county, was making a political speech while campaigning for reelection. In the midst of the session, revolvers were fired and the people ran out of the hall. Only two fatalities resulted from the melee. A White man named B. R. Mitchell received a fatal shot, and a Black man known as Foote was wounded. Morgan left the county following the affair. The most serious outburst developed at Clinton three days later, and has been referred to as the Moss Hill conflict because some of the fighting took place on Moss Hill, near the Clinton community. The plan was to have a barbeque, while leading speakers delivered addresses. Governor Ames and other Republicans were on the program, and some of the Democrats were invited to participate and were allowed adequate time to present their messages. There were some 2,500 people present, of which most were Black, with about 1,200 being males of both races. The Democrats were the first to speak, and when the Republican speaker began his delivery, a dispute emerged between a young White man and a Black man. Someone spoke in contradiction of a comment the Republican speaker made, and the fighting which followed raged for several days. Recruits from Jackson, Vicksburg, and other parts of the

state piled into the town. Another dispute occurred on the outer perimeter of the village over some insignificant misunderstanding, and a number of people were killed. Fighting continued through the final night of violence, some three days after the disturbance started.

There have been different accounts concerning the casualties, but there were three Whites and six or seven Blacks reported dead, and several from each side were wounded.¹⁵

On September 7, 1875, Governor Ames sent a message to President Grant stating that the situation in the state was in such condition that it was necessary to send federal troops. But two days later George, chairman of the Democratic Executive Committee, sent a wire to the attorney general telling him that things were normal, and that there was no need for troops to come to the state. On the same day, the authorities in Washington sent a letter to Governor Ames declaring that the American people had become exhausted with the violent disturbances in the South which had been occurring every year. In addition, the attorney general told Ames that most of the people were opposed to the federal government's interference. He added that he wished peace could be restored without any action on the part of the government. Lastly, he advised Ames to use his own resources to restore Mississippi to normalcy.¹⁶

While Ames worked to restore peace, another riot broke out at Friar's Point in Coahoma County on October 9, 1875. The outbreak started when John Brown, the Black sheriff of the county, assembled some three hundred Blacks at a political rally to promote his political program in the county convention. Some charged that Brown had armed the Blacks and called them together for the purpose of burning the town. In

an attempt to stop the group, former governor Alcorn led a group of Democrats, and they succeeded in dispersing the Blacks. But a second conflict started when the Blacks shot a young White man named Scott. Alcorn again launched a counterattack and nine Blacks were killed during the encounter. When the affair ended, nine Blacks and three Whites were dead, and Brown fled from the county.¹⁷

Inasmuch as Governor Ames could not obtain troops from the federal government, he resorted to the arming of the militia throughout the state, many of which included Black companies. He ordered Charles Caldwell, a Black militia officer, to deliver arms to some of the men in Edwards, a community between Jackson and Vicksburg. Next Ames made plans to send a Black unit to Yazoo City to restore the sheriff to his office. His third move was to send arms to the militia in DeSoto County. As the tension in the county grew more tense, the Democrats began to attack Ames for his action. The Democratic Executive Committee issued a statement claiming that Ames was trying to initiate a racial war within the state. The committee also denounced the action as an unnecessary move because peace prevailed in the state and no one had resisted state authorities. But Ames said that such a course was necessary in order to have an honest and peaceful election.¹⁸

Realizing that an attack upon the state militia was sure to bring federal troops and all chances to overthrow the Republican Party at the election would be lost, the Democrats had to find other means to deal with the situation. On October 15, 1875, a conference was held between George, who represented the Democrats, and Governor Ames. George suggested that Ames dissolve the militias throughout the state, and he promised that a peaceful election would take place. Ames agreed to

disperse and disarm the companies, but he refused to disband them.

George agreed to this promise, and Ames subsequently issued a proclamation disorganizing the militia units across the state, and directed the men to return to their homes.¹⁹

It appeared that things would be just as agreed at the conference. As the campaign continued, the Democrats attempted to win Black support. The press had previously told the Blacks that they should not make the mistake of nominating Blacks just because they were Black or because there were no Blacks in the Democratic Party, but should render justice to the Whites just as members of the Black party were doing for Blacks. The press further stated that if anyone should discover a Black Democrat and believed that he was worthy for nomination, then he should be endorsed for a position in proportion to the constituents he represented. The paper went on to state that when Blacks voted for Democrats, they should be compensated according to the number who voted. Democrats promised Blacks that pre-antebellum conditions would not be restored to them if their party prevailed and that public education would be perpetuated. Such campaigning swept many Blacks into the Democratic Party and some would vote the Democratic ticket at the election.²⁰

Even though George promised a peaceful election, such was not the case. On election day, all of the methods which had been used in previous elections were excised at the polls. In many of the counties violence erupted between Blacks and Whites at the polls. Many Blacks were frightened away from the polls, while others refused to show up. In some counties, an extra ballot box was kept on hand in order to stuff in the needed votes. Social and economic intimidation became a common practice as many were fired from their jobs, while others were

coerced into resigning. Yet, some resorted to the art of purchasing votes. When the votes were in, the Democrats had won the election by more than 30,000 votes. They elected four of the six congressional seats and no immediate complaints in reference to a contested election was registered at the time.²¹

Eventually, however, charges were brought against the Democrats for their action during the 1875 election. The following year a five-man committee went to Mississippi to investigate the charges. The group was chaired by Senator George S. Boutwell of Massachusetts, who remained in the state for months hearing testimonies by citizens from across the state. During the course of the hearing, hundreds of witnesses appeared, both Black and White. Some testified that the Democrats came by their homes and forced them to make political speeches on behalf of the Democratic Party. Others witnessed that they were told that if they did not vote for the Democrats all Blacks in the county would be killed. On the other hand, Democrats denied the charges of intimidation by Whites against Blacks, but they claimed that Blacks attacked other Blacks, and that otherwise the election was fair. Even Hiram R. Revels, the former Black senator, testified to that effect. When all the testimony was heard, the committee reported that fraud had occurred during the election and that many of the elected officials in the counties were incapable or dishonest. Also, the report declared that the state expenses had been unnecessarily increased over the past few years. It concluded that intimidation occurred in order to bring about a change in the state's administration.²²

There were many factors cited relative to the Democratic victory, as both Republicans and Democrats made accusations against the other.

For example, when the Democrats were charged with instigating the Clinton riot, the Democrats held a hearing of their own in which much testimony was given by Blacks and Whites. They concluded that the incident was triggered by Blacks who insisted on a fight with the Whites, who tried to avoid a conflict. Democratic success was also attributed to the work of George and Lamar at the state and national levels. George used his political skill in spearheading the movement which led to the so-called Revolution of 1875, while Lamar had won the sympathy of the North for the South when he delivered the eulogy of Senator Charles Sumner. Such diplomacy at the national level helped to remove some of the sectional strife.²³

Others viewed the triumph from a different perspective. The Republicans suffered political defeats nationally as well as at the local level. People blamed the party for the depression of 1873, which led to Democratic political gains in the state elections the following year. National politics worked to the Democrats' advantage as the North began to forget about some of the major differences which followed the war. New political leaders emerged within the Republican Party, and these men possessed power as they created new issues. Near the end of President Grant's first administration, such scandals as the Credit Mobilier aroused national concern. Other scandals followed, and the Republicans found themselves on the defensive. During Grant's second term, his concern for activities in the South began to diminish as he concerned himself with other matters. Accentuating these facts, many able-bodied Southerners received their political rights under the Amnesty Act, who were eager to capitalize on the Republicans' mistakes. Finally, the political lines were drawn more severely than they had ever been by the

Republicans in previous elections.²⁴

The forces and elements which eventually led to a reduction in the Republican political machine in the state were present from the beginning of the reconstruction period in Mississippi. But there were counter forces at work, such as governmental obstacles which prevented a Democratic seizure of political control. In addition to the federal authorities as a major stumbling block, there was the presence of a conservative class of politicians in the state who allied themselves with the Republicans. Furthermore, the increasing power of the Black faction of the Republican Party made the task for an overthrow by the Democrats even harder. Nevertheless, the Democrats continued to look for ways and means to effect their insatiable quest to dethrone the arch enemy, and they used every known method possible to make that desire a reality.

The Democrat's opportunity presented itself as natural calamities and other factors made themselves visible throughout the nation. Recognizing that the time was right to make their move, the Democrats put forth all conceivable effort to accomplish the goal for which they had long awaited. When the effort was over, and the Republican Party in the state was nearly at an end, what impact did the victory have on state politics? Were the Democrats satisfied with their triumph? Had Black voting and office holding come to an end in the state? Only the Bourbon period which followed can offer an explanation.

FOOTNOTES

¹ Drake, "The Mississippi Reconstruction Convention of 1865," Journal of Mississippi History, Vol. XXI, pp. 253-254; Currie, "The Beginning of Congressional Reconstruction in Mississippi," Journal of Mississippi History, Vol. XXXV, pp. 24-25.

² Newberry, "John Roy Lynch: A Political Biography," p. 57; Aptheker, To Be Free: Studies in American Negro History, p. 175.

³ Forrest Ku Klux, September 28, 1871; The Ku Klux Conspiracy: Report of the Joint Select Committee to Inquire into the Condition of Affairs in the Late Insurrectionary States (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1872), p. 21.

⁴ Smith, "A History of Lauderdale County, Mississippi," pp. 58-60.

⁵ The Ku Klux Conspiracy, p. 233.

⁶ Blaustein and Zangrando, Civil Rights and the American Negro, pp. 228-229, 247.

⁷ Wallace, History of the Negroes of Mississippi from 1865-1890, pp. 69-73; William D. McCain Papers; Mississippi State Archives; Meltzer, Freedom Comes to Mississippi: The Story of Reconstruction, pp. 148-150.

⁸ Bennett, Black Power U.S.A.: The Human Side of Reconstruction, pp. 222-227; Meltzer, Freedom Comes to Mississippi: The Story of Reconstruction, p. 150; Franklin, ed., Reminiscences of an Active Life: The Autobiography of John Roy Lynch, p. 142.

⁹ Ibid., p. 132; Bennett, Black Power U.S.A.: The Human Side of Reconstruction, pp. 226-227; Meltzer, Freedom Comes to Mississippi: The Story of Reconstruction, pp. 154-157; Report of the Senate Sub Select Committee to Inquire into the Mississippi Election of 1875-1876 With the Testimony and Documentary Evidence (3 vols., Washington: Government Printing Office, 1876), Vol. I, p. XIV.

¹⁰ Dunbar Rowland, "The Rise and Fall of Negro Rule In Mississippi," P.M.H.S., Vol. II (1899), p. 192; Smith, "Techniques Used in the Overthrow of Republican Rule in the State of Mississippi in 1875," p. 35.

¹¹ Inquiry into the Mississippi Election of 1875-1876, Vol. I, p. LVIII; J. S. McNeilly, "Climax and Collapse of Reconstruction In Mississippi, 1874-1896," P.M.H.S., Vol. XII (1912), pp. 1-2.

¹² Ibid.; Meltzer, Freedom Comes to Mississippi: The Story of Reconstruction, p. 159.

¹³ Inquiry to the Mississippi Election of 1875, pp. LIX-LX; Adelbert Ames Papers, Mississippi State Archives.

¹⁴ Rowland, "The Rise and Fall of Negro Rule in Mississippi," P.M.H.S., Vol. II, pp. 193-194; Smith, "Techniques Used in the Overthrow of Republican Rule in the State of Mississippi in 1875," p. 35.

¹⁵ Inquiry Into the Mississippi Election of 1875, pp. LX-LXIII; American Annual Cyclopedia and Events of 1875, p. 515; Charles Hillman Brough, "The Clinton Riot," P.M.H.S., Vol. VI (1902), pp. 56-63.

¹⁶ American Annual Cyclopedia and Events of 1875, p. 516; Rowland, "Rise and Fall of Negro Rule in Mississippi," P.M.H.S., Vol. II, p. 194.

¹⁷ Inquiry Into the Mississippi Election of 1875, pp. LVIII-LIX; American Annual Cyclopedia and Events of 1875, p. 516.

¹⁸ Aptheker, To Be Free: Studies in American Negro History, p. 181; Frank Johnston, "The Conference of October 15th, 1875, Between General George and Governor Ames," P.M.H.S., Vol. VI (1902), p. 69; American Annual Cyclopedia and Events of 1875, p. 517; Vaiden Weekly Record, February 26, 1876.

¹⁹ Johnston, "The Conference of October 15th, 1875, Between General George and Governor Ames," P.M.H.S., Vol. VI, pp. 68-70; Inquiry Into the Mississippi Election of 1875-1876, p. XIII; American Annual Cyclopedia and Events of 1875, Vol. XV, p. 517.

²⁰ Jackson Daily Mississippi Pilot, July 28, 1875; Wallace, History of the Negroes of Mississippi, 1865-1890, pp. 81, 85.

²¹ Albert D. Kirwan, Revolt of the Rednecks: Mississippi Politics, 1876-1925 (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1951), pp. 4-5; Aptheker, To Be Free: Studies in American Negro History, p. 184; Wallace, History of the Negroes of Mississippi, 1865-1890, pp. 85-86.

²² Inquiry Into the Mississippi Election of 1875, pp. 995, 1019-1020; Anne Cates Calvert, "A History of Clay County Mississippi Prior to 1900" (Master of Arts Thesis, Mississippi State University, 1965), pp. 44-49, 52; Thompson, "Hiram R. Revels: A Biography," pp. 157-158.

²³ The Clinton Riot, A True Statement Showing Who Originated It (Jackson: Democratic-Conservative Executive Committee, 1875), Campaign Document No. 2, pp. 1-3; Kirwan, Revolt of the Rednecks: Mississippi Politics, 1876-1925, pp. 3-4.

²⁴ Meltzer, Freedom Comes to Mississippi: The Story of Reconstruction, pp. 154-155; Wallace, History of the Negroes of Mississippi, 1865-1890, p. 75.

