

STRATMORE PARCHMENT

100% RAG U.S.A.

WAS JOHN C. CALHOUN LOCALIST OR NATIONALIST?

STRATMORE

100% RAG

WAS JOHN C. CALHOUN LOCALIST OR NATIONALIST?

By

MICHAEL E. DERRICK

Bachelor of Science

East Central State Teachers' College

Ada, Oklahoma

1934

Submitted to the Department of History
Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the degree of
MASTER OF ARTS

1939

LIBRARY
AGRICULTURAL & MECHANICAL COLLEGE
OKLAHOMA

APPROVED:

T. H. Reynolds
In Charge of Thesis

T. H. Reynolds
Head of the Department of History

D. C. Whitcomb
Dean of Graduate School

INTRODUCTION

In this paper, an attempt has been made to present an unbiased account of the life and works of John Caldwell Calhoun with a view of determining, if possible, whether he was a localist or a nationalist. Although, undoubtedly, one of the most conspicuous characters that America has ever produced, there have been few public men so little understood as *was* Calhoun.

In intellect, Calhoun had no superior, and from 1820 until his death he was an avowed candidate for the presidency, although he was never even a nominee of his party. He devoted his entire life in support of a cause that was destined to bring about an attempt to dissolve the Union soon after his death. Although he predicted this very thing and tried in every way he knew to prevent the conflict, he was probably more responsible for its coming than any other man.

In preparing this paper, the writer wishes to express sincere appreciation to Doctor T. H. Reynolds, Head of the Department of History, Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College, Stillwater, Oklahoma, for his encouragement and splendid cooperation. Also to the library staff of A. and M. College for its courteous assistance. Appreciation is also acknowledged to the library staff of the University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma.

M. E. D.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter I, Biography	1
A. Youth and early manhood	
1. Ancestry and birth	
2. Youth	
3. Education	
4. Vocation	
5. Marriage	
B. Political career	
1. State Legislature	
2. National House of Representatives	
3. Secretary of War	
4. Vice President	
5. United States Senator	
6. Secretary of State	
7. Presidential Aspirations	
Chapter II, Calhoun and Minor Issues	19
A. The United States Bank	
1. Favored in 1816	
2. Opposed later	
B. Internal Improvements	
1. Favored in 1817	
2. Opposed later	
3. Proposed a substitute for Clay's plan	

TABLE OF CONTENTS (continued)

Chapter III, Calhoun and Nullification 27

A. Early attitude toward the tariff

1. Favored tariff in 1816

2. Silent on tariff in 1824

3. Asserts himself in 1827

B. Change of attitude

1. The "Tariff of Abominations."

2. The South Carolina Exposition

3. Address to the People of South Carolina

4. Letter to Governor Hamilton

5. Resigns Vice-presidency and becomes only a plain and honest "nullifier".

6. Speech against the Force Bill

Chapter IV, Calhoun and Slavery Extension 42

1. The Missouri Compromise

2. Early predictions

3. Incendiary mails

4. Abolition petitions

5. Annexation of Texas

6. Wilmot Proviso

7. Convention of 1849

8. California

9. His last speech, March 4, 1850

Conclusion 54

Bibliography 56

Chapter I

Biographical Sketch

John Caldwell Calhoun was of Scotch-Irish descent. His father, Patrick Calhoun, was brought to America from Ireland in 1733, when he was only six years old. The Calhouns first settled in western Pennsylvania, later moved to the western part of Virginia, and finally, after Braddock's defeat in the French and Indian War, established Calhoun Settlement in the Abbeville District in the northern part of South Carolina. It was here that John Caldwell was born March 18, 1782. His father was a prominent man of the community. A Revolutionary patriot, he had served in the Colonial Assembly of South Carolina and later after the formation of the Union, he represented Abbeville District in the legislature of that state. As a member of the Colonial Assembly he bitterly fought the adoption of the Constitution of the United States, asserting that it tended to centralize government in the hands of Federal authorities. John Caldwell's mother was Miss Martha Caldwell, born in Charlotte County, Virginia, daughter of a Presbyterian minister who was also an emigrant from Ireland.¹

Young Calhoun had little opportunity for a literary education. His early training consisted mainly of the instruction he received from his parents and information gained through their conversations. In the sparsely settled region where he lived there were no established schools and it was not until he was placed under the care and tutorship of his brother-in-law, Dr. Moses Waddel, a Presbyterian minister, at the age of thirteen that he was permitted to attend school regularly. It was

¹Encyclopaedia Britannica, IV, 584.

here that fate again intervened to deprive him of the opportunity of furthering his education at this time. His father died soon after he entered the Waddel home and Mrs. Waddel died soon after. These incidents, together with his own failing health, forced him to return home to his mother.²

Dr. Waddel was librarian for a circulating library which required much of his time and it was little attention that he was able to devote to young Calhoun while he was there, however, while there he read such literature as Rollin's Ancient History, Voltaire's Charles XII, and Locke's Essay on the Human Understanding.³

When he returned home he immediately set about to assist his mother in the management of the plantation with, apparently, no further thoughts of securing an education. All these years that he spent on the plantation deprived him of associations with others of his own age. He was the youngest of four children. His two older brothers had gone to Charleston for employment. It was after Calhoun's return home from the Waddel home that he definitely decided that he would be a planter.

When he was nineteen, his mother and two brothers in a family conference, decided that John should have an education. He at first opposed the idea, insisting that he was needed at home. He finally agreed to go to school provided he should have a complete education. This was interpreted to mean a thorough course in a New England University. It was decided that he should go to Yale.⁴

In order to prepare him for entrance to Yale, he was again placed under the care of Dr. Waddel where he applied himself so stren-

²Correspondence of John C. Calhoun, ed. by J. Franklin Jameson, American Historical Association Annual Report, 1899, II, 73.

³Ibid., 72.

⁴Ibid., 78.

✓ ously that in two years he had not only finished a preparatory course
 ✓ but was able to enter the Junior class at Yale. He entered Yale in ✓
 ✓ 1802 and graduated two years later, receiving his A.B. degree with the
 ✓ highest honors of the class. He then took up the study of law at the
 Litchfield, Connecticut, Law School. After a little more than a year
 at Litchfield, he returned to Charleston to finish his law studies and
 gain admission to the bar. His mother died soon after he enrolled in ✓
 Yale.