CHAPTER VI

MISSISSIPPI BLACKS DURING THE BOURBON PERIOD, 1876-1890

The success that the Democrats enjoyed at the polls in the state and congressional elections of 1875 did not give them complete control of the state government. The election was primarily a contest for state legislators and for the election of congressmen. The Democrats had outpolled the Republicans by a majority of more than 30,000 votes, and they won four of the congressional seats. But most of the other offices were held by Republicans. Furthermore, the Republicans carried twenty-two of the seventy-four counties in the state. There were also 67,171 votes officially returned for the Republican Party. In addition, John R. Lynch won another term in the United States Senate by a comfortable margin. A total of sixteen Blacks were reelected to the legislature; five senators and eleven representatives were returned. Finally, the Ames' administration was still active.¹

Even with a thirty-nine percent reduction of Black representation in the state legislature, the Democrats were still faced with the problem of approximately 130,483 Black registered voters in the state during the early stage of the Bourbon period. Some of the Democrats suggested that a constitutional convention be held in order to handle the voting problem. But most of the politicians felt that it was somewhat soon to take that step and that there would be other complications

involved. It was finally decided that they would wait and give the new state administration an opportunity to exercise its program and, at the same time, they would keep an eye on Black suffrage in the state.²

The Democrats realized that Ames would have to be removed before they would gain undisputed control of the state government. Little time passed before they began proceedings to impeach the governor. On February 22, 1876, eleven charges of impeachment were brought against Ames in the state senate. He was accused of removing certain officials from office, and another charged that he made unlawful removals. He was also blamed for the riot in Vicksburg in 1875, and accused of arming the Black militias in the state without cause. Finally, Ames received the blame for the reappointment of Crosby, the Black sheriff of Vicksburg, as well as six other accusations. Three days later, the charges were adopted against him in the house of representatives by a vote of eighty-six to fourteen. The twelve Republicans that were present voted against the impeachment as did two Democrats. Following the impeachment vote, twenty-three articles of impeachment were drafted and passed. To handle his defense, Ames hired some of the finest lawyers in the nation, and they fought a hard battle on behalf of the governor. But they soon learned that the whole affair was a political matter. Ames was not on trial because he had committed any crimes, but because he was a Republican and was in the path of the Democrats who were determined to remove him. Realizing that they only wanted the governor's chair, Ames' lawyers felt there was no need to continue the trial. They advised him to pursue another course of action. Not wanting to blemish his record, he asked to resign. His resignation was accepted, and by a vote of twenty-four to seven the trial came to an end.

The legislature then installed John M. Stone, a Confederate veteran, as governor.³

Speaking in defense of the charges against him and the events of his administration years later, Ames explained that he was only carrying out his duties in office. In reference to charges related to his affiliation with the Blacks, he again stated that much of what he did was in line with his work. He pointed out however that some of the Blacks were honest, loyal, and competent supporters. Ames said that one must agree that he was justified in calling out Black militia units to protect the people. He also noted that Blacks made no attempt to strip the Whites of their civil rights as the Whites did the Blacks. When Ames left Mississippi, he never returned.⁴

Having completed the task of removing Ames from office, the Democrats enacted additional measures as safeguards against Blacks in politics. They adopted two amendments to the state constitution. The first dissolved the office of lieutenant governor and made the president of the senate the next man in line to the governorship. The second amendment provided for two year sessions of the legislature, beginning in 1878. A new registration law was also passed. Under the new law, the governor would preside over the senate and the secretary of state would be in charge of the board of registration. Both the governor and the secretary were responsible for appointing three members to the board of registration in each county, and each member was to belong to different political parties. Other strict regulations regarding voter registration were applied under the new law, such as the right to challenge anyone's voting rights.⁵

Mindful of the fact that the Black voter was still an important

factor in politics, the Democrats made an attempt to persuade Blacks to vote with their party. The earliest efforts made toward a quest for the Black vote occurred at the Democratic state convention in 1875. Those leaders who pushed for a Black alliance had accepted the terms of the war, and they urged the adoption of the Black vote in their platform for that year. But another faction of the party opposed such an alliance on the grounds that it was dangerous to the party. Such men as W. H. McCradle, editor of the Vicksburg Commercial, and A. J. Frantz, editor of the Brandon Republican, who sought the Black vote and because they accepted reconstruction policies, were referred to as Bourbons. These men had very little power before the war; however, by 1875 they had obtained considerable influence and leadership.⁶

The term Bourbon was also applied to those who came into power after the Democratic political victory of 1875; they refused to recognize congressional reconstruction. Yet, there was a third group who prided themselves with having led the overthrow of the Republican Party and who also described themselves as Bourbons. Like the original group, the other Bourbons did not have much recognition before the war, but all advocated changes through different approaches. Because these various groups were described as Bourbons, the term was used very loosely, and it became difficult to distinguish between Bourbon groups. The three most powerful leaders in the state during the Bourbon era were Lamar, George, and Edward C. Walthall, another prominent Democrat. All three served as United States senators, being elected at different times during the Bourbon period. These men stood behind a program that would reconcile sectional differences, and they also promoted railroad construction, industrialization for the South, and other commercial

enterprises. Bourbon action was contrary to the desires of the agrarian class and would lead to dissention. Though there were conflicting economic interests among Bourbons, all groups wished to control the Black vote in order to perpetuate White control.⁸

Recognizing that the state and the presidential election of 1876 would soon take place, the Bourbons began their campaign for Black support. Blacks were told that they had not lost any of their liberties since the Democrats gained control of the government, and that they still possessed equality. They were also advised that there was no reason to support the Republican Party. Blacks were asked to join their Southern friends by supporting the Samuel J. Tilden ticket. The Yazoo City Herald even reported that Senator Bruce had joined the Democratic Party. Although Bruce claimed to be a Republican, the paper stated that he had advised Blacks throughout the state to support Democrats by voting their ticket. The Herald said that the Democrats were appreciative to the Blacks and would show their appreciation when the need presented itself.⁸

In addition to the press' recruitment pleas, it stated that some Blacks had joined the Democratic Party and anticipated that others would join in the near future. The Democrats won some Blacks into their organization without any persuasion. When the Republican state convention met during the year, party members refused to nominate any Blacks for positions on the ticket, and a break developed between them. Supplementing these factors, Blacks began to organize Democratic clubs throughout the state, and they asked the members of their race to become affiliated with them.⁹

The Republicans' appeal to Blacks to remain in their party was

implied in the platform of their presidential campaign. Rutherford B. Hayes, the Republican nominee for president, proclaimed that he would work for a government that would protect the interest of Blacks as well as Whites. Hayes continued that he would initiate a program that would eliminate the differences between the sections in the nation. Above all, his campaign represented unity and reform in the government.¹⁰

As the Democrats continued to rally the support of the Black voter, the Republicans began to counteract those actions. One method the Republicans used was the dismissal of Blacks from office in the party. The Republicans held a meeting in Greenwood for the purpose of removing Sam McCrea, the Republican Black registrar in Leflore County and a member of the board of supervisors. It was believed that McCrea would be replaced by Silas McLean, a Black school teacher. When the Democrats learned of the matter, they began to seek ways to keep McCrea in office. Although McCrea belonged to the Republican Party, he was conservative in his views and had made many friends among the Democrats. The Democrats pictured him as a competent politician and felt that he should remain in office. L. P. Yerger, a member of the Democratic Executive Committee, wrote a letter to J. Z. George concerning the affair and told him to look into the matter.¹¹

The Democrats never refrained from the practice of soliciting Black support prior to the election of 1876, and they did not maintain peaceful methods in their attempt to win the election. To prevent the Republicans from making a good showing, they returned to the same tactics which were utilized in previous elections. Those Blacks who did not join their party but continued to support the Republican ticket received the same treatment. In some counties, Blacks and Whites were forced to

leave their homes. In Bolivar County, a lawyer who had been there for only three months was coerced from the county. Though he had not participated in politics, he left for fear of his life. In nearby Washington County, four Blacks were driven from their homes and forced to live in the woods because of their political views. Similar events occurred in other counties under the guidance of the Ku Klux Klan, while riots developed in numerous counties.¹²

As the election neared, the campaign became more intensive. In some counties the political rallies were referred to as the "Red Shirt Campaign," as the men rode through the streets wearing red shirts, making and delivering speeches. Even young boys bored holes in trees and filled them with powder to cause an explosion like the sound of a cannon when they were ignited. Perhaps one of the most startling incidents during the entire campaign occurred in Starkville. Both parties gathered to hear speeches and both groups came armed. The Democrats went to the extent of bringing a piece of field artillery. The momentum of the tension which developed caused the meeting to dissolve before the speaking began. The Republicans charged that the Democrats had frightened Blacks and forced them to join their party through violent means. But the Democrats denied these charges and retaliated by saying that Blacks voluntarily came to them and that they were only defending Blacks from other members of the Black race.¹³

Such performances by the Democrats led to complaints and criticisms internally and externally. J. L. Murphy had already written to Governor Stone and registered his complaint for having to leave his home. He told the governor that he had been asked to leave the county and he pleaded with the governor to take action against such injustice. Murphy

told Stone that he came to the county to practice law and he had not been involved in politics. Criticism at the national level resulted from a speech made by the United States attorney general who commented on affairs in Mississippi. Governor Clark wrote a letter to the attorney general and informed him there was no intimidation in the state. The governor also advised him that he was quite capable of handling state affairs.¹⁴

In spite of the criticisms the Democrats received, they continued their extra legal methods through election day. When the returns were compiled and tabulated, the Democrats had won by almost a 60,000 majority, with Tilden as their candidate for president. Even though the Democrats relied on activist methods in carrying the election, Blacks were not as docile as they had been previously, for they cast enough votes to cause some concern by the Democrats, as well as embarrassment. Though fraud could have accounted for the victory, the Democrats claimed that it resulted from the vast numbers of Black votes. In addition to Tilden's victory, the Democrats elected six congressmen from Mississippi. Unfortunately, however, the presidential election resulted in a stalemate.¹⁵

When the electoral votes were tallied, Republicans claimed that Hayes had won. But the Democrats argued that Tilden was the victor. The whole controversy centered around the returns from the states of Louisiana, Florida, and South Carolina, which gave Hayes a majority of one vote in the electoral college. The deadlock produced strained relations as tension over the matter mounted in the nation. Some talked of converging on Washington to seat Tilden as president. To settle the conflict, Congress appointed an electoral commission of fifteen members.

The commission consisted of five United States Supreme Court justices, and the remaining members were equally divided between the two parties by members from both houses of Congress. Following a change on the commission which probably would have decided in Tilden's favor, Hayes was named the rightful winner.¹⁶

Hayes' victory did not come without a degree of logrolling. Traditionally, it has been recorded that Hayes obtained the presidency as a result of a meeting which occurred at the so-called "Wormley Conference" in Washington on February 26 and 27, 1877. According to that thesis, some of Hayes' supporters held a number of meetings with Southern representatives and came to an agreement which ended the dispute. The explanation was that Republicans agreed to withdraw the remaining troops from the South who were stationed in Louisiana and South Carolina. In exchange, Southerners relinquished their claim for Tilden as president. Moreover, the Democrats promised that Blacks would not be deprived of their liberties and that there would be no militant reaction against Republicans. The essence of the bargain was that the South sacrificed Tilden for home rule, while the Republicans gave up the Blacks for Hayes' victory. Though that has been the general explanation for the bargain, there was more involved than what took place at Wormley. Even before the conference, both the South and Hayes had previously taken steps to pursue what was finally accomplished at the conference. For several days before the meetings, Southerners had developed a way to withdraw troops from the South. The step was taken as a safety measure just in case the president did not keep his end of the bargain. The house of representatives had refused to support an appropriation bill for the army. Hence, troops would have pulled out anyway.¹⁷

Mississippi's role in the bargain resulted from the actions of Senator Lamar, who had worked his way up several important committees, including chairman of the caucus committee which was responsible for choosing the electoral commission. He delivered a speech in favor of the decision to let a committee decide the impasse. Lamar reported that he felt an unbiased decision would be reached. However, he was linked to the "Scott Plan," which promised Republican support for the Texas Pacific Railroad. Several prominent citizens opposed Lamar's participation in the compromise. Even former governor Alcorn objected, warning that the election could lead to an uprising in the state and possibly upset the structure of government. Although the decision in the state was accepted, the citizens were not satisfied with it. The whole affair was referred to as the "Fraud of 1876" and Hayes was called "the defacto President of the United States." Such criticism did not deter Lamar. As the troops were not immediately withdrawn from the remaining states, Lamar wrote President Hayes reminding him of the agreement. The following month, the last of the troops pulled out, bringing an end to military control in the South. A few years later opposition against Lamar in the state had disappeared, for the citizens were calling him the greatest statesman in Mississippi. One of the newspapers in the state went so far as to say that it would not support any man who ran for governor in the state who opposed Lamar.¹⁸

The removal of the troops did not have a great impact on Black politics in Mississippi. In fact, since the split between Blacks and the Republicans in 1876, Republicans allowed the Black faction of their political machine in the state to dissolve and in the same year in which the troops left the South, Republicans gave up the organization. Blacks

rebuilt the Republican Party into a strong organization and would control it for ten years. Black leadership over the party was especially powerful in municipal communities such as Jackson. At times they had complete control over the party, for they selected party members and negotiated with the federal government. They grew even stronger, as they were able to elect one of their candidates in the congressional election of 1878 by an 823 majority vote in Monroe County. The election proved that the Black vote was still a major factor in politics. Inasmuch as there were some 130,483 Black voters in the state during the period, the White wing of the Republican Party stood by waiting for the opportunity to form a coalition with a dissenting Democratic faction. That chance occurred as dissension developed among the Democrats.¹⁹

Unity had remained stable within the ranks of the Democratic Party since their takeover in 1875. But differences began to flare when some of the Democrats charged that members of the party were becoming too liberal and that an attempt was made by the group to monopolize the party. Lamar was the primary object of their attack, for he had gained the reputation as being the agent for the Southern cause in its relations with the North following the war. Lamar had been elected to the United States senate succeeding Revels, and he had become the most influential figure of his party at that time. He was able to determine the success or failure of an office seeker. In addition to Lamar's liberal views, there were other members of the party who felt that they should have better political positions in the state. They reasoned that they too had helped to regain political control in 1875, but George and Lamar had obtained better positions while others had not been rewarded. To further compound the issue, Lamar refused to support the Bland-

Allison Act as the members of the Mississippi Legislature had instructed him to do. These differences marked the beginning of a four year struggle within the Democratic Party. It was also the beginning of an alliance between the Democrats and the third party movement.²⁰

The internal conflict did not cause major concern by the liberal wing of the Democratic Party as long as it involved only the party's members. But when the conservative segment began to court Black voters, the liberals went into an outrage and the struggle became more intense. In 1881, the Black faction of the Republican Party and the Greenback Party formed a coalition in order to place a candidate in the state's gubernatorial election. The Greenbackers had made considerable progress in the state, particularly in the Second Congressional District. It appeared that the party would carve out an even greater portion of the political sector of the state. Republicans were of the opinion that the party had gained enough strength to get an impartial election and a fair tabulation in the areas where it had been established. In order to make the ticket stronger, John R. Lynch suggested that a liberal-conservative Democrat should have the nomination. Lynch felt that Benjamin King, a state senator from Copiah County, was the right man for the position. He told the party members that King was a man who would sacrifice party affiliation for what he believed to be best for the public welfare. When Lynch confronted King with the proposition, he told Lynch to give him a few days to consider the matter. A few days later King agreed to run as an independent Democrat upon the conditions that both parties endorse him at a regular convention. Lynch discussed the matter with the parties, and they gave their consensus to the plan.²¹

The combination parties' platform called for fair elections and a judiciary election system for judges. The Democrats nominated Robert Lowry, a lawyer from the state. When the election was over, the Democrats polled 47,960 votes while the fusion ticket had 31,256. The defeated party claimed that the election was carried by fraud and intimidations. But the Democrats denied the charges, and they gave Blacks credit for helping in the victory. Lynch commented that the Democrats won because the coalition party did not have an organization in the predominantly Black counties and that their candidate did not obtain enough White support in the counties to assure a fair election and tabulation of the votes. Therefore, Lynch concluded that the Democrats' victory resulted from the returns from the Black counties and not from the actual votes which were cast. In spite of the defeat, the Republicans made their greatest showing since the election of 1875.²²

The next serious contest between the liberal and conservative Democrats occurred in 1882. In that year James R. Chalmers, a former Democrat, bolted the Democratic Party and organized the Mississippi Independent Democratic Party. Several factors accounted for Chalmers' abandonment of the Democratic Party. He opposed the Lamar-George control of the party and the refusal of Lamar's faction to support him in the contested election which he lost to John R. Lynch as a result of the election of 1880. There was also bitterness because the state legislature had dissolved four counties in Chalmers' district in 1880. Chalmers claimed that Lamar was behind the whole scheme because of his opposition toward Lamar. He denounced the Democrats as having deserted the principles for which the party stood. He publicly announced his withdrawal from the party and immediately sought the aid of Ethelbert Barksdale,

one of the leading editors, who was also a leader of one of the anti-Lamar Democratic groups in the state. Chalmers decided to change his residence from Vicksburg to the Second Congressional District in Panola County where Lamar lived. The Democrats said that such a move would destroy Chalmers' political career, for no Blacks would support a man who tried to unseat John R. Lynch, the Democratic press added.²³

The conservatives were well aware of the third party movement throughout the South, especially in Virginia where they allied with the Republican Party and took over the government from the Democrats. William Mahone, a senator from Virginia, had combined a number of third parties into the Readjuster Party and successfully dissolved the old Democratic regime. The Democrats had a passionate dislike for Mahone and for Chalmers who chose to duplicate his actions in Mississippi. The success of the third party was supplemented by the Black vote and the support of those who were dissatisfied with the liberals' attitude toward industry. Apparently the politicians at the national capital in the Republican Party were convinced by Mahone's victory. Chalmers wrote to President Chester A. Arthur expressing his opinion that such a combination could defeat the Democrats in the state. The plan was instantly endorsed by the Republicans.²⁴

Meanwhile, the White wing of the Republican Party had become somewhat exasperated because the Blacks had controlled the party since 1877. Lynch, Bruce, and Hill were the leaders of one group in the party. This trio formed an unbeatable alliance as they dominated the state machine by collaborating with the Washington officials from the state. The influence and positions that these individuals had in the state allowed them to demand and accomplish a great deal for Blacks. Bruce held

a position in the United States Treasury Department with headquarters in Washington, and was able to make connections for his two comrades in the state. Lynch occupied the chairmanship of the state Republican committee for eight years, beginning in 1881. Hill was the most important link in the chain, for he held a position in the Federal Internal Revenue Department in the state. Hill's office was the foundation upon which the party built its organization, and Hill had many agents operating throughout Mississippi. Each of these men would serve as chairman or floor manager over the Republican conventions in the state, giving them a monopoly of the gathering.²⁵

With a strong desire to regain control of the Republican Party, the White segment of the party joined forces with the Chalmers' group. They were disgusted with Black domination and they showed their anger by launching a bitter campaign in their revolt against Black politics. This wing of the Republican Party was led by George C. McKee, then postmaster at Jackson. In order to attract the votes of the Greenback-Independent supporters and the small farmers, Chalmers called for a change in congressional districts in the state, the abolishment of national banks, and election of state judges, for which he had asked in a previous campaign. There were seven congressmen running from Mississippi and four of them were opponents of the Democratic Party. Chalmers received considerable help from Washington in finance and in appointments of officers to state positions. Although Bruce sent word from Washington to the Black Republicans, directing them to support Chalmers, they refused.²⁶

When the Blacks refused to stand behind Chalmers, the Democrats formed an alliance with them and nominated Ham C. Carter, a Black

candidate, to run on an Independent Republican ticket. To further complicate the campaign, Hill labored strenuously to obtain the nomination from the Seventh Congressional District. Like the Chalmers' group, Hill obtained aid from national headquarters through Bruce. The White Republicans strongly detested Hill's nomination. They repeatedly claimed that Hill and the other leaders, namely Bruce and Lynch, had formed an agreement with the liberals in the Democratic Party in order to promote the "color line" in the state. It was said that Lamar and George worked at the national level by helping in the appointment of individuals to offices at both levels. For example, it was claimed that Lamar was partially responsible for Bruce's appointment as register of the treasury. Moreover, they asserted that the two groups made it appear that they were enemies while in reality they were allies, and their interests paralleled each other. As for Hill, they claimed that he used his office to support the liberal Democrats and that his campaign was only a scheme to defeat Chalmers' ticket. They concluded that Hill was well aware that he could not win, but that his defeat was the only way that he could retain his office and continue to support Bourbonism for self-interest as he had done in the past.²⁷

In addition to the charges against the Lamar faction, the Chalmers' supporters notified William E. Chandler, a native Mississippian and secretary of the navy, explaining the nature of the connection between Blacks and Bourbons. In a series of communications with Chandler, conservatives told him that George and Lamar had an understanding with the Black leaders in the state whereby Blacks would persuade their followers to support Democrats at the polls in all state elections and that Blacks would be rewarded by receiving federal aid in the state through the

influence of Bourbons. Not only was there a mutual exchange between the factions, but the liberals received other concessions. By cooperating with Blacks, Bourbons would be able to destroy any chances for a revival of the Republican Party, and at the same time destroy the adage that Blacks controlled the Republican Party or to associate Blacks with that party. Such a scheme would create the racial issue in the state, and, thus, the Whites would support the Democrats, building up a strong party in the state.²⁸

In order to prevent Hill's nomination for congressman, the Greenbackers and the Independents held a conference with the Black Republicans in Hazlehurst. The Blacks listened as the other groups suggested a compromise for the purpose of nominating a candidate from each party from the district. But the Blacks informed them that they were committed to Hill. The other parties let it be known that they were opposed to Hill because of his relations with the Bourbons. Because they could come to no mutual understanding, the groups went their separate ways and the meeting adjourned. The Blacks unanimously supported Hill in the state. But the conservatives continued to label him as a staunch supporter of the Bourbons. Some reported that Hill gave confidential information to the Democrats and others said that Lamar supported him because no other Democrat could obtain his office in the state. Despite his fence straddling, Hill succeeded in getting the nomination. Though they were cognizant of Hill's logrolling actions, the Republicans at the federal level had to play the role of a spectator. There was too much opposition against the Republican Party in other states, and the delegation from Mississippi would be important to them in the election. Furthermore, Hill was the leader of the Blacks in

the state and the entire political operations were under his command. To replace him would be fatal to the party while other simultaneous forces were operating against it.²⁹

Before the Greenbackers and Independents left the meeting in Hazelhurst, they organized a committee and instructed it to call another nominating convention at a later date. When they again met, Ethelbert Barksdale was placed on the ticket to be matched against Hill from the Seventh Congressional District. Thus, began the hottest campaign in the state between hostile groups within the Democratic Party since the election of 1875. The most important factor to all the groups involved was the presence of the Black vote for which each faction scrambled. During the Bourbon period in 1882, Blacks were in the majority by 22,034 registered voters in Mississippi. There were 108,244 White voters and 130,278 Black voters. Aware of the importance of that Black majority, the Democrats used the press to supplement their quest to attract the Black vote. Blacks were reminded of the increase in the number of Blacks who served in state politics. The Democrats also called to their attention that educational opportunities had been improved in the state. They likewise elaborated that since the withdrawal of federal troops, Democrats had upheld their rights to the franchise. Finally, the Democrats pointed out that Blacks had been placed on the party's ticket in a number of counties. Then they made a plea for Blacks to support them at the polls.³⁰

The importance of the election of 1882 was reflected through the campaign of the various groups as the election approached. Most of the leading Blacks in the state supported the Hill campaign. T. W. Stringer, an influential Black in the state, spent four months in Washington

soliciting aid for Hill. He announced that Hill would be elected regardless of what the cost of the campaign totaled. Other Blacks who promoted Hill's election were former lieutenant governor Davis, T. W. Cardoza, ex-superintendent of education, former senator Bruce, and followers of the late Charles Caldwell, former politician and militia officer. In its continuing attack upon the Hill campaign, the press argued that Hill's nomination was a disgrace to the Democrats and that Republicans were organizing Blacks in opposition to the Bourbons. It asserted that the Democrats would have no problem in electing Barksdale over Hill, for the color line would be useless in the election due to the fact that the Democrats had controlled the state since the takeover in 1875. Therefore, Hill's followers were having an illusion, believing that Hill would win.³¹

Observing the animosities and dissension between the groups from the nation's capitol, President Arthur refused to give further support to the Black party in Mississippi. He pursued such a course in order to divide the White vote in the state, and he hoped to regain control of the Republican Party. To assure the effectiveness of his plan, the president began to parcel out the positions to White citizens in Mississippi. However, this program was not confined to Mississippi, but employed throughout the South where the Republicans had lost control of their political machine. Such practice enraged the Blacks and Southern Democrats who launched an intensive counterattack to appease the Blacks.³²

The president's maneuvers did not retard the progress of the factions involved in the campaign. In fact, it added momentum to the Democrats' attack upon the opposition. Whereas there were four

candidates in the race against the Bourbons, most attention was focused on the Hill-Chalmers campaign. That contest was significant because it was a test to decide the future success of the Independent and Republican parties in the state. Hill's defeat would add great impetus toward the revival of the White wing of the Republican Party while his victory would increase Black segment control over the party. Not only were most eyes on the contest, but more effort was put into the campaign. Another important factor was that the Seventh Congressional District contained 26,432 Black votes, making it the largest of both races in the state. The Third Congressional District was the second largest, with 21,986 Black voters. Nevertheless, the Democrats were confident of a victory. Basing their opinion upon their success in the election of 1880 in the Seventh Congressional District, they predicted a repeat of their previous victory in that district. The Democrats were quick to point out that the Republicans would probably claim that fraud was used at the polls, because there were more Blacks in the district. But they declared that such a charge would be absurd because all Blacks would not vote for Republican candidates unless color was made an issue in the election.³³

The Democrats gave Hill a final lashing before the election, and they advised Blacks as to what course they should pursue. They denounced Hill as being incompetent for holding a congressional seat. He was also accused of using the Black voters for his own self-interests. In evaluating Hill's platform, the opposition stated that he offered no political views on his qualities as a politician. Actually, they claimed that Hill had no political views or opinions on anything. Concerning Hill's Black supporters such as Davis, Cardoza, and Bruce, the

opposition advised the Black voters that they should have learned a lesson from past experience to stay clear of those troublemakers. They viewed Bruce's participation in the Seventh Congressional District race on behalf of Hill as an advocate of the color line in exchange for a position in Garfield's cabinet.³⁴