While at Yale, Calhoun gained the admiration and respect of
 Dr. Dwight, president of the college. He was highly esteemed by fellow
 students and professors. He was alert and dared to take issue even with
 Dr. Dwight on questions of government. (He openly maintained the prin- ✓
 ciples of the Republican party) against the arguments of Dr. Dwight who
 was an enthusiastic Federalist. Dr. Dwight is said to have remarked
 that Calhoun had sufficient talents to be president of the United States
 and would some day attain that position.⁵

When he was admitted to the bar in 1807, he set up the practice
 of law at Abbeville. Yet he still longed to be a planter. He was well
 qualified to become a great lawyer yet it is doubtful if he would have
 attained greatness in that field. Says Von Holst:

A man of his general ability and uncommon logical acute-
 ness could not have failed to acquire a prominent standing
 in this calling if he had devoted himself to it with his whole
 energy. Yet he would undoubtedly never have become a great
 lawyer, because he was not objective enough to examine his
 premises with sufficient care, while he built his argument
 upon them with undeviating and most incisive logic, thereby
 frequently arriving at the most shocking conclusions with
 nothing to stand upon except false postulates. Moreover,
 such natures never attain greatness, unless they pursue an
 aim which fills the whole head and heart with the force of
 a burning passion, a frame of mind into which but few men
 can be put by common law; and of these few Calhoun certainly
 was not one.⁶

⁵ Ibid., 81.

⁶ John C. Calhoun, 10.

Calhoun was married in 1811 to a wealthy cousin, Floride Bonneau Calhoun. Miss Calhoun was a member of the aristocratic group of Charleston and a typical southern planter's daughter. Although Calhoun had been reared by a family of only moderate means which owned but few slaves, he now found himself in the planter class. He required several years to make the transformation of his views to coincide with those of the planter class. He now had an income sufficiently large to enable him to pursue an independent course in politics.

The couple set up residence at "Bath", his plantation in Abbeville District, and remained there until 1825. In the meantime Calhoun had purchased a plantation in Pendleton District. He named this new plantation "Fort Hill". The residence, a large and commodious dwelling, assumed the name of the plantation. They moved to "Fort Hill" in 1825 when he became vice-president. This remained his home until his death. The "Fort Hill" plantation in later years became the site for the Clemson Agricultural College, at Clemson College, South Carolina. The old Calhoun residence stood on the campus of the college until it was destroyed by fire only a few years ago. The college took its name from T. G. Clemson, son-in-law of Calhoun.

Calhoun's home life was happy. He was always anxious to return to the plantation when his duties at Washington were over. Home was thus made a haven of refuge for him. To Calhoun and his wife were born nine children. He enjoyed the associations of the plantation and was interested in improving the agriculture of the South.

The same year that marked Calhoun's admission to the bar also marked his entrance into politics. He was elected a member of the lower house of the state legislature from Abbeville District in 1807 and served in this position for four years with distinction. This together with his law practice during the intervals, gave him valuable experience for the role he was to play on the national stage for almost forty years.

He entered the national arena as a member of the house of representatives and spent six years in that body. He served eight years as secretary of war during President Monroe's administration. He was twice elected vice-president, serving under the administrations of John Quincy Adams and the first term of Andrew Jackson. He was senator from South Carolina from 1833 to 1843 and from 1846 to 1850, and served as secretary of state during the last year of President Tyler's administration.

Calhoun took his seat as one of the law makers of the Nation on November 4, 1811.⁷ For several years American commerce had been harassed by the French and English. Jefferson had been able to avoid an open conflict largely through the Embargo Act and thus far Madison's administration had also averted war with either. This Twelfth Congress was controlled by young men who had been elected to take the place of older ones who had controlled the government from its beginning. These young men had great confidence in the future of the country and had no fear of a war with England. Prominent among them were Clay and Calhoun who at once assumed leadership in the House and for their actions became famous as the "war hawks." Clay was elected speaker of the House

⁷Annals of Congress, 12 Cong. 1 sess., I, 331.

and he appointed Calhoun as member of the foreign relations committee.⁸

Calhoun soon became the dominant figure of this committee and to him goes the responsibility for the report of that group which was presented to the House for approval December 11, 1811. In the report, the committee recommended in no uncertain terms that the United States go to war with England to protect American commerce.⁹

On the following day Calhoun made his first set speech in the House in defense of the report and refuted the arguments of John Randolph, the only member of the committee who opposed the report. With this speech Calhoun proved himself more than a match for the great Randolph and gained the indisputable leadership of the war party. Says Von Holst:

So the first act of Calhoun on the national stage was to sound the war trumpet. Henceforth incessant war, war to the bitter end, was to be his destiny to the very last day of his life; though it was in later years to be waged not against a foreign aggressor, but against internal adversaries, against the peace of the Union, against the trite welfare of his own section of the country.¹⁰

Calhoun was kept busy from 1812 through 1814 in the prosecution of the war but as soon as the war was over he became deeply involved with the internal affairs of the country. He was responsible for securing the passage of the law establishing a Second United States Bank.¹¹ He favored the tariff law of 1816 and even spoke in its behalf. He urged the passage of the bonus bill which provided for internal improvements to be supported by the federal government. In his speech on the internal improvements bill he took quite a different attitude toward the constitution from that he assumed after becoming vice-president. In the speech on internal improvements in 1817, he said:

⁸Ibid., 343.
⁹Ibid., 476-483.
¹⁰John G. Calhoun, 16.
¹¹Annals of Congress, 13 Cong. 3 sess., III, 587,588.

I am no advocate for refined arguments on the Constitution. The instrument was not intended as a thesis for the logician to exercise his ingenuity on. It ought to be construed with plain good sense; and what can be more express than the Constitution on this point?¹²

The War of 1812 left the war department in a deplorable state. Everything was confusion and little had been done to remedy this when Monroe became president. For any man with no experience in that line to try to straighten it out would be a hazardous undertaking. Calhoun risked the splendid reputation he had made in the House in accepting the position as secretary of war but he went about that work with the same determination for which he had earned his fame and for which he was to be noted throughout his life. Order was soon restored. He established the practice of making systematic reports to congress and was able through these reports to increase the efficiency of the army and extend the work of the military academy at West Point. He urged the promotion of internal improvements such as roads, bridges, and canals as a means of promoting the efficiency of the army in times of war. With the successful administration of the war department he proved himself an able executive.¹³

As the election year of 1824 approached there was no one in direct line to succeed Monroe as President. A mad scramble followed, chiefly among cabinet members. Calhoun had a strong following at first but attacks by Clay and Crawford so weakened his chances that he was compelled to give way and accept the nomination as vice-presidential candidate.¹⁴ Both the Adams and the Jackson forces nominated Calhoun as the running mate. Although no candidate for the Presidency received

¹²Annals of Congress, 14 Cong. 2 sess., III, 855.