The returns revealed that the Democrats had won five of the seven congressional seats. In the Second and Third Congressional Districts, the combination parties were successful. Barksdale defeated Hill in the Seventh Congressional District, by a majority of 5,466 votes. Hill received only 1,198 votes in Hinds County, just four more than his opponent. He had a total of 5,448 to Barksdale's 10,914. The closest race was between Vance Manning and Chalmers in the Second Congressional District. The Democrats suffered a significant defeat in Lamar's home county, for Chalmers carried Lafayette County by a majority of three to one. Though Chalmers was the victor in the Second Congressional District, he had to fight to be seated in Congress. Because of a typographical mistake in Tate County, Chalmers was denied the 1,472 votes intended for him. On the ballot, the name "J. R. Chambless" appeared, and the election commissioner declared that no such person was running. The liberals were aware that Chalmers' election depended on the votes in that county; they declared Manning the winner in that county. Chalmers immediately contested the election and so did Carter, the Black Republican candidate. Both men charged that fraud was employed at the polls, but Carter's fight was useless, for Chalmers was awarded his seat following a congressional hearing. All candidates who won in the contest credited their victories to the support of the Black vote, especially the Democrats who received a substantial number. The victory

only intensified the hostility between Chalmers and Hill.³⁵

While Chalmers busied himself in jubilation over the victory, Black Republicans were working to prevent him from enjoying another election victory in the next contest. Both Lynch and Hill immediately began to seek a way to discredit Chalmers' machine. When Republicans held their state executive committee meeting in the summer of 1883, Lynch presided. As chairman of the gathering, Lynch delivered a speech in which he denounced Chalmers as a man who was only in politics for self-interest. He suggested a coalition with a third party whose candidates would be selected from the Democratic ranks instead of the Republican. When the Chalmers' supporters introduced resolutions on his behalf at the meeting, it was not acted upon. Even when Chalmers attempted to address the body, Lynch refused to recognize him. Nevertheless, at the Republican state convention in April of 1884, Chalmers received more support when delegates were picked for the national convention. On the other hand, Bruce was allowed to deliver the keynote address, Lynch received the position as permanent chairman, and all three Blacks were allowed to attend the national convention as delegates. Likewise, Chalmers and all the other faction groups would send delegates to the convention.³⁶

As soon as the national convention was over, the bitterness between Chalmers and Hill again emerged during the campaign of 1884. Supporters at Washington continued to aid both groups, hoping to build one solid Republican Party by dissolving differences between them. They were also skeptical about losing the support of either group in the state. But Chalmers accused the Black Republicans of promoting discord by selecting only members from their party for Congress. There were

also conflicts over the appointments made from Washington. When the Secretary of the Treasury failed to follow through on a promise that he would appoint one of Chalmers' men to a state position, Chalmers heard that Hill stood in the way of the appointment and that a Hill supporter would receive the office. This incident accentuated hostility between the rival groups. Chalmers claimed that Hill's brother who worked for the revenue department in the state received orders from Hill to promise offices to delegates who were attending the district convention if they would oppose Chalmers' nomination for Congress. When that attempt failed, Hill tried two more times to block Chalmers' nomination, but his efforts were in vain. Chalmers was nominated without a dissenting vote. From that moment, Chalmers declared that Hill began campaigning against him at the polls. Chalmers also commented that their chances for electing any candidate were in danger as long as Hill headed the Republican Party. Undoubtedly, Hill's action was effective, for Chalmers was defeated by more than 3,000 votes, and he also lost in all the state's districts.³⁷

Chalmers' defeat did not discourage him from further political pursuits. In 1885 an alliance was made between the Greenbackers and the Republicans for the purpose of running a candidate for governor. Being chairman of the Republican state committee, Lynch was reluctant about endorsing such a combination ticket. However, he was persuaded to continue as chairman, and Lynch agreed, provided that a campaign committee composed of persons selected from the party's general committee be in charge of the campaign. The party agreed to his suggestion and the campaign began. During the course of political activities, Democrats referred to Chalmers as a traitor to his state, nation, and race. At

times threats were made upon Chalmers' life. When he attempted to make a speech at Columbus, he had to cancel for fear of his life. The cancellation destroyed the whole campaign, as the election was allowed to go by default. Chalmers' political career began to decline following the governor's campaign. His last public appearance in politics occurred at the Republican national convention in Saint Louis, Missouri, in 1896. Shortly afterwards, he settled in Tennessee, where he died a few years later. In addition to other mistakes, the Republicans, Greenbackers, Independents, and Blacks could have destroyed Democratic control in the state if they had dissolved their animosities by uniting into one strong coalition. Hence, the most serious internal conflict between the Democrats since the early days of reconstruction had run its course.³⁸

The Chalmers' episode taught the Democrats that a more rigid method had to be used in order to prevent the resurgence of third parties and similar political groups. Some of the leading Bourbons organized what became known as the "fusion system." The nature of that policy was based upon an agreement whereby the Democrats would support the Black Republicans in exchange for Black support against the other rival groups. Black appeasement was accomplished by making concessions in various counties of the state. One of the Black leaders would make an agreement with the Democratic executive committee in the county as to the number of positions that Blacks would receive in the state. When they decided upon the number, the Democrats would distribute the offices in different counties. The Blacks never received the number and kind of offices which the Democrats obtained and those they did receive were lesser ones. This system was also used to satisfy Blacks at the

national level.³⁹

Even though Black politicians were selected by Black voters, the Democratic committee had the authority to approve or reject the individuals who were elected. The insignificance of the offices held by the Blacks was evident in such counties as Hinds where the Democrats held eight offices consisting of supervisors, treasurer, chancery and circuit clerk, and other important positions. Blacks occupied such positions as constable, coroner, justice of the peace, and other minor positions. That situation existed throughout the state except in cases where exceptions were made in counties like Adams, where an agreement was made that Blacks would hold offices in proportion to half of the legislators. Lynch upheld the plan because he felt that Blacks could not do better during that period. He also suggested that Blacks should support any group which benefited them the most, until the time came when they could stand behind the Republican Party again. Lynch declared that by no means had Blacks abandoned the Republican Party for a party which had largely stripped them of their civil rights.⁴⁰

To assure that Blacks would not return to the Republican Party, President Grover Cleveland did for the Democrats what Arthur had done to regain Republican control, but Cleveland's action was just the opposite of Arthur's. Whereas Arthur removed Blacks and replaced them with native Whites, Cleveland began appointing Blacks to office. Upon the recommendation of E. C. Walthall, a senator from Mississippi, Cleveland appointed a Black to a position in the state along with several others in the South. Thomas C. Catchings, another congressman from Mississippi, boasted that the fusion policy had placed more Blacks in office in his district alone in Mississippi than there were in the

entire region of the North.⁴¹

Though the Bourbons were fortunate in perpetuating the system in the midst of adverse competition, the policy had its weaknesses from the time it was originated. First, the Democrats viewed the principle as a means of securing positive goals at minimum expense by two opposing groups. Moreover, the poor Whites registered complaints against the small politicians who were seeking the offices which emanated from the fusion. Also, others felt that the Democrats had gone too far in the restoration of the political machine in Mississippi and that the inclusion of Blacks in the system would lead other Blacks to seek political offices. Finally, some pointed out that Blacks controlled the deciding vote whenever discontent occurred between Whites on the boards of supervisors. But actually, as a whole, Blacks gave the operation minor support. At any rate, by employing such techniques as these and other traditional methods, the Democrats succeeded in containing the opposition parties during the early period of the Bourbon era. As a result of such politics on the part of the Democratic and Republican Parties, Blacks found themselves in a dilemma which produced frustration and political complacency. Supplementing their anxieties, the Republican Party began to decline. Nevertheless, Blacks refused to give the Democrats their total support, for they knew from experience that the Democrats would resort to violent tactics during crises.⁴²

Though Blacks continued to give the fusion principle minimal support, the plan encompassed not more than eight counties in the predominantly Black sections of Mississippi where Blacks were depended on for both economic and political reasons. Yet, those who supported the plan praised its operation due to the fact that it temporarily ended

strained racial relations and helped to quite political problems between races. Both Blacks and Whites were pleased with the system, especially in Black counties. However, there were those outside the state who viewed the situation in a different perspective. Speaking at the twenty-sixth anniversary in honor of Black emancipation in the District of Columbia, Frederick Douglass told his listeners that Blacks in the South were still in a situation that was deplorable to Black progress. In reference to Mississippi, he emphasized that conditions there were terrible as a result of the state's Agriculture Lien Law. That code had been revised to give the landlords the right to bind employees to plantations. It also protected the owner's rights to exploit workers. Douglass declared that laws of that nature kept Blacks from progressing, and, thus, they would never advance in any area of human development. He stated also that Blacks for this and similar reasons had not accomplished much during the first twenty years of their freedom.⁴³

The comment that the Democrats would resort to fraudulent means in politics when times were hard became imminent in state affairs following the congressional campaign in 1888. In that year, James Hill launched a campaign as a candidate from the Second Congressional District against T. C. Catchings. When the election was over, Hill was soundly defeated. But Hill claimed that the use of extralegal means caused his defeat, and he took means to prove his claim. Hill's attorney contested the election of 1888, and the hearings began on January 30, 1889. During the course of the affair, hundreds of witnesses appeared on Hill's behalf and the contest continued through the month of February. Although Hill's attorney made a gallant fight, Catching's

victory was upheld. After that contest, Catchings announced that he would not run for Congress again. Further problems developed in the summer of 1889. When the Blacks held their state convention in July, they demanded additional offices in counties where the fusion system operated. To accomplish this request, they proposed a fusion ticket, but the Democrats refused to accept it.⁴⁴

Although Blacks failed to accomplish a fusion ticket, the Republicans were successful in nominating a full ticket in 1890 for the first time in thirteen years. In the same year, the Republicans had a small majority in the United States Congress. President Benjamin Harrison expressed the need for a law that would allow the federal government to supervise elections in order to protect the rights of Blacks to vote in the South. Harrison's suggestion was strengthened when Henry Cabot Lodge presented a bill to that effect in Congress. These and other factors led many to the conclusion that it was necessary to seek methods to remove the Black vote.⁴⁵

As various groups continued to ponder the question of eliminating Blacks from politics, it was pointed out that Blacks had failed in their opportunity to use the franchise effectively. The Democrats wanted the Blacks to vote as individuals rather than as a group, and many believed that there was still a chance to accomplish this. Otherwise, the majority was of the opinion that such a feat would never take place. Others feared that Blacks would continue to occupy a commanding position in politics. Finally, a clamor for a constitutional convention echoed throughout the state. However, not all factions wanted a convention for the purpose of removing Blacks from politics. Those who lived in White counties desired a constitutional convention in order

to destroy the Bourbon's machine which they declared was using the Black vote for self-interest. They feared that such a scheme to disfranchise Blacks would surely lead to federal intervention in state affairs. But others felt that there was no alternative unless they wanted a government controlled by Blacks. Politicians in the White counties argued that any law enacted to eliminate the Black vote would also disfranchise thousands of Whites. The argument continued until 1890, when the legislature instituted a measure which set August 12 as the date for a convention to assemble for the purpose of drawing up a new state constitution.⁴⁶

When normal political operations resumed in Mississippi in January of 1876, Democrats realized that their desire to have undisputed control of state government was far from their expectations. Although the so-called "Revolution of 1875" reduced the number of Blacks and Republicans in government, both groups remained a major factor in state affairs. This led the Democrats to launch a concerted effort to solve the problem, and they did to a certain degree with help from the federal government and its support of the election of 1875. But even that move did not totally dissolve the problem, for there were thousands of Blacks who still held the franchise, including those in the legislature. Recognizing that such a problem still existed and needed attention, the Democrats searched about for a way to handle the situation. For a while it appeared that federal authorities would offer a solution once again by the removal of troops from the South. But when that effort failed, the Democrats decided they would cooperate with the Blacks until the chance came to solve the problems.

During the Bourbon period, Blacks played logrolling in order to

remain active in politics. Although discontent and dissension among the various political factions at both state and national levels led to confrontations with Blacks, they were able to find refuge among groups which enabled them to accomplish political concessions as a voting bloc. However, by the end of the Bourbon period political fortune began to wane for Blacks in Mississippi as the cry for a constitutional convention became dominant in the state, and it was finally called in 1890. Only the decade of the 1890s held the answers to the twin questions of the impact of the new constitution and political parties on Black politics in Mississippi.

FOOTNOTES

¹Aptheker, To Be Free: Studies in American Negro History, p. 185; Franklin, ed., Reminiscences of an Active Life: The Autobiography of John Roy Lynch, pp. 186-187; Wallace, History of the Negroes of Mississippi, 1865-1890, pp. 85-86; Vernon Lane Wharton, The Negro In Mississippi, 1865-1890 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1947), p. 202; Vaiden Weekly Record, February 26, 1876.

²John Samuel Ezell, The Southern Negro, 1877-1930 (New York: Macmillan Company, 1963), p. 176; Frank Johnston, "Suffrage and Reconstruction in Mississippi," P.M.H.S., Vol. VI (1902), p. 203.

³American Annual Cyclopedia and Events of 1876, p. 561; Franklin, ed., Reminiscences of an Active Life: The Autobiography of John Roy Lynch, pp. 187-189.

⁴Adelbert Ames to James W. Garner, January 17, 1900, James W. Garner Papers, Mississippi State Archives; Franklin, ed., Reminiscences of an Active Life: The Autobiography of John Roy Lynch, p. 189.

⁵American Annual Cyclopedia and Events of 1876, pp. 561-562.

⁶Willie D. Halsell, "The Bourbon Period In Mississippi Politics, 1875-1890," Journal of Southern History, Vol. XI, No. 4 (November, 1945), pp. 519-523; Kirwan, Revolt of the Rednecks: Mississippi Politics, 1876-1925, p. 9.

⁷Halsell, "The Bourbon Period In Mississippi Politics, 1875-1900," Journal of Southern History, Vol. XI, p. 523; Kirwan, Revolt of the Rednecks: Mississippi Politics, 1876-1925, p. 9.

⁸Yazoo City Herald, October 20, 1876.

⁹Kirwan, Revolt of the Rednecks: Mississippi Politics, 1876-1925, p. 7.

¹⁰Letter containing the Republican Party's platform, July 8, 1876, J. Z. George Papers, Mississippi State Archives.

¹¹L. P. Yerger to J. Z. George, August 14, 1876, J. Z. George Papers, Mississippi State Archives.

¹²Kirwan, Revolt of the Rednecks: Mississippi Politics, 1876-1925, p. 6.

¹³"Autobiography of Charlton M. Clark," Charlton M. Clark Papers, Mississippi State Archives; Kirwan, Revolt of the Rednecks: Mississippi Politics, 1876-1925, pp. 5-6.

¹⁴J. L. Murphy to J. M. Stone, October 29, 1876, John M. Stone Papers, Mississippi State Archives; Yazoo City Herald, October 13, 1876.

¹⁵Kirwan, Revolt of the Rednecks: Mississippi Politics, 1876-1925, pp. 5, 7.

¹⁶Franklin, ed., Reminiscences of an Active Life: The Autobiography of John Roy Lynch, pp. 193-196.

¹⁷C. Vann Woodward, Reaction and Reunion: The Compromise of 1877 and the End of Reconstruction (Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1966), pp. 6-7.

¹⁸Smith, "Biography of James Lusk Alcorn," James L. Alcorn Papers, Mississippi State Archives; James B. Murphy, L. Q. C. Lamar: Pragmatic Patriot (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1973), pp. 165-171; Edward Mayes, Lucius Q. C. Lamar: His Life, Times, and Speeches, 1825-1893 (Nashville: Barber and Smith Publishers, 1896), pp. 307-309; Aberdeen Tri Weekly Examiner, April 27, 1881.

¹⁹Rodabough, "History of the Negroes of Aberdeen and Monroe Counties, Mississippi, 1790-1916," p. 61; Kirwan, Revolt of the Rednecks: Mississippi Politics, 1876-1925, pp. 7-8; Ezell, The Southern Negro, 1877-1930, p. 176.

²⁰Willie D. Halsall, "Democratic Dissensions In Mississippi, 1878-1882," Journal of Mississippi History, Vol. II, No. 3 (July, 1940), pp. 123-125; Kirwan, Revolt of the Rednecks: Mississippi Politics, 1876-1925, p. 4.

²¹Halsell, "Democratic Dissensions In Mississippi, 1878-1882," Journal of Mississippi History, Vol. II, p. 135; Franklin, ed., Reminiscences of an Active Life: The Autobiography of John Roy Lynch, pp. 255-258.

²²Ibid., pp. 259-260; Kirwan, Revolt of the Rednecks: Mississippi Politics, 1876-1925, pp. 7-8; Wallace, History of the Negroes of Mississippi, 1865-1890, p. 148.

²³Willie D. Halsell, "James R. Chalmers and Mahoneism In Mississippi," Journal of Southern History, Vol. X, No. 1 (February, 1944), pp. 38-39.

²⁴Woodward, The Strange Career of Jim Crow (London: Oxford University Press, 1966), pp. 56-57; Halsell, "James R. Chalmers and Mahoneism In Mississippi," Journal of Southern History, Vol. X, p. 37.

²⁵Ibid., p. 40.

²⁶Halsell, ed., "Republican Factionalism In Mississippi, 1882-1884," Journal of Southern History, Vol. VII, No. 1 (February, 1941), pp. 84-85; Halsell, "James R. Chalmers and Mahoneism In Mississippi," Journal of Southern History, Vol. X, pp. 41-44.

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²⁸Woodward, The Strange Career of Jim Crow, p. 58; Kirwan, Revolt of the Rednecks: Mississippi Politics, 1876-1925, pp. 10-11; Halsell, "Republican Factionalism in Mississippi, 1882-1884," Journal of Mississippi History, Vol. VII, pp. 86-87.

²⁹Jackson Weekly Clarion Ledger, August 23, 1882; Kirwan, Revolt of the Rednecks: Mississippi Politics, 1876-1925, p. 13.

³⁰Jackson Weekly Clarion Ledger, August 23 and 30, 1882; Kirwan, Revolt of the Rednecks: Mississippi Politics, 1876-1925, p. 15.

³¹Jackson Weekly Clarion Ledger, August 23 and September 27, 1882.

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³³Halsell, "James R. Chalmers and Mahoneism In Mississippi," Journal of Southern History, Vol. X, p. 42; Jackson Weekly Clarion Ledger, September 6 and 13, 1882.

³⁴Ibid., September 27, 1882.

³⁵Halsell, "James R. Chalmers and Mahoneism In Mississippi," Journal of Southern History, Vol. X, pp. 47-53; Jackson Weekly Clarion Ledger, November 15 and 22, 1882; Kirwan, Revolt of the Rednecks: Mississippi Politics, 1876-1925, p. 14.

³⁶Halsell, "James R. Chalmers and Mahoneism In Mississippi," Journal of Southern History, Vol. X, pp. 53-54.

³⁷Ibid., pp. 54-56.

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³⁹Woodward, The Strange Career of Jim Crow, pp. 57-58.

⁴⁰Newberry, "John Roy Lynch: A Political Biography," p. 96; Wharton, The Negro In Mississippi, 1865-1890, pp. 202-203.

⁴¹Woodward, The Strange Career of Jim Crow, p. 59.

⁴²Wharton, The Negro In Mississippi, 1865-1890, p. 203; Woodward, The Strange Career of Jim Crow, pp. 58-59.

⁴³Wharton, The Negro In Mississippi, 1865-1890, p. 203; Washington National Republican, April 17, 1888.

⁴⁴Kirwan, Revolt of the Rednecks: Mississippi Politics, 1876-1925, p. 59; Vicksburg Evening Post, January 30 and 31, 1889, and February 4, 9, 15, 23, 1889; Jackson Daily Clarion Ledger, April 3, 1890.

⁴⁵Wallace, History of the Negroes of Mississippi, 1865-1890, p. 158; Kirwan, Revolt of the Rednecks: Mississippi Politics, 1876-1925, p. 59.

⁴⁶Wallace, History of the Negroes of Mississippi, 1865-1890, p. 148; Johnston, "Suffrage and Reconstruction In Mississippi," P.M.H.S., Vol. VI, p. 205; Kirwan, Revolt of the Rednecks: Mississippi Politics, 1876-1925, pp. 60-64.

CHAPTER VII

MISSISSIPPI BLACKS IN THE POPULIST MOVEMENT, 1890-1900

When the 131 members of the Mississippi state legislature met on January 7, 1890, and passed a bill calling for a constitutional convention to convene on August 12, 1890, a series of debates followed between those who opposed the measure and those who supported the bill. As early as 1888, the legislature had made an attempt to push such a measure, but failed by a vote of nineteen to sixteen in an effort to override Governor Lowry's veto of the bill. Even with the defeat of the Lodge Bill in Congress, which advocated federal supervision of state elections, supporters of the convention began to argue that Black suffrage was a threat to the White race.¹

J. Z. George, one of the persons who was primarily responsible for the disfranchising scheme, proclaimed that he favored a new constitution because Blacks were incapable of operating the government. He also stated that the Blacks were in the majority in the state and that the situation should be altered before a racial war developed for the control of the state. J. A. P. Campbell, a state judge, made a similar comment. Campbell stated that he desired a plan that would assure every White man a plural vote and would eliminate the vote of Blacks who were not qualified to govern. Like George, Campbell viewed the majority of Black voters as a danger to White government.²

Essentially, the entire plan was a comprehensive one, encompassing such suggestions as the secret ballot, alteration of legislature representation to be more effective in White counties, a higher poll tax, a more extensive residence requirement for voting, and other significant limitations for the franchise. But the major problem was to find a way to implement the idea. Sensing that the task would be difficult, the supporting faction proclaimed that the plan was a necessity in order to gain control of the government.³

Some of the leading publications of the state opposed calling of a convention. Many were of the opinion that such a step was not necessary and that those who advocated the measure had no grounds except for personal interest. The press also stated that a measure of progress had been made in the state and that there was also a state of tranquillity. There was also a feeling that Blacks were working well with some of the Whites in promoting the welfare of the state. Other influential politicians suggested that Blacks should not be disturbed because they were satisfied.⁴

While different groups debated the issue of calling a convention, Blacks were very much cognizant of the whole scheme. During the summer of 1890, some forty counties sent Black delegates to a conference in Jackson to take steps to prevent the calling of the convention. The result of the meeting was an appeal to the president of the United States. Blacks informed President Harrison that the Whites were resorting to the use of fraudulent means of disfranchising them under the pretense of being afraid that Blacks would control the state politically. But they proclaimed that the real reason was that Democrats knew that unless they used such methods they would be defeated. The

delegates then called upon the Blacks of Mississippi to unite by sending representatives to the convention to counteract the plan.⁵

Although Blacks showed both physical and vocal determination to abrogate the plot, their efforts were not enough, for the opposition was successful in sending a Democratic delegation to the convention. When the group met on August 12, 1890, there were only two Republicans from Bolivar County and the remaining number consisted of 130 Democrats, one Conservative, and one member of the Greenback Party. The two Republicans were G. P. Melchoir, a white man, and Isiah T. Montgomery, the only Black present.⁶

Without much loss of time, the delegates organized and began their proceedings. The two major proposals centered around an educational requirement and a poll tax payment for voting. The former plan produced severe opposition from the delegates from the White counties. They argued that an illiterate test would deny too many Whites the franchise. On the other hand, the members from the Black counties suggested that either an educational clause or a property requirement be required, but the opposing group stipulated that neither plan would work because there were also many Whites who did not own property. As the debate lingered, one of the delegates reminded the group that the most pressing problem was that of finding a way to perfect such a scheme through legal means. He cited the act which returned the state to the Union and explained that it protected the rights of citizens to vote under the constitution of 1868. He concluded that if that congressional measure were within the bounds of the United States Constitution, then they could not succeed in their task. The convention presented that problem to a committee of counselors under the

directorship of Wiley P. Harris, a prominent judge. It directed the group to find out if Congress had the authority to impose such laws upon the state.⁷

On August 23, 1890, the committee made its report. According to its findings, the act which readmitted the state to the Union was unconstitutional. Harris declared that Article I, Section 2 of the United States Constitution did not specify uniform qualifications in all states and that the power to decide who should be eligible to vote was left up to the states. Moreover, Harris proclaimed that the Fourteenth Amendment only protected the rights of Blacks to vote by decreasing a state's congressional representation that refused to recognize those liberties, while the Fifteenth Amendment did not provide the franchise but primarily protected that right on the basis of color and previous bondage. Thus, Harris concluded that the state was only faced with the decision of disfranchising the Blacks or of losing representation in Congress. After studying previous cases in which states had argued in similar situations, the delegates adopted the report as being a legal step under the United States Constitution.⁸

The next serious problem involved apportionment. This time, however, it was the members of the Black counties who protested the loudest. Like the White counties, they were fearful of the mass reduction in representation from their section. The controversy centered around a plan submitted by J. Z. George. Actually, his suggestion called for the creation of new districts to be carved out of the Black counties. The second part of the scheme demanded an election system by which a candidate must receive a majority of electoral and popular votes in order to be elected to a state office. If a candidate should fail to

receive a majority of both, the election would be decided by the state house of representatives. In reality, the plan was designed to make use of the voting constituency rather than the population as a whole. If it were successful in passing, then thirteen new members would be added to the legislature branch and all would go to the White counties. Following a heated disagreement over the suggestion, the delegates finally consented to it. The plan was a guarantee against Black dominance or control in any way.⁹

In the midst of the discussion relating to suffrage restrictions, Isiah T. Montgomery, the only Black delegate at the convention, delivered an address before the body expressing his position on the matter. Realizing that the whole scheme would greatly reduce the number of Blacks who voted in the state and the representation in Congress, Montgomery was willing to support apportionment and the illiteracy clause in order to restore better race relations within the state. According to his calculations, the apportionment plan would leave a majority of twenty legislators from the White counties in the state, while the educational clause would restrict 123,334 Blacks of a total of 189,884. From that estimation, 11,889 Whites would lose the vote from a total of 118,890. Hence, Blacks would suffer a loss of a 70,004 majority and Whites would gain a majority of 48,451 voters. Nevertheless, Montgomery declared that such a sacrifice was essential in order to restore peace and harmony between the races.¹⁰

Montgomery's speech had a profound impact upon the convention. There were mixed emotions as the delegates listened to the firey message. To hear such a message by a Black man caused some amazement, but a sense of gratitude prevailed as the members approved of the speech.