¹³Von Holst, op. cit., 41.

¹⁴Ibid., 58, 59.

a majority of the votes cast, Calhoun was elected Vice-president by a large majority. Although Jackson had received a greater number of the electoral vote, Adams was selected by the House.

The Jackson forces at once raised the cry of "bargain" when Clay became Secretary of State under Adams. The bitterness over the controversy placed Calhoun in an embarrassing position. His refusal to call Randolph to order when the latter was making an abusive attack upon Adams and Clay on the floor of the Senate brought the accusation from Adams that he was seeking to undermine the administration.¹⁵ Here Calhoun began to defend his actions with the Constitution, claiming that he had no constitutional authority to call any member of the senate to order.

He also denied the constitutionality of the tariff for protection and with his vote in the senate defeated the Woolens Bill in 1827.¹⁶ In 1826, an attempt was made in the House to besmear his character. A charge was made alleging that he had participated in the profits of a certain rip-rap contract while secretary of war.¹⁷ Immediately upon being notified of the charges, he demanded a thorough investigation. He refused to preside further over the senate until the investigation was finished. Although exonerated of the charge, Calhoun believed that it was a malicious intent to ruin his reputation. In this he was probably correct for it grew out of the attacks made upon him when he might have been a presidential choice. In a letter to James Edward Calhoun in December, 1826, he wrote:

¹⁵Ibid., 63

¹⁶Correspondence, 250.

¹⁷Von Holst, op. cit., 50.

Just at the moment that I was falicitating [sic] myself that I had ceased to be an object of bitter party attacks, a deep laid conspiracy [sic] to destroy forever my reputation, was ready to burst upon me. An artful charge of participating in the profits of Mix's contract was got up, and published in the government papers here, with such circumstances as were calculated to excite publick [sic] curiosity, and to give the whole an air almost official. I at once saw the assassin aim, and determined to repel it instantly, and effectively, by an appeal to the House of Representatives demanding an investigation. It was granted, but the chair, forgetting the first principles of justice, constituted the committee, with the exception of two, of hostile materials. The result was a protraction of the investigation, or rather inquisition for forty days, but a life of spotless political purity bore me through every difficulty, and compelled my enemies to acquit honorably, though forgery and perjury were both resorted to by the vile wretch, who was the instrument in the transaction. ¹⁸

His change in attitude toward the tariff can largely be attributed to the steady opposition at home. At the request of members of the legislature of South Carolina, while he was at "Fort Hill" during the summer of 1828, he prepared the South Carolina "Exposition" which became the foundation for the "Nullification" doctrine. ¹⁹ The authorship of the Exposition was kept carefully concealed until the middle of 1831. ²⁰

Soon after the beginning of the Jackson administration, it became evident that trouble was ahead. Jackson was stubborn; so was Calhoun. The quarrel between them began with the "Peggy O'Neal" affair. ²¹ Almost immediately came the revelation to Jackson by the "Crawford Letter" that Calhoun, in President Monroe's cabinet in 1818, had favored seriously censuring Jackson for actions in the Seminole campaign of that year. Jackson never forgave Calhoun for his attitude

¹⁸Correspondence, 239, 240.

¹⁹Henry Alexander White, "John G. Calhoun", Library of Southern Literature, II, 675,676.

²⁰Ibid.,

²¹Claude G. Bowers, The Party Battles of the Jackson Period, 116-143.

at that time. He was never quite able to understand how Calhoun could have been his enemy then and later pose as a friend. As a matter of fact, Calhoun's desire in the cabinet meeting to have Jackson censured did not mean that he held Jackson as an enemy. These incidents, together with the nullification controversy completed the break between the two. From that time to the end of Jackson's administration, Calhoun opposed Jackson with all his might. Calhoun, recognizing Jackson's popularity and detesting the high-handedness with which he carried on the Executive functions of the government, wrote James Hamilton in 1831:

Had he placed himself on principle, and surrounded himself with the talents, virtue, and experience of the party, his personal popularity would, beyond all doubt, have enabled us to restore the Constitution, arrest the progress of corruption, harmonize the Union, and thereby avert the calamity which seems to impend over us; as it is, that very popularity is the real source of our weakness and distraction.²²

And in summing up the results of the "Spoils System" against which he fought desperately, he said:

When it comes to be once understood that politics is a game; that those who are engaged in it but act a part; that they make this or that profession not from honest conviction or an intent to fulfil them, but as the means of deluding the people, and through that delusion to acquire power-- when such professions are to be entirely forgotten, the people will lose all confidence in public men; and will be regarded as mere jugglers,-- the honest and the patriotic as well as the cunning and the profligate; and the people will become indifferent and passive to the grossest abuses of power on the ground that those whom they may elevate, under whatever pledges, instead of reforming will but imitate the example of those whom they have expelled.²³

Calhoun resigned the vice-presidency in December, 1832, to accept the position in the Senate vacated by Senator Hayne who had been elected governor of South Carolina. He immediately united his forces with those of Clay to oppose Jackson and the executive usurpations upon Congress. By so doing, he aided in bringing about the passage

²²Correspondence, 282.

²³Debates in Congress, 22 Cong. 2 sess., XI, part 1, 560.

of the Compromise Tariff of 1833, and with the tariff compromise was able to persuade his State to repeal the Nullification Ordinance.²⁴ The Force Bill, commonly called by Southerners the "Bloody Act" was passed along with the compromise tariff in spite of Calhoun's opposition.²⁵

He resigned his seat in the senate in 1842 to become effective at the close of the 27th Congress, March 4, 1843. He had become too valuable to the country and especially to his section to be allowed to remain long in retirement. Through a clever maneuver of Henry A. Wise, he was selected by President Tyler as Secretary of State.²⁶ The annexation of Texas had been a problem for some time and since the opposition to it was mainly in the North, it was necessary, if Tyler's administration was to complete the annexation, to select a Southern man as secretary to succeed Judge Upsher. (Calhoun had favored annexation since Texas became independent of Mexico, and with his ability, it was thought that he was the most logical one to succeed. He became secretary in March 1844 and immediately set about to complete the annexation.) He was able to complete the work at the very close of Tyler's term. Thus to him is due much of the credit for the annexation of Texas.)