From that moment forward, there was little opposition toward the measures and the plans were overwhelmingly adopted. Without sending the constitution to the voters of the state for ratification, the delegates had already decided that their work would be sufficient. Thus, the document was adopted on November 1, 1890.¹¹

The most important accomplishments of the delegates were the measures pertaining to an educational requirement, apportionment, and a poll tax. Article 12, Section 241 of the constitution stipulated that only males twenty-one years of age and over were eligible to vote, excluding insane persons and Indians, who were not taxpayers. It also stated that a person should have lived in the state for two years and in the voting district for one year in order to qualify as a voter. Finally, it excluded anyone who had been convicted of a crime such as arson, theft, bribery, bigamy, and other felonies. A minister could vote if he had lived in the state for six months, providing that all other requirements were met.¹²

Section 243 of the same article provided for the assessment of a two dollar poll tax to be paid two years in advance of the coming election. The tax would be used for the support of public education and all qualified voters between the ages of twenty-one and sixty were required to pay the tax. Only those individuals who did not possess all of their mental faculties, such as speech, sight, hearing, or those who had lost certain limbs such as feet or arms, were exempted from paying the tax. County officials had the authority to pass additional taxes but they could not exceed three dollars in each year. An individual could not be convicted for refusing to pay the tax.¹³

Section 244 declared that beginning on January 1, 1892, every

voter must possess a reading knowledge of any section of the state constitution, or he should understand it when read to him. Also, a satisfactory explanation should be given if necessary. That section also provided for a new registration to take place before another election occurred after January 1, 1892.¹⁴

Perhaps the last major section of the constitution was Article 13, the portion dealing with apportionment. That article guaranteed White political control in the state. New districts were created in the White sections of the Black counties in which thirteen additional White representatives would be selected, and senators were to be elected on the basis of population. Each county was to be divided into five electoral districts, and the voters were to elect one elector from each district, and they would serve as the county board of supervisors. Regardless of the methods used in the election of senators and representatives, a candidate must receive a majority of both popular and electoral votes to be elected. Finally, if neither candidate received a majority of the votes, the election was to be decided in the lower house of the legislature.¹⁵

Like the criticism before and during the convention, the constitution received severe attacks throughout the state and the nation from both Blacks and Whites. A majority of the leading newspapers in the state such as the Jackson Clarion Ledger, the Natchez Democrat, the Vicksburg Post, the Greenville Democrat, and others opposed the educational clause. The Yazoo Herald proclaimed that the clause was unjust and that it gave unlimited powers to the registrars. But contrary to those attacks, there were other publications which approved the document. The Greenville Times stated that there were no provisions in the

constitution which could not be found in those of the Northern states. The Carroll County Democrat testified that Senator George showed that in the state of Vermont on two different occasions, constitutions had been adopted without being ratified by the people. Another newspaper editorialized that the presses should refrain from their attacks upon the constitution and that they should support those who were struggling to improve it. Finally, the Oxford Globe claimed that Senator George had rendered a magnificent service in devising such a plan. It further stated that the people had, ever since Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation, been trying to find a way to regain White supremacy. The paper also stated that the educational clause was both a social and political expediency.¹⁶

When criticism in the state began to wane, the matter arose again in the United States Senate. A number of senators from the Northern states of Vermont, Massachusetts, Wisconsin, New York, and others attacked the constitution. They charged that it was a scheme to disfranchise the Blacks and that the illiteracy test was designed to give the registration officials an opportunity to disqualify Black voters because the registrars' decisions would be the deciding factors as to who would vote. They likewise stated that the apportionment system was established to eliminate Black votes in the mass populated counties where Blacks lived. Finally, Northerners argued that the provisions of the educational clause allowed other illiterates to vote when the constitution was explained to them.¹⁷

When the senators finished their attack, Senator George began his speech in defense of the constitution. George's retaliation started a debate which began on December 31, 1890, and lasted well into the new

year. He spoke for four and one-half hours on the subject. Using the method of historical analysis, the senator pointed out various ways in which New England and other Northern states had deprived Blacks of the franchise prior to the reconstruction period. Regarding certain states, George explained that in Massachusetts, Vermont, New York, Connecticut, and other which attacked Mississippi's Constitution, that Blacks did not receive the vote until the passage of the Fifteenth Amendment. For example, he added that Blacks were not allowed to vote in Wisconsin until the state supreme court ordered it in 1866. In another example, he stated that between 1865 and 1870 six states in the North defeated legislation that would have allowed Blacks to vote. Citing the state of New York alone, George said that on two attempts the voters in the state refused to permit Blacks to vote by defeating the measures by some 140,000 votes on the first occasion and by more than 40,000 votes on the second occasion.¹⁸

George launched his next criticisms against a number of individuals who had opposed Black votes in different ways and on several instances. He said that Senators Preston King of New York, Lyman Trumbull of Illinois, Thaddeus Stevens of Pennsylvania, and a number of other leading Republicans had registered resentment against Black suffrage prior to the passage of the amendments which allowed Blacks to vote. George proclaimed that even Lincoln objected to mass Black enfranchisement to a certain extent. A similar view was expressed by Garfield as early as 1866. In addition to the opposition, George told the group that Blacks were denied the right to serve on juries and in the militias in some Northern states. Moreover, he continued that other restrictions such as the ability to read and write, and property qualifications had been

placed upon Blacks after the passage of the Fifteenth Amendment by some of the Northern states. Yet, George concluded, that those restrictions by the Northern states had not caused public resentment or criticism.¹⁹

Excluding their criticism of the constitution, probably the Blacks' attitude toward the tragedy of the adoption of the constitution was best expressed by John R. Lynch. According to Lynch, there were several major factors which accounted for the defeat of effective legislation that would have enforced the amendments to the United States Constitution in reference to the National Election Bill. Lynch proclaimed that there were four classes of Republicans who were not in Congress long enough and who did not possess the fortitude of their belief to support the bill. One group wanted to build a solid White Republican Party in the South and desired social relations with the Southern Democrats rather than political affiliation with Blacks. There was another segment of the Republican Party in the South composed of men of convictions who stood behind the party when times were bad as well as good. Lynch continued by saying that a third group was interested in obtaining political office for money only. The last class consisted of a small number of men who claimed to be Republicans but voted only for the party in national elections and for the Democrats in all other elections. All groups opposed the election bill.²⁰

In spite of the argument for and against the Mississippi Constitution, there was still a question of its legality in terms of judicial rulings. That question was answered in 1892 in the case of *Sproule vs. Fredricks*. It was charged that the constitution was invalid, particularly the understanding clause, because it discriminated against Black people. A second accusation was made to the effect that the constitution

was not ratified by the people and that it violated the Fourteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution. The state supreme court ruled that the framers of the constitution were within their rights and had the authority to draft a new constitution without referring it to the people for ratification. To the second charge, the court held that the state had the right to decide who should have the vote and that the Fourteenth Amendment only protected people on the basis of color and race. In 1898, the United States Supreme Court made a similar ruling upholding the state court's decision. When Henry Williams of Washington County was convicted of murder, he appealed the case on the grounds that the whole affair was unconstitutional because the jury consisted of all Whites who were selected under the laws of the constitution of 1890, which was unconstitutional according to the Fourteenth Amendment of the United States Constitution. But essentially, the United States Supreme Court ruled that the constitution had not violated the rights of Blacks in any way. Thus, the state constitution's validity was upheld and other states would soon follow Mississippi's example with similar restrictions, such as the grandfather clause.²¹

Though the Blacks once again found themselves alone in the struggle for political power after the Bourbons had closed ranks on them, they had to look for a new alternative for political survival. Although there was no evidence as to how many people among Blacks or Whites were ineligible to vote because of the educational clause in the constitution, there were a total of 76,742 voters in the state during the same year in which the state court upheld the constitution. Out of that number, only 8,615 were Black and 68,127 were White registered voters. When the clause went into effect, 1,085 Blacks registered under it, and

only 1,037 Whites qualified. Hence, the Blacks' search for a political haven would become reality within the Populist Party, which polled 9,770 votes in Mississippi in the national election in November of 1892.²²

Although the Populist Party did not become recognized in Mississippi as a major party until the early 1890s, it had made progress as early as 1881 during the Bourbon period. In that year, an attempt was made to form an alliance with a segment of Black Republicans in an effort to elect a governor. However, their defeat proved that they did not have enough support in the state. Nevertheless, the Populists continued to struggle for political power. In addition to their dislike for the wage system and industry, primary Populist discontent stemmed from activities on the part of railroads. As farm prices began to decline and money became scarce, Populists began to organize more intensively.²³

In the next state election, Populists ran another candidate for governor. Farmers were told to unify in order to protect their interests. W. C. Johnson, a Populist from Neshoba County, warned the Populists that it was imperative that they put someone in office to perpetuate the welfare of farmers. He also added that they should become masters rather than servants. He concluded that if the farmers failed to accomplish those ends, no one else would. Such efforts on the part of the farmers led to the development of hundreds of local organizations, and by 1888 the party was strong enough to elect a man to Congress from the Fourth Congressional District. However, this political interest on the part of farmers was not confined to Mississippi alone, but it occurred throughout the nation.²⁴

Though the Populists continued to pressure the Democratic Party in the state, the Bourbons managed to appease them throughout the latter part of the eighties. But that appeasement did not occur because the Bourbons were fond of the farmers; it happened because the Populists dominated the lower house in the legislature. In addition, members of the United States Congress from Mississippi gave the Populists substantial support. For example, J. Z. George was a Bourbon, but he often spoke in support of the Populists. On one occasion, George told a farmers' organization that he sympathized with their problems concerning low prices, high railroad rates, and negligence on the part of the government. George continued that all phases of the economic structure were important but that he believed agriculture to be the most important area of all. George added that he had always been interested in the farmer. He also told them that he would do all he could as a political figure to promote their interests. Meanwhile, he advised them to begin a program of diversification in order to solve some of their problems.²⁵

Other state politicians in Washington such as Congressman Barksdale supported the farmers in their fight to establish silver as the monetary standard in the United States. In his support for silver, Barksdale declared that silver was the medium of the poor people of the South just as gold was the standard for the aristocratic monopolies of the North. John Sharp Williams, another congressman from Mississippi, also fought against the gold standard by opposing a tariff based upon gold payments. Despite the help given to the Populists by the Bourbons, the farmers' political strength continued to gain momentum, and the Bourbons' political power began to decline. In addition to the election

of Clark Lewis to Congress from the Fourth Congressional District, Joseph Henry Beeman from the Fifth Congressional District was elected to Congress in the subsequent congressional election, along with another Populist candidate. The Populists' opposition toward the Bourbons emanated from further economic discontent on the part of the farmers. The number of mortgages in 1889 had increased from some 4,000 to almost 12,000 since 1880; by 1890, Mississippi was leading in the number of farms lost. The farmers continued to suffer economic hardships as cotton prices fell lower. Such conditions led the farmers to push for strenuous relief measures, and by 1890 the farmers had obtained enough political strength to displace the Bourbon leaders. Thus, the decline of Bourbonism gave birth to the Populist movement.²⁶

In January of 1890, the Populists emphasized their desire to see further political changes effected in the state which would be favorable to the farmers' interests. A committee representing the state Farmers' Alliance presented a memorial to the legislature registering a strong protest against the state lawmakers and charged them with negligence toward the farmers. As the committee proceeded with its complaints, the protestors outlined the problems of the farmers across the state and declared that the laws favored the capitalists. Before the committee finished its criticisms, it went as far as to demand a new state constitution. Later in the same year, the Populist Party had a national membership of 1,269,500, and there were 60,000 in Mississippi alone. By the summer of 1890, the Populists were recognized as a third political party and would soon be strong enough to nominate candidates for the presidential election of 1892.²⁷

After the Populists had firmly established themselves in the state,

they began to catalyze their efforts to strengthen the party by means of an impartial recruiting program. In 1891, their platform in the state's Seventh Congressional District called for equality for all and favoritism for no particular group. They also asked for an end to prejudice throughout the United States and demanded a direct vote for United States senators by the people in the state. To bring about these demands, they requested that the United States Congress adopt amendments to the United States Constitution. The Greenbackers, the Readjusters, and other political parties who tried to utilize the Blacks for political purposes approached them indirectly through the Republican Party. Not only did they deal with the Blacks indirectly, but those parties failed to change the political convictions of the Blacks to those of their own. But unlike their counterparts, the Populists made a direct approach to the Blacks by making them feel a sense of belonging.²⁸

The Populists in Mississippi held a state convention in Jackson on June 3, 1892, and selected delegates to attend their national convention. There were thirty delegates present at the state convention and twenty-four counties were represented. When the party held its national convention in Omaha, Nebraska, on July 2, 1892, twenty-four delegates from Mississippi attended from the state's seven districts. The Populists nominated James B. Weaver of Iowa for president and James G. Field of Virginia as vice-president. For their platform, the Populists stressed a higher tariff to protect agricultural products and the Force Bill for supervision of elections as major issues during their campaign. The Populists were also attacked for cooperating with Republicans and for favoring Blacks. In the state, the Democrats became

exasperated because Populists constantly demanded federal supervision of elections in certain counties. Populists were only assuring themselves that the same thing would not happen to Blacks as had occurred in previous elections. When the election was over, Weaver was defeated, but he received 10,256 votes in Mississippi, 1,040,866 national popular votes, and 22 electoral votes. The Populists received 368 votes in Chickasaw County, the only county in which they won. Thomas P. Gore, another Populist candidate, ran a close race in Webster County, but the Democrats won by a narrow margin of 110 votes.²⁹

There were other Populists' candidates in the state who made substantial showings in the congressional election of 1893. One was James Burkett, brother of the powerful Frank Burkett of the Populist Party. James carried Chickasaw County by 119 votes, Choctaw County by 13 votes, Pontotoc by 149 votes, Webster County by 62 votes; he lost the election, however, to H. D. Money, a Democrat, by a vote of 6,233 to 3,905. Though the Populists failed to win a majority of the major positions which they sought, they made a strong showing as a national party. Their vote for Weaver ranged from 15 to 29 percent nationally among those Populists who supported Weaver for president, while Mississippi comprised 19.42 percent of the national vote.³⁰

The success that the Populists had in 1892 only accentuated their drive for more political power. As the Democratic and Republican Parties received further criticism for their support of the railroads and big business in the state, others aided and urged the farmers to unite their political power in order to settle their problems with the vote rather than the bullet. Adhering to that encouragement, the Populists intensified their efforts to attract the Black vote. They continued to

make use of a direct approach, but rather than the employment of appeasement and paternalistic tactics, the Populists chose the "equalitarian" and realistic methods in their communication with Blacks. They told Blacks that both of them were victims of the same oppressor and that they shared a common cause. Feeling a sense of confidence, the Populists spearheaded a vigorous campaign for the state congressional election of 1894. Realizing that it would be a difficult task to defeat a combined ticket between the Blacks and the Populists, the enemies of the Populists designed a strategy to prevent such a victory. When the campaigning began, the tactics which had been used in previous elections were used again. Fighting, killing, and dissension among families prevailed during the campaign. Although the Populists were stronger in the White counties, there was still some fear of their recruitment of Black votes by the opposition.³¹

In advocating the silver standard as the key issue in the campaign, the Populists ran candidates in all districts in the state, excluding the Mississippi River Delta. When the election was over, the Populists had failed to elect a single congressman. Some of the Populists charged that fraud was used and took steps to contest the election, but this came to no avail even though they polled more than one-third of the votes. They received adequate support in the White counties but were soundly defeated in the Black sections.³²