Calhoun had hoped that Polk would retain him at the head of the cabinet to settle the Oregon question but in this he was disappointed. It is very likely that, had he been secretary of state during the Polk administration with permission to carry out his policy of "masterly inactivity", the United States would have secured the whole of Oregon instead of only that portion which lay south of the forty-ninth parallel. In a letter to his daughter, he wrote:

²⁴White, op. cit., 675,676.

²⁵John Bach McMaster, History of the People of the United States, VI, 168.

²⁶Henry A. Wise, "How Calhoun was made Secretary of State", Historic Characters and Famous Events, XI, 323-326.

It was scarcely in the power of Mr. Polk to treat me badly. I would consider it, at least, as much a favor to him for me to remain in the office under his administration, as he could to me to invite me to remain. Indeed, as his cabinet was organized and the views expressed in his inaugural in reference to the Tariff and his imprudent declaration in reference to the Oregon question, I could not have remained in had he invited me.²⁷

It is very likely that President Polk had so obligated himself to the Northern Democrats not to retain Mr. Calhoun in the cabinet that it was inexpedient for him to ask the latter to remain. Another explanation may be found in the expression:

Where Calhoun sat in the cabinet, there was the head of the table. In this Tyler acquiesced; but Polk, wishing to be chief of his own administration, did not invite Calhoun to continue in office.²⁸

President Polk offered Calhoun the position as minister to England, the most coveted foreign ambassadorship, but Calhoun declined the offer.²⁹ He felt that he was now too old to enter the diplomatic service abroad.

Calhoun again entered the senate in 1846. This time he was selected to fill the position vacated by the resignation of Judge Huger in order to make room for Calhoun.³⁰ By this time Calhoun only had to let it be known that he would accept the position for his selection to be assured in South Carolina. The great problem before Congress and the President at this time, other than the tariff and slavery, was the Oregon question. The administration had come out definitely for immediate settlement and urged that England be notified to that effect and that the United States would demand the whole of Oregon. President Polk made the assertion in his first message to Congress. Calhoun was

²⁷Correspondence, 656.

²⁸Dictionary of American Biography, II, 416.

²⁹Wise, op. cit., XI, 323-326.

³⁰James Elliot Wamsley, "Calhoun's Return to the Senate", American Historical Association Annual Report, 1913, I, 161-165.

sure that Polk's policy would bring about war with England. Now again the Nation looked to Calhoun for leadership and to find a way out of the dilemma. Fernando Wood, Tammany leader, wrote Calhoun:

I need not add, all eyes are turned on you. Twenty times a day I am asked, "what course will the Great Calhoun take on the Oregon question?"

Politicians of all parties look for your sagacity-- experience and far-seeing wisdom to stand between the great interests of the country, and the Hotspurs who in a spirit of demagogism would destroy us as they have themselves.

We know that even popular sentiment cannot drive you from a position which in your heart you deem correct-- and we also know that in your estimation the loud declamation of adventurers is not to be heeded when the calm, silent opinions of the industrious and producing classes is antagonistic to them.³¹

Nor were they long to wait to find out how he stood. In a speech delivered in the senate, he urged his former policy of "masterly inactivity" if we were to secure the whole but he also urged a compromise with England if we were to demand an immediate settlement. He pointed out the folly of those two great English-speaking nations going to war against each other.³² The compromise adopted was that urged by him.

Calhoun opposed the Mexican War as being unnecessary. He insisted that a compromise could easily have been brought about that would have been agreeable to both nations by establishing the Neeces river instead of the Rio Grande as the boundary line between Mexico and Texas.³³

From 1833 until his death in 1850, Calhoun was intensely interested in the slave question. His fight against receiving abolition petitions in Congress was waged in the late thirties and placed slavery as the leading issue from that time until the beginning of the Civil War.

³¹Correspondence, 1066.

³²Congressional Globe, 29 Cong. 1 sess, 502-506.

³³White, op. cit., 676.

Throughout this period he manifested a deep interest in the Union, expressing in his public statements, a constant fear for its safety.

Although he spoke briefly as late as the 13th of March, his last great speech was read by Senator Mason on March 4, 1850. Calhoun had grown too weak to make the delivery, yet unlike many who grow weak in mind as well as body, he retained his great mental faculties until death overtook him. ³⁴ Von Holst says:

To the last moment, he manifested the deepest interest and concern in the troubles of his country. "The South! the Poor South! God knows what will become of her!" murmured his trembling lips; but he died with that serenity of mind which only a clear conscience can give on the deathbed. ³⁵

He died on the last day of March 1850.

William E. Dodd, in summing up his attitude toward this greatest of all South Carolinians, says:

Not many of us know John C. Calhoun as he was, as he lived and moved among Americans of the last century. No political party looks back to Calhoun as its founder or rejuvenator, no group of public men proclaim allegiance to his doctrines, no considerable group of individuals outside of South Carolina profess any love for his name and ideals. While all parties seek to find in Jefferson's writings justification for their programs, none dare admit their present policy to be even remotely descended from the teaching of the great Carolinian; yet Calhoun had the approval while a young man of the great Virginian and died more beloved by a greater number of Americans than even the sage of Monticello. When Jefferson died Virginia wept but not loudly; when Calhoun's body was carried to Charleston in April, 1850, the whole state mourned as if every man had lost his father. For weeks the ordinary course of business was interrupted and months afterward men talked gloomily as they met upon the streets of Charleston. Only twice in the history of the country have men felt so keenly the loss of one of their leaders--December 1799 and April 1865. ³⁶

Speaking in the senate on the day after Calhoun's death, Henry Clay said:

³⁴ Congressional Globe, 31 Cong. 1 sess., XIX, part 1, 451-456.

³⁵ Loc. Cit., 349.

³⁶ Statesmen of the Old South, or From Radicalism to Conservative Revolt, 1.

Sir, he has gone, No more shall we witness from yonder seat the flashes from that keen penetrating eye of his, darting through this chamber. No more shall we be thrilled by that torrent of clear, concise, compact logic, poured out from his lips, which if it did not always carry conviction to our judgment, always commanded our great admiration.³⁷

On the same occasion, Webster spoke:

The eloquence of Mr. Calhoun or the manner of his exhibition of his sentiments in public bodies, was a part of his intellectual character. It grew out of the qualities of his mind. It was plain, strong, terse, condensed, concise, sometimes impassioned--still always severe. Rejecting ornament, not often seeking far for illustration, his power consisted in the plainness of his propositions, in the closeness of his logic, and in the earnestness and energy of his manner. . . . He had the basis, the indisputable basis of all high character. If he had aspirations, they were high and honorable and noble. There was nothing groveling, or low, or meanly selfish that ever came near the head or heart.³⁸

The passing of Calhoun marked a halt in Southern leadership.

For almost forty years he had played no small part in the affairs of the nation. In Congress or out, his counsel was sought on all important questions. It mattered not what others thought on various issues, Calhoun was always ready to speak out loud what his convictions were. No man doubted for long how he stood on the issues. Had it not been for this trait in his character, it is very probable that he would have become President of the United States. That his influence was keenly felt in the Senate is illustrated in the words of Senator Turney, one of Calhoun's bitterest foes:

When he chooses to unite his forces, he carries or rejects any measure he pleases, and exercises as I desire the whole Nation to know, that balance of power, small as it may be, which fixes upon him the responsibility to the American people either of the passage or rejection of the measures of this Congress.³⁹

³⁷Congressional Globe, op. cit., 624.

³⁸Ibid., 625.

³⁹Ibid., 395.

The election of Jefferson in 1800 marked the beginning of the end of the Federalist party. Until 1816, it remained a party of opposition only. When Monroe was elected the second time, in 1820, the Federalist party had ceased to exist. The Jeffersonian party had taken the name of National Republicans. It was to this party that Calhoun attached himself when he entered the political arena.

With the passing of Monroe, there was no one in direct line for the presidency. A mad scramble followed, chiefly among his cabinet members. Calhoun was seriously considered but through the attacks of Clay and Crawford, his chances were weakened. Unable to secure nomination for the first place, Calhoun was given second place by both the forces of Jackson and those of Adams. The result was his election while the election of President was thrown into the House.

Again, in 1828, Calhoun was elected vice president, this time with Jackson. It was generally understood that Jackson would not desire to be re-elected at the end of his first term and that Calhoun should become his successor. This agreement was implied in a letter written by Calhoun after his break with Jackson in which he said, "Between General Jackson and myself any connection personal and political is rescinded." ⁴⁰

His break with Jackson destroyed any chances he might have had of becoming Jackson's successor, yet he did not despair of hopes in the campaign year of 1832 for in that year he wrote:

If the country wants an individual to carry on sectional conflicts, I am not their man. I would not advance myself by sacrificing its true interests; but if they look to the higher considerations of peace, harmony, and liberty, it would be the proudest moment of my life, to be instrumental in promoting these objects. ⁴¹

⁴⁰ Correspondence, 292.

⁴¹ Ibid., 297.

When he resigned the vice-presidency, he gave up any allegiance he had to either of the two major political parties and from that time forward claimed that he belonged to that small and denounced group of states rights advocates.

With his attitude toward the General Government and his support of States rights, he had less chances of becoming president. His policy in the Senate was to throw his support to that group which supported measures most nearly like what he desired. His resignation from the Senate in 1843 was for the specific purpose of making preparations for the campaign of 1844.⁴² His prospects appeared better in the latter part of 1843 than ever before and that he believed so is shown in a letter in which he says:

If my friends think my service will ever be of importance at the head of the Executive, now is the time. It has never come before, and will pass away forever, with the occasion. I have not the least personal ambition in reference to the subject; but I do feel a deep interest in a system, to the sustaining of which, I have devoted thirty years, and in the success of which, our safety, liberty, and prosperity depends.⁴³

It became evident a few months before the convention was to be held that Calhoun could not be nominated. Rather than be defeated, he withdrew his name, and from that time on, little effort was made to secure the nomination for him.

Calhoun's failure to become the party's candidate for the Presidency at any one time during his political career may be explained in Von Holst's words:

Calhoun was not a statesman of the type which, at this time, began to be only too common in the United States. He did not owe his position to the grace of King Caucus and the favor of his grandees, the washed and unwashed patriots of

⁴³Ibid., 495.

of the primary meetings. He therefore did not know and understand everything by intuition, as this privileged class of mortals do, but he was obliged to study and reflect upon the subjects with which he had to deal as a legislator. As a seat in the legislative hall was in his opinion as well the most responsible as the most honorable post in which a man can be put by the confidence of his fellow citizens, he applied himself to this task with all the thoroughgoingness of his nature.⁴⁴

The subsequent chapters of this paper will be devoted to a discussion of Calhoun's attitude toward the various political issues of the period of American history in which he lived. An effort will be made to show his attitude toward these issues and how each issue influenced him in his relations toward both the general government and his own section of the country.

We now move on to Chapter II which will be devoted to a discussion of his attitude toward the United States Bank and toward internal improvements.

⁴⁴Loc. cit., 111.

Chapter II

Calhoun and Minor Issues

The Republican party was converted somewhat to nationalism during the War of 1812, and immediately after the war became interested in strengthening the national government. Calhoun was one of the leaders in the movement. As chairman of the Committee on National Currency, he reported a bill on January 8, 1816, to incorporate a Second United States Bank. On February 26, he spoke in behalf of the bill, urging its passage because of the depressed financial condition of the country, and insisting that the bank was necessary to establish the country's finances on a firm basis. Referring to the constitutional question, he said that "it had already been so freely and frequently discussed, that all had made up their minds on it."¹ If he thought it was unconstitutional, he was careful not to say so then. Apparently, he was guided by the dire need for some means of stabilizing the currency in urging Congress to grant the charter. The bank was chartered for a period of twenty years. With the passage of the bill, the bank issue was out of the way for a while but it came up again early in the Jackson administration. With respect to the bank issue, Calhoun wrote, March 20, 1830:

There is not the least foundation for the report that I have come out for or against the bank. I have not moved on it at all, either for or against, as I deem the agitation of the question any way premature. ²

He then explained himself further by insisting that there would be time enough four years later to make an issue of that ques-

¹Works, II, 186.