Still not willing to concede defeat, the Populists reorganized their party and drafted a platform for the Mississippi election of 1895. While emphasizing some of the issues suggested at the national conventions in previous elections, they attacked the existing Democratic regime in the state and demanded numerous changes. One of the

major complaints was raised against the exploitation of public school property by the Democrats and the increased tax system. The Populists nominated Frank Burkitt for governor, and they put out a ticket for every office in every county in Mississippi. Although the Democrats had not received much competition for the governor's office since the beginning of the Bourbon period, they became somewhat alarmed, especially after the Populists received one-third of the votes in 1894. Burkitt promised a public school system for everybody regardless of race or color. More fear entered the minds of the Democrats because some of them suspected that an agreement may have been made with the Republicans. These fears led to a campaign to capture the Black vote by both groups, although some Democrats felt that it would be better to refrain from seeking Black support. On the other hand, the Populists were accused of utilizing the Black vote. It was reported that six hundred Blacks had been registered in Marion County alone who were committed to the Populists. In addition, Burkitt had already acknowledged that he had not signed the constitution in 1890 because it disfranchised some of the best citizens of the state, namely Blacks.³³

Such efforts on the part of the Populists led some of the Democrats to form an alliance with the Republicans and Blacks, disregarding the warning against it by some Democrats. The fact that the Populists canvassed the entire state during the campaign, together with the impact of Burkitt's speeches in various counties, led to a very enthusiastic campaign as the Democrats launched a heated counterattack. The results of the election proved that the Democrats had once again defeated the Populists. Burkitt carried only the county of Chickasaw and two other Populists were elected to the house. From a total of 64,000 votes cast,

Burkitt received just 17,466. Although the Populists were defeated, they made the best showing that they had experienced in any previous election in the state. Whereas their vote was 19.42 percent in 1892, it had increased to 26.99 percent in 1895.³⁴

There was no doubt that the election of 1895 marked the peak of Populists' politics in the state, for after that year Populist strength began to decline. Yet, the Populists made a gallant attempt to revive their image at both state and national levels. Understanding that the Black vote could make the difference between the resurgence and destruction of their party, the Populists made an extra effort to gain the Black vote in the presidential election of 1896. Tom Watson of Georgia, the Populists' candidate for vice-president, delivered a magnificent speech in an attempt to unite the races as he campaigned for the Black vote. Speaking on the subject of racism, Watson reminded both Blacks and Whites that they were forced to hate each other, and that the hatred was based upon a monetary principle which had made slaves of them. Watson contended that they had been exploited to the extent that they failed to recognize the racism that deceived both races. Moreover, he proclaimed that Blacks and Whites were in the same boat, and that interest was more important than race. Watson pointed out that there was no difference between the interest of the Black or White laborers, farmers, or sharecroppers. In his final appeal, Watson told the Blacks that if they would stand behind the Populist Party and fight to uphold their own civil rights and masculinity, then the Populists would eliminate racism regardless of race.³⁵

The appeal that the Populists made was perhaps heard by 16,234 registered voters in the state in 1896, who had increased their number

from 8,965 since 1892--the same year that the understanding clause went into effect. Irrespective of their vigorous campaign to win Black votes and the presence of eligible Black voters, the Populists fell short, for the election returns showed that the presidential candidates failed to carry a single county in the state. The Watson ticket polled only 7,517 votes in the state and the congressional candidates received 11,098 votes in Marion County, the only county in which they were successful in winning in Mississippi. They suffered the same fate in the election of 1898, for there were fewer candidates nominated for Congress than there had been in 1896. The party received only 2,444 votes in the state's congressional election of 1898. By 1899 the party was almost dead. Even with a Black population of 18,170 registered Black voters in the state in that year, the Populists' candidate for governor, R. K. Prewitt, mustered only 6,097 votes, as he lost in all counties in the state. Even with the report that James R. Chalmers, who had become a Populist, had organized the Black voters in Webster and Choctaw Counties, did not add much to the Populists' fight. However, they did manage to elect two legislators, Thomas R. Magee and N. C. Hathorn, who won seats in the house.³⁶

In 1900, the Populist Party was destroyed in every way except in name, especially after the election of that year. Wharton Barker of Pennsylvania, the Populist candidate for president, received only 1,644 votes in Mississippi. In several of the counties where the Populists were very strong, Barker polled just a little more than a hundred votes, and in other counties, he received less than one hundred votes. The Populist candidates for Congress had a combined total of only 1,100 votes in the state. Barker received only 50,599 votes from

Populists throughout the nation. The election of 1900 was the last time that a Populist candidate ran for Congress in Mississippi.³⁷

Several factors accounted for the failure of the Populists to accomplish political success over a long period of time. Perhaps the primary reason was the race problem. Racial prejudice was strongest among laboring groups to which the Populists directed most of their attention. Moreover, these were the same groups which the major political parties ignored during the reconstruction era in order to utilize the Black vote for political purposes. Racism was too deeply imbedded to overcome in an environment which required much more expertise than the Populists possessed at the time. The fact that the party failed was not surprising, but the most phenomenal thing was the success which it made in the midst of adversity. The other reasons that attributed to its failure were its inability to perfect contemporary changes, disunity, insufficient leadership, and the beginning of prosperity in the nation.³⁸

Even though the Populist Party survived for a brief period, it pushed for and accomplished measures which had great impact throughout the nation. The Populist movement was effective to the extent that many of the things the party demanded were realized long after it had disappeared. Some include restrictions on railroads, legislation to regulate monopolies, direct election for senators, and the vote for women. In addition to those proposals, the Populists in Mississippi wanted laws to abolish agricultural legislation which bound the tenant to the soil, agricultural and mechanical institutions for boys and girls, laws which would force tenants and landowners to honor contracts, and a wire fence law. But perhaps the most important

achievement during the Populist era was a mental union by both races which emanated into a viable political aim for the first time in the South.³⁹

As strange as it may seem, the poll tax amendment to the Mississippi constitution did not pass until November 6, 1900. Likewise, the amendment relating to apportionment passed the same day. Inasmuch as there were 907,630 Blacks and 641,200 Whites in the state, the number of Black voters declined further following the passage of the apportionment and the poll tax amendments. In 1899, there were 18,170 Black voters in the state and in 1900 there were considerably less. In Jones County alone in 1900 there were 1,264 Black voters.⁴⁰

Although the Populist movement came to an end in the state, it did not discourage Blacks from participating in politics. Leaders such as Lynch, Hill, and Montgomery continued to protect the interests of the Blacks at the national level. In 1900, Lynch attended the Republican National Convention as a delegate from the state. Immediately, he became a member of the Platform and Resolutions Committee. He was also appointed a member of the subcommittee that had the responsibility of drafting a platform. The first task of the subcommittee was to study the previous platform, which was unsatisfactory to the majority of the subcommittee members.⁴¹

When the subcommittee began its discussion of the platform, Lynch indicated his desire to protect the political welfare of Black people in Mississippi and the nation. He supported a plan which would force states to abide by the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments to the United States Constitution. His proposal suggested that the representation of various states be reduced at the national convention when those

states refused to obey the amendments. Lynch also asked that delegates to the national convention be elected at popular primaries instead of state and district conventions.⁴²

The adoption of the Mississippi Constitution of 1890 had a great impact on Black politics, as it removed a substantial number of these voters and office holders from the political scene of the state. In due time the United States Supreme Court upheld the validity of the Mississippi Constitution. Even then there was still a considerable number of Black voters in Mississippi. Realizing that they would remain effective as a voting group, these Blacks searched about for an opportunity to use their voting power.

That opportunity came with the emergence of the Populist movement in Mississippi. Dissatisfied with the Bourbons' courtship with industry and big business, the Populists eventually overthrew the Bourbons in the state and took control of the government. Seeking to build a strong party, the Populists made an attempt to utilize the Black vote. The Populists told Blacks that both of them were in the same situation and that Blacks and Populists were victims of a common oppressor. With this understanding, Blacks and Populists formed a temporary coalition in Mississippi which had promise of emerging as the dominant party. By 1895, the Populists had grown stronger than ever before in the state.

Realizing that if the Blacks and the Populists continued to grow in Mississippi, they would eventually control the government and Blacks would once again come to power, the Democrats began to revive reconstruction era tactics in order to prevent such a resurgence in politics. By using extralegal means and racism as weapons, the Populists' opposition was able to discredit the Populist Party in Mississippi by 1900

and bring about its demise.

Although the Blacks and the Populists enjoyed a brief period of political success, they formed a mental union that had never been accomplished before by two oppressed classes of different races in the South and in the nation. The failure of the Populist Party, however, did not completely eliminate Blacks from politics in Mississippi. When Mississippi Blacks lost their haven with the Populists, their Black leaders continued to protect their interests at the national party conventions and elsewhere, and Blacks continued to vote, although in decreased numbers, through the initial decades of the twentieth centuries.

FOOTNOTES

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CHAPTER VIII

IN RETROSPECT

When President Johnson presented his plan of reconstruction to Mississippians, he suggested limited enfranchisement for Black people who could qualify to vote. The state authorities were eager to rejoin the Union, but they were not willing to extend the voting privilege to Blacks. Regardless of the president's request, the conservatives in Mississippi proceeded to prepare the state for reunion based upon the same type of government that existed before the war. Because of their refusal to recognize Black suffrage, they had to suffer the penalties of a reconstruction program which allowed Blacks to participate in politics for the first time in the history of Mississippi.

By 1867, thousands of Blacks became registered voters and by 1870 they were holding political offices throughout the state. Although they were not represented in proportion to their number, they performed adequately as pioneers in government. Because of their inexperience as politicians, they were taught the basic skills for such tasks by the Freedmen's Bureau, the Loyal League, and other organizations which the government established. As a result of that training, Blacks became responsible politicians, especially at the local level in the densely populated counties where they were in the majority. In addition to their service at the local level, they became effective participants at the state level. Because of their inexperience as politicians, Blacks

became the subject of severe criticism as the conservices charged them with fraud and extravagance, but as whole those charges were groundless.

The thirty-five Blacks who served in the state legislature in 1870 were substantially outnumbered, but they were very effective by employing the method of bloc voting to obtain their goals. By using such a system, they were able to abolish some of the statutes in the state which denied Blacks their rights as citizens. Furthermore, they managed to elect some of their colleagues to the national level of government. After obtaining a measure of sophistication in politics, many of the racial problems disappeared, and some Whites suggested an alliance with the Black political bloc. By 1873, Black representation reached high tide in the state legislature. During that year, a number of Blacks emerged who exercised considerable political influence as leaders in the state.

For the first time, Blacks filled the offices of lieutenant governor, secretary of state, superintendent of education, senator, mayor, convention delegates, and other positions. In addition, Blacks occupied minor offices within the state. Though most of the minor leaders were less publicized, these Blacks performed invaluable services in the posts they held. The activities of Blacks who exercised influence and power on the local and state levels did much to place Blacks in national politics.

The ability of Black local and state leaders to use their power wisely was shown when they chose able men to represent them at the national level. Though Blacks were in the majority in the voting population in Mississippi, they were able to send only three of their

counterparts to the nation's capital. Nevertheless, the performance of these representatives outweighed the lack of numbers. Although the ideologies of these national leaders were different occasionally, they all managed to satisfy the constituents whom they served. These men were more than individuals who occupied offices only to vote, make speeches, or introduce bill. Not only were they representing the state from which they came, but they represented the South, the nation, and above all, they served humanity. To Black people they symbolized hope for the survival of the human race, hope that soared from the day Blacks entered the United States Congress for the first time in the history of the nation. Though much of what these men fought for came to no avail, there were solid accomplishments, but most of all, their ideas lingered through the years in the minds of their fellow men.

From the time that Black people entered politics in Mississippi, Democrats and others who resented their presence fought to remove them. But the presence of the federal government prevented this from being accomplished. By 1873, the enemies of Black politics became alarmed over the increasing Black political power in the state. The fear that Blacks would eventually control their lives led them to intensify their efforts to remove Blacks and the Republicans from the political scene.

In the same year that Blacks experienced the climax of their political power in Mississippi, an economic panic paralyzed the nation, reinforcing resentment against the Republican regime. Supplementing that calamity was the occurrence of a number of scandals during the Grant administration. Those problems placed the Republicans on the defensive for the first time, and little attention was placed on political activities in the South, especially Mississippi. Recognizing that

the time was right to make a move, the conservatives spearheaded a concerted drive to regain control of the local and state governments of Mississippi. During the years 1874 and 1875, a series of riots occurred throughout the state which claimed the lives of many Blacks and Whites. When fighting and killing ceased, other tactics such as fraud, intimidation, and bribery were resorted to. With those events, there was a severe decrease in Republican Party and Black political activity in the state.

Although the so-called Revolution of 1875 reduced the number of Blacks and Republicans in Mississippi state government, the Democrats fell short of what they anticipated in relation to a complete takeover. As normal political operations continued the following year, a substantial number of Blacks and Republicans still remained in government. Being sensitive to the fact that both groups were still a threat, the Democrats launched a drive to end this opposition. For a while it appeared that federal authorities would remove the hurdle for them by withdrawing troops from the South as a result of the famed Bargain of 1876, but such would not be the case. It seemed natural for the state to look to the federal government for help, for it had upheld the state election of 1875, favorable to Blacks. However, the removal of federal troops did not help the Democrats, for there were thousands of Blacks who still held the franchise. When their efforts failed, the Democrats decided to cooperate with the Blacks until an opportunity came to disfranchise them.

That cooperation developed into what became known as the Bourbon era in which Blacks participated in logrolling in order to remain active politically. Dissension and discontent among the various political

factions led to a confrontation with Blacks that allowed them to accomplish political concessions as a voting bloc. However, by the end of the Bourbon period political fortune began to wane for Blacks as the clamor for a constitutional convention echoed across the state. The response to that cry came in August of 1890 when the legislature voted to call a constitutional convention.

When the delegates met in November, 1890, to draft a new constitution, there was great disagreement as to what the new document should contain regarding Black voters. But eventually the opposition subsided and the framers gave the state a constitution which removed a sizeable number of Black voters and office holders from the political scene in the state. Although the new constitution was sanctioned by the convention that authored it, little significance could be read into it until it was upheld by the United States Supreme Court. Even after the constitution took effect, there was still a marginal number of Black voters. Being cognizant of the fact that they could still be effective as a group, Blacks looked for an opportunity to utilize their voting power.