²Correspondence, 270, 271.

tion, when a fuller knowledge of its operations could be gained.

When the bank issue was forced by Clay in the Presidential campaign of 1832, it was a fight between Clay and Jackson and Calhoun had no love for either. He had no desire to aid Clay because of the tariff and his break with Jackson had severed all connections in that camp. Yet, Calhoun had always been found on one side or the other, never neutral. Rather than aid Jackson, he chose to support the bank and Clay. Thus it was, the bank issue at this time did not portray Calhoun's convictions, or at least it can be said that he might have opposed it had he felt perfectly free.

Since the bank was defeated in 1832, it was evident that the issue would again arise before the expiration of the charter. After Jackson's veto in 1832, the friends of the bank were never quite able to muster enough support to pass the bill over the veto, hence the charter was allowed to expire. In 1837, Calhoun united his forces with those of the administration to defeat Clay's amendment providing for the establishment of another United States Bank.³ Only a short time before, he had united with Clay to arrest the usurpations of the Executive over Congress. Now, he could claim a double victory. In his remarks on Clay's amendment, he claimed that he opposed it because he wished to place the liberty and the Constitution on a durable basis. He had hoped to effect this by uniting with the nationals in providing effectual guards against future usurpations of the Executive over Congress-- and with his old friends of 1827, in restricting the encroachments of Congress on the states.⁴

³Works, III, 96.

⁴Ibid., 96-101.

In December, 1816, Calhoun moved that a committee be appointed to inquire into the expediency of setting apart the bonus and net proceeds of the Second United States Bank, as a permanent fund for internal improvements. Then on February 4, 1817, he spoke in favor of the bill, entering into a lengthy discussion of the Constitution. He said:

It is mainly urged that the Congress can only apply the public money in execution of the enumerated powers. I am no advocate for refined arguments on the Constitution. The instrument was not intended as a thesis for the logician to exercise his ingenuity on. It ought to be construed with plain good sense; and what can be more express than the Constitution on this point? . . . If the framers had intended to limit the use of the money to the powers afterward enumerated and defined, nothing could have been more easy than to have expressed it plainly. . . . Let it not be argued that the construction for which I contend gives a dangerous extent to the powers of Congress. In this point of view I conceive it to be more safe than the opposite. By giving a reasonable extent to the money power, it exempts us from the necessity of giving a strained and forced construction to the other enumerated powers.⁶

From the above, we readily infer that Calhoun was an extreme nationalist, but when accosted that it was necessary to get the assent of the states, he replied that the good sense of the states could be relied upon and that they would readily give their assent.⁷ He did not aver that the states had no rights in this matter but rather that they would readily concur. The "Bonus Bill" was vetoed by President Monroe, but Calhoun continued to favor internal improvements supported by the general government during his tenure as secretary of war. In a report for the war department in 1819, which was made at the request of Congress, he said:

⁵Annals of Congress, 14 Cong. 2 sess., II, 296.

⁶Ibid., 855.

⁷Ibid.

A judicious system of roads and canals, constructed for the convenience of commerce and the transportation of the mail only, without reference to military operations, is itself among the most efficient means for the more complete defence of the United States. Without adverting to the fact that the roads and canals which such a system would require are, with few exceptions, precisely those which would be required for the operation of war, such a system, by consolidating our Union, and increasing our wealth and fiscal capacity, would greatly add to our resources in war. ⁸

On October 15, 1821, Adams wrote of Calhoun:

Mr. Calhoun is a man of fair and candid mind, of honorable principles, of clear and quick understanding, of cool self-possession, of enlarged philosophical views, and of ardent patriotism. He is above all sectional and factious prejudices more than any other statesman of this Union with whom I have ever acted. He is more sensitive to the transient manifestations of momentary public opinion, more afraid of the first impressions of the public opinion than I am. ⁹

On July 3, 1824, in discussing the distribution of powers between the states and the general government, Calhoun wrote Robert S. Garnet in which he also explained his position on the bank and on internal improvements. He concluded with:

If, then, I have given offence, it must be by my acts, and by them I am willing to be tried, and if I mistake not, I have never done an act which, if condemned in me, Mr. Jefferson, Mr. Madison, and Mr. Monroe must also be equally condemned. . . . I think it cannot be doubted that if the power existed in Congress to appropriate money for internal improvements, for which we have the sanction of the three distinguished citizens to whom I have referred, there was nothing in the bill to make it unconstitutional. . . . I have nowhere in my public capacity asserted the right of the money so appropriated without the consent of the States or the individuals to be affected. . . . My impression is that the power exists to a certain extent, but as I have always believed that it should not be exercised without a clear necessity, and as I do believe that the mere

⁸Von Holst, op. cit., 36, 37.

⁹Dictionary of American Biography, II, 413, citing Adams' Memoirs, V, 361.

right of applying our money, not as a sovereign without the consent of those to be affected, but as a mere proprietor with their assent, will be found sufficient in practice. I have carefully abstained from coming to any final conclusion until it becomes absolutely necessary. ¹⁰

We readily see that his position in the above statement is virtually the same as that in his speech on the same question in 1816. In neither case did he assert that the General Government had the power to carry on internal improvements without the assent of the states.

At a dinner given in his honor in Pendleton District on April 26, 1825, Calhoun gave the following toast: "Internal improvements: guided by wisdom and energy of its able advocates, it cannot fail to strengthen and perpetuate the Union." ¹¹

Just when Calhoun began his opposition to internal improvements supported by the General Government, it is hard to say. When Clay proposed that the surplus of the General Government, gained largely through land sales, be distributed to the states as a direct gift based upon their population, Calhoun opposed and offered as a substitute the proposal that the surplus be deposited with the states on a population basis and subject to withdrawal by the General Government at any time. ¹² The money, under Calhoun's plan, was to be used by the States for promoting internal improvements. He had become convinced that it was unconstitutional for the General Government to carry on works of this nature, yet he was willing to do indirectly what he dared not do directly.

He spoke in opposition to the Cumberland road bill on April 1,

¹⁰Correspondence, 221-223.

¹¹Dictionary of American Biography, II, 416.

¹²Works, III, 488-495.