Their opportunity came with the emergence of the Populist movement in Mississippi. Discontented and disillusioned with the Bourbon's relationship with industry, the Populists managed to edge them out of political power. Desiring to strengthen their party, the Populists made an appeal to win the Black vote. Using a direct approach, the Populists told the Blacks that they both were victims of a common oppressor in Mississippi and that they were in the same situation. This led to a temporary alliance between Blacks and Populists until it appeared that they would emerge as the dominant party in Mississippi. By

1895, the party had grown to the extent that the opposition party became alarmed.

That fear led the Democrats to believe that such an increase in political growth would once again develop into Black political control. To prevent that from reoccurring, the Democrats revived old reconstruction tactics in order to curtail the coalition. By using racism and other extralegal means as its primary weapons, the Democratic Party succeeded in discrediting the Populist movement in the state, and by 1900 the party was dissolved as a political threat in Mississippi. Although the union was short-lived, it produced a combination between two oppressed classes of opposite races which had never been accomplished before in the South. The failure of the Populist Party, however, did not completely eliminate Blacks from politics. They once again sought refuge by attending national political conventions, where they pushed for support, and many continued to vote well into the twentieth century and until the federal government revived Black voting in the South.

Hence, the study of Blacks in politics in Mississippi from 1865 to 1900 suggests that there are several myths and misconceptions concerning the subject. First, Blacks who participated in local and state government were not a group of incompetent men who were used by the Republican Party. They were, rather, capable individuals who had to be reckoned with because of their presence, just as they were in the political and economic conflict in the nation before the Civil War. Next, they did not cease to participate in politics in Mississippi when the Democrats regained power, as many have been led to believe. Instead, Blacks continued to remain active in politics, but their numbers were

fewer. Violence, intimidation, and other efforts were used to remove Blacks from politics, but these efforts in the long run came to no avail.

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A*

BLACKS IN THE MISSISSIPPI GOVERNMENT

The Blacks listed below held positions in the Mississippi government at various periods between 1869 and 1883, including those who served in the United States Congress.

- I. Lieutenant Governor:
 - A. A. K. Davis, January, 1875 - March 17, 1876
- II. Secretary of State:
 - A. James Lynch, December, 1869 - December, 1872
 - B. H. R. Revels, December, 1872 - September, 1873
 - C. H. C. Carter, September 1 - October 20, 1873
 - D. M. M. McLoad, October 20 - November 13, 1874
 - E. James Hill, January, 1874 - January, 1878
- III. Superintendent of Education:
 - A. T. W. Cardoza, 1874 - 1876
- IV. State of Librarian:
 - A. J. D. Worls, 1870
- V. Speaker of the House of Representatives:
 - A. James R. Lynch, 1872 - 1876
 - B. I. D. Shadd, 1874 - 1876
- VI. Secretary of Agriculture and Immigration:
 - A. Richard Griggs, 1873
- VII. United States Senate:
 - A. Blanche K. Bruce, March 4, 1875 - March 3, 1881
 - B. Hiram R. Revels, February 3, 1870 - March 3, 1871
- VIII. United States House of Representatives:
 - A. John R. Lynch, March 4, 1873 - March 3, 1877; March 3, 1883

*From Allan Smith, "Techniques Used in the Overthrow of Republican Rule in the State of Mississippi in 1875," p. 66.

APPENDIX B*

BLACKS IN THE MISSISSIPPI SENATE

The fourteen Blacks listed below served in the Mississippi Senate at various periods between 1870 and 1888.

<u>Name</u>	<u>County</u>	<u>Years</u>
Albright, George	Marshall	1874, 1878
Barrow, Peter	Warren	1872, 1873
Bowles, C. M.	Bolivar	1872, 1873, 1877
Caldwell, Charles	Warren	1873, 1878
Gayles, G. W.	Bolivar	1880, 1888
Gleed, Robert	Lowndes	1870, 1876
Gray, William	Washington	1872, 1876
Revels, H. R.	Adams	1870
Shirley, Nathan	Chickasaw	1874, 1878
Smith, George C.	Coahoma	1874, 1875
Stewart, Isham	Noxubee	1874, 1878
Stringer, Thomas W.	Warren	1870, 1871
White, George W.		
William, J. M. P.	Adams	1874, 1878

*From Allan Smith, "Techniques Used in the Overthrow of Republican Rule in the State of Mississippi in 1875," p. 65.

APPENDIX C*

BLACKS IN THE MISSISSIPPI HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

The Blacks listed below served in the Mississippi House of Representatives at various periods between 1870 and 1894. They are arranged according to the county from which they served and the year. There were a total of 151 who could be identified. The counties which sent them were: Adams (8), Amite (1), Bolivar (7), Carroll (1), Chickasaw (3), Claiborne (3), Clarke (1), Clay (1), Coahoma (4), Copiah (2), DeSoto (2), Grenada (1), Hinds (13), Holmes (7), Issaquena (7), Jefferson (3), Lauderdale (1), Lawrence (1), LeFlore (2), Lowndes (4), Madison (1), Marion (1), Marshall (6), Monroe (4), Noxubee (5), Oktibboha (4), Panola (9), Rankin (3), Sharkey (2), Sunflower (2), Tunica (2), Warren (10), Washington (12), Wilkinson (4), Yazoo (5).

<u>County</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Years</u>
Adams	Bowles, George F.	1880, 1890
	Cory, P. L.	1884
	Davis, A. K.	1874, 1875
	Jacobs, H. P.	1870, 1877
	Lynch, John R.	1870, 1873
	Lynch, S. H.	1874, 1875, 1882, 1886
	Mece, W. W.	1880
	Washington, George	1878
Amite	Kendrick, Reuben	1872, 1876
Bolivar	Bowles, C. M.	1870, 1871
	Bufford, J. H.	1880, 1882
	Gayles, G. W.	1872, 1875, 1892, 1892
	Huntley, G. W.	1888
	Lowe, W. L.	1886
	Moore,	1874, 1877
	Reyton, Perry	1884
Carroll	Washington, George R.	1875, 1876
Chickasaw	Harrison, Henry	1874, 1875
	Henderson, Henry	1871
	White, George	1874, 1875

*From Allan Smith, "Techniques Used in the Overthrow of Republican Rule in the State of Mississippi in 1875," pp. 67-70.

<u>County</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Years</u>
Claiborne	Newsom, H. P.	1870, 1871
	Smith, Hoskin	1874, 1875
	Smothers, Joseph	1872, 1875
Clarke	Clemons, C. P.	1874, 1875
Clay	Caradine, J. W.	1874, 1875
Coahoma	Allen, William	1884, 1886
	Hopson, I. H.	1888
	Monroe, James P.	1874, 1877
	Oliser, G. H.	1890
Copiah	Christmas, R.	1874, 1875
	Handy, Emmanuel	1870, 1871, 1872, 1873
DeSoto	Johnson, J. H.	1872, 1873
	McCain, Thomas	1872, 1876
Grenada	Greene, Davis S.	1872, 1873
Hinds	Atwood, L. K.	1880, 1884
	Bell, Monroe	1872, 1873
	Grandberry, G. C.	1882
	Hicks, Weldon	1878
	Johnson, William	1872, 1873
	Mason, Henry	1870, 1871
	McLoad, M. M.	1884
	Mosley, G. G.	1874, 1875
	Norris, C. F.	1870, 1871
	Reese, C.	1872, 1873
	Robinson, William	1884
	Shorters, J. A. J.	1874, 1875, 1884
	Wilberforce, E.	1874, 1875
Holmes	Howard, Perry	1872, 1875
	Marshall	1870, 1877
	Mitchell, C.	1878
	Scarborough	1870, 1871
	Stewart, F.	1872
	Truehart, H. H.	1872, 1875
	Weathering, T.	1874, 1875, 1880
Issaquena	Blackwell, S. B.	1882, 1886, 1888
	Griggs, Richard	1872, 1873
	Jones, C. J.	1890
	Jones, W. H.	1874, 1875, 1876
	Moore, Len	1870, 1884
Jefferson	Cesser, James D.	1872, 1878
	Scott, H. P.	1878
	Simmons, J. S. (Speaker)	1883, 1884

<u>County</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Years</u>
Lauderdale	Moore, Gran J.	1870, 1877
Lavender	Boulder, J. F.	1870, 1871
	Glenn, J. H.	1874, 1875
	Thompson, Robert	1874, 1875
Lawrence	Charles, George	1870, 1871
LeFlore	Mallory, W. H.	1876, 1877
	Randolph, J. W.	1874, 1875
Madison	Edwards, George	1878
	Handy, J. F.	1872, 1876
	Henry, Alfred	1884
	Jenkins, David	1876
	Johnson, John	1888
	Lewis, S. W.	1884
	Lory, M.	1882
	Spellman, J. J.	1870, 1876
Marion	Wilson, Marshall	1870, 1871
Marshall	Cunningham, R.	1878
	Hill, James	1872, 1873
	Peal, A.	1874, 1875
	Rodgers, A.A.	1874, 1875
	Shelby, G. C.	1878
	Simpson, Adam	1880
	Williams, R.	1874, 1875
Monroe	Brooks, Arthur	1870, 1871
	Holmes, William	1872, 1873
	Nathen, Cats	1874, 1875
	Walker, J. C.	1874, 1875
Noxubee	Davis, Willie	1870, 1871, 1872, 1873
	McNeese, M.	1870, 1877
	Overton, L. W.	1876, 1877
	Stewart, Isham	1870, 1874
Oktibboha	Boyd, A.	1874, 1875
	Chiles, Benjamin	1874, 1878
	Higgins, D.	1870, 1871
	Netters, R.	1870, 1871
Panola	Cooke, John	1872, 1873
	Fields, A.	1880
	Matthews, D. F. J.	1874, 1875
	Peston, A. B.	1882
	Piles, J. H.	1870, 1874
	Settle, J. T.	1884

<u>County</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Years</u>
Panola	Sykes, Thomas	1874, 1875
	Vaughn, Gilford	1876, 1877
	Young, C. Y.	1870
	Young, J. M.	1878
Rankin	Huks, Wilson	1874, 1875
	Jackson, H. L.	1888
	McFarah, J. W.	1874, 1875
Sharkey	Brooks, F. P. P.	1886, 1888
	Butter, G. W.	1884, 1890, 1892, 1894
Tunica	Brown, G. F. A.	1876, 1877
	Smith, Gilbert	1884, 1890, 1892, 1894
Warren	Barrow, Peter B.	1870, 1871
	Buah, C. W.	1874, 1875
	Carter, H. C.	1872, 1873, 1876, 1877
	Charis, G. W.	1874, 1875
	Coates, M.	1882, 1884
	Edwards, W. W.	1874, 1875, 1876, 1877, 1882
	Head, C. P.	1870, 1871
	Johnson, A.	1870, 1871
	Shadd, I. D.	1872, 1875
Washington	Harris, J. F.	1890
	Harris, W. H.	1874, 1875, 1888
	Harton, Gilbert	1884
	Mitchell, Peter	1880, 1882, 1886
	Morgan, J. H.	1870, 1876
	Parker, J. R.	1884
	Ross, J. A.	1871
	Sanderlin, S. S.	1876, 1877
	Scott, H. P.	1878
	Simmons, J. S. (Speaker)	1883, 1884
	Stites, Doctor	1870, 1871
	Webster, G. D.	1872, 1873
Wilkinson	Young, J. B.	1876, 1877
	Fitzhugh	1874, 1875
	Foloy, H. M.	1870, 1874
	Riley, Samuel	1876, 1877
	White, George W.	1870, 1874
Yazoo	Boyd, Walter	1874, 1875
	Craytia, H.	1880
	Dickson, J. M.	1872, 1873
	Foote, W. W.	1870, 1871
	Patterson, J. G.	1874, 1875
	Wade, F. W.	1872, 1873

APPENDIX D

MISSISSIPPI VOTERS AND POPULATION FROM 1860 TO 1900

The voting list below is incomplete because annual records were not maintained and is also inaccurate because the votes were usually based upon estimated tabulations. There were no reports made for either race during certain years. The voting materials were supplied for the most part by the Office of the Secretary of State of Mississippi. The population statistics were taken from the Ninth Census, the Tenth Census, and the Twelfth Census of the United States.

Year	<u>White</u> Population	Voters	<u>Black</u> Population	Voters
1860	353,899	---	437,404	Slaves
1867		58,385		79,176
1870	382,896		444,201	
1876		---		130,483
1880	479,398		650,291	
1882		108,244		120,278
1890	544,851	118,890	744,749	189,884
1892		68,632		8,965
1896		108,998		16,234
1899		122,724		18,170
1900	641,200	---	970,630	1,264

VITA

Buford Satcher

Candidate for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Thesis: BLACKS IN MISSISSIPPI POLITICS, 1865-1900

Major Field: History

Biographical:

Personal Data: Born in Wiggins, Mississippi, May 12, 1939, the son of Willie L. and Ethel Satcher; moved to Picayune, Mississippi, while still an infant; married Patricia H. Satcher, March 22, 1968; two children, Grover L. and Kwasi Owusu.

Education: Attended elementary, grade, and high school in Picayune, Mississippi; graduated from George Washington Carver High School, Picayune, Mississippi, in 1961; received the Bachelor of Science degree from Alcorn State University, Lorman, Mississippi, in 1965; received the Master of Arts degree from North Carolina Central University, Durham, North Carolina, in 1970; completed requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy degree at Oklahoma State University in July, 1976.

Professional Experience: Social studies teacher, West Bolivar High School, Rosedale, Mississippi, 1965-1966; social science teacher, Nugent Center High School, Benoit, Mississippi, 1966-1968; substitute teacher of social science, Merrick Moore High School, Durham, North Carolina, 1968-1969; history instructor, Alcorn State University, Lorman, Mississippi, 1969-1973; graduate teaching assistant in history, Oklahoma State University, 1974-1976.