1840.¹³ At that time, he said he was thoroughly convinced that the General Government was wholly unfit to carry on works of internal improvement. He admitted that he looked at this bill just as he did every other internal improvement, that he was opposed to it, "if for no other reason, because the experience of a quarter of a century had proved that this government was utterly unfit to carry on works of this kind." He then discussed the wastefulness that had been exhibited in the past and compared the costs of the works carried on by the General Government to those of a similar nature that had been carried on by States. He was convinced that the states were able to do the work much cheaper and more efficient. Said he:

It is high time that the internal bleeding, which has been wasting the strength of the Government, should cease, and that we should direct our attention and resources to objects really intrusted to the Government and for which it is responsible.¹⁴

From 1830 forward, Calhoun bent his efforts to unite the South in a solid unit to oppose what he termed "encroachments" of the North against the South. Clay's "American System" had united the West with the North, not because of identical interests but because the North desired a protective tariff and the West desired internal improvements. In order to secure funds with which to promote internal improvements, the West was willing to pay tribute to Northern factories in the form of a high tariff. There was little hope for the South to profit from an internal improvement program for would not the West be connected with the North more securely? Calhoun hoped to break this alliance of the West and North and bring the West into an alliance with the South. Surely the

¹³ Works III, 488-495.

¹⁴ Ibid., 494.

interests of the South and West were more nearly identical than were those of North and West. In 1838, Calhoun wrote Hayne, suggesting a convention of Southern States for the purpose of uniting in a common front against the encroachments from the North.¹⁵ In 1845, such a convention was held at Memphis chiefly for the purpose of discussing railroad and waterway transportation.¹⁶ Calhoun attended as a delegate from South Carolina and was made presiding officer of the convention. In a speech before the convention, he urged his railroad program, supported by the states, to connect the South and West. He also discussed the constitutional power of Congress to improve the navigation of the Mississippi river. He argued that this did not come in the category of internal improvements but that the river should be considered as a great inland sea, not traversing the States but bathing their shores. Considered as such, he would insist that Congress had the constitutional right to improve its navigation.¹⁷

In 1849, in discussing the calling of a Southern convention, he suggested that such a convention should formulate plans to be submitted to Congress, to stop encroachments on Southern rights and save the Union.¹⁸ Again, in 1850, after it was decided that the convention should be held in Nashville in the summer of 1850, he wrote, "It is becoming a common opinion, that there is little chance of saving the Union."¹⁹

¹⁵Correspondence, 416.

¹⁶John Bach McMaster, History of the People of the United States from the Revolution to the Civil War, VI, 176.

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Correspondence, 765.

¹⁹Ibid., 779.

From the standpoint of internal improvements and the bank, it is certain that Calhoun took a nationalist point of view before the thirties. After that time, his attitude changed but he cannot be charged with having taken a sectional view then, for he merely denied the right of the federal government to carry on internal improvements within the bounds of a state without that state's consent. Also he pointed out the fact that so much graft existed in the contracts let by the federal government that it was a waste of funds to sponsor the works in that way. His attitude toward the bank changed when it was made so evident in the campaign of 1832 just how powerful the bank was and how it might influence the political leaders.

The next chapter will be devoted to a discussion of his attitude toward the tariff from 1816 through the nullification controversy which was terminated with the Compromise Tariff and passage of the Force Bill in 1833.

CHAPTER III

Calhoun and Nullification

✓ The close of the War of 1812 also marked the close of the
 ✓ Napoleonic Wars in Europe. Many thousands of soldiers were thus re-
 ✓ leased from the European armies and became engaged in agricultural pur-
 ✓ suits and in industry. Soon there was a surplus of both agricultural
 ✓ products and manufactured goods. These manufactured goods were sent in
 ✓ large quantities to American ports and were sold so much cheaper than
 ✓ the young American manufacturers could sell theirs that it became evi-
 ✓ dent if something were not done, American manufacturers would go bank-
 ✓ rupt. The result was a demand for a protective tariff. A higher tariff
 ✓ was also needed by the United States treasury to replenish the treasury
 ✓ and pay debts incurred in the late war. With his experience as a leader
 ✓ in the prosecution of the war, Calhoun had become convinced that the
 ✓ United States should become a "self-sufficient" nation. He also felt
 ✓ that in order to do this it would be necessary to give protection to
 ✓ the young American industries, while at the same time the government
 ✓ would be raising much needed revenue. Calhoun believed that whatever
 ✓ aid for American manufacturers was to be derived from the tariff would
 ✓ be shared by all sections alike, and it is reasonable to believe that
 ✓ he never gave serious thought to the question of the constitutionality
 ✓ of a protective tariff. At any rate, he supported the tariff law of
 ✓ 1816, and went so far as to speak in its behalf. In his speech, he said:

In regard to the question how far manufacturers ought
 to be fostered, it is the duty of this country, as a means
 of defence to encourage its domestic industry, more especially

that part of it which provides the necessary materials for clothing and defence. . . . The question relating to manufactures must not depend on the abstract principle that industry, left to pursue its own course, will find in its own interests all the encouragement that is necessary. Laying the claims of manufacturers entirely out of view, on general principles, without regard to their interests, a certain encouragement should be extended to our woollen and cotton manufactures. ¹

There is little doubt that at that time Calhoun anticipated an industrial development in the South just the same as in the North. With an attitude of that sort, it is natural to see that he would favor a tariff for some protection at least. But, if he did anticipate such, he was doomed for disappointment for the planters fully realized that to encourage industry in that section would mean to endanger slavery. Besides, they were prosperous; they lived luxurious lives. What more could they wish? In supporting the tariff, Calhoun did not represent the sentiment of the South. The South was fully aware that the burden of a protective tariff would fall upon it. It was through Calhoun's influence and leadership that the Southern vote in the House on the tariff in 1816 was twenty-three for and thirty-four against. ² Thus the twenty-three actually voted against the interests of their own section. There is also reason to believe that Calhoun believed that the passage of this tariff would be sufficient protection for years to come. In this he was also disappointed, for once the manufacturers had tasted the fruits of protection, there would be no end to their demands.

Before 1820, it was evident that a higher tariff would be demanded. Already, the industrial North claimed that the tariff of 1816 did not protect. Since Calhoun was a member of President Monroe's

¹ Works, II, 163.

² Annals of Congress, 14 Cong. 1 sess., 1352.

cabinet from 1817 to 1825, there was no occasion for him to come out openly either for or against a higher tariff. In 1824, Clay announced his "American System" and was able to secure the passage of a higher tariff. Southerners opposed it bitterly. Calhoun had no part in it.

The South became deeply agitated over the passage of the tariff in 1824. Coming as it did during a decade of declining cotton prices, it was natural for the South to become aggrieved at the passage of a higher tariff. By 1825, the opposition had spread throughout the South and was linked with a denial of the constitutional power of Congress to enact a protective tariff. Calhoun was an object of censure throughout the South in Anti-tariff publications because of his former and still unrecanted position with respect to the tariff.³ His position was a grave one at that time. If he continued on the course favoring protection, his own state would repudiate him. If he changed his course, he would lose a great portion of his following in the industrial section, and he could never hope to become the chief magistrate of the country without the support of his own section plus at least New York and Pennsylvania, the two most important industrial states. Newspapers in the South urged the calling of a Congress of the opposition states to discuss action on the tariff. That Calhoun was still inclined to take the nationalist point of view is shown in a statement he made at a dinner given in his honor at Atlanta, Georgia, in the summer of 1825. He said:

No one would reprobate more pointedly than myself any concerted union between States for interested or sectional objects. I would consider all such concert as against the spirit of the Constitution.⁴

³Dictionary of American Biography, II, 414.

⁴Von Holst, op. cit., 67.

Little, perhaps, did Calhoun realize when he uttered these words that it would be only three years when he would become the chief proponent of a doctrine that would be so complete in the assertion of States rights that it would put all other theories into the background.

Early in 1827, the tariff again came before Congress, this time known as the Woolens Bill. Calhoun was Vice president and therefore the presiding officer of the Senate. When the bill came to vote, the Senate was evenly divided. It was Calhoun's vote that defeated the measure.⁵ Thus at one stroke, he not only redeemed himself with his native state but he definitely aligned himself with the anti-protectionists who were later to become known as "nullifiers."

Prior to this time, the South could rely on the New England States to oppose protection because that section had been chiefly interested in shipping, but now the New England states had become engaged in manufacturing. When the tariff came up in 1828, the South was left practically alone to oppose it. Webster who could always be counted upon heretofore to oppose the tariff, now came out boldly for it. The result of this additional strength for the protectionists was passage of the tariff law of 1828, commonly known as the "Tariff of Abominations."⁶

When Congress adjourned in 1828, Calhoun returned as usual to "Fort Hill" to spend the summer. He immediately informed himself on the situation in South Carolina. At the request of W. C. Preston, a member of the legislature of that state, Calhoun wrote a report for a committee of the legislature.⁷ This report as written by him and modified by the

⁵Correspondence, 250.

⁶Works, III, 48-51.

⁷Dictionary of American Biography, II 414.

committee became famous as the "South Carolina Exposition".⁸ It was the first of a series of documents by Calhoun embodying the doctrine of nullification.

The "Exposition" was a warning to the General Government of what might be done if the protectionist program were continued. Its promulgation did not commit the States to a definite course of action. Neither did it commit Calhoun to anything, for he kept his authorship confidential until about the middle of 1831.⁹

The "Exposition" began with the deliberate assertion that the tariff act of 1828 was unconstitutional, unequal, oppressive, and calculated to corrupt the public virtue and destroy the liberty of the country, and then set out to prove each of the assertions.¹⁰ Unconstitutional because the General Government is one of specific powers, expressly granted in the Constitution; because these only and such others as may be necessary to carry them into effect, can rightfully be used by Congress; and because the power to protect manufacturers is not one of those expressly granted nor necessary to such as are specifically given. Unequal and oppressive because the burden fell upon the South. Since the South was strictly an agricultural region and sold only about one-third of her products in the United States, it was natural that she would be compelled to sell the other two-thirds abroad. To export her products meant that she would also be forced to buy goods from her customers abroad. With such a large amount of imports, it was plain that the South would be forced to pay the greater portion of the tariff duties. A discussion then followed as to how the encroachments of the General

⁸Works, VI, 1-57.

⁹McMaster, op. cit., VI, 164.

¹⁰Works, VI, 1, et. seq.

Government upon the rights of the States could be arrested. It was asserted that the Supreme Court was not the proper authority to say whether or not a law, involving a controversy between a State and the General Government, was constitutional because the Court was an agent of the General Government. It was maintained that the States had a right to determine when an act of Congress encroached upon their rights. The remedy was "interposition". It was held that the constitutionality of acts of Congress should be decided by State conventions held for that purpose, and if such convention of any state held that an act of Congress was not in accordance with the Constitution, that act became null and void within the borders of that state. He then maintained that such nullification would not be final because final authority rested upon the judgment of three-fourths of the states of the Union. Just as the Constitution provides that three-fourths had a right to amend the Constitution, so would the same rule apply in nullifying a law enacted by Congress. The processes outlined in the "Exposition" were: (1) If a law were declared null and void by the convention of a state, it merely suspended that law until the other States could pass on the issue. (2) If three-fourths of all the states declared through similar conventions that the law was unconstitutional, it would be null and void everywhere. (3) If the conventions of more than one-fourth of the states refused to act or by their decisions pronounced the law constitutional, the law would remain in effect, but the States which objected to it had a right to withdraw from the Union.¹¹

¹¹Works, VI, 1-57.

OCT 27 1939

Having now devised a plan to be used in a contingency, Calhoun sought various ways to prevent the contingency from arising. He persuaded the Carolinians to withhold action until the next Congress should have had an opportunity to repeal the "Tariff of Abominations". For a while, he pinned his faith on Jackson, not too strong however, for he knew that the General had been elected on a dual proposition with respect to the tariff. In this he was not disappointed for Jackson, anxious to perpetuate his popularity in the industrial section, was willing to abandon the South on the tariff question. That Calhoun hoped for a favorable attitude by Jackson is illustrated in a letter he wrote in January, 1829, in which he said:

At all events our fate will soon be known, as far as the General Government is concerned. The next two or three years will be of the deepest interest to us, and the whole Union. I look forward to the course that events will take with no small concern. To preserve our Union on the fair basis of equality, on which alone it can stand, and to transmit the blessing of liberty to the remotest posterity is the first object of all my exertions.¹²

Calhoun's second manifesto was an address to the People of South Carolina, dated at Fort Hill, July 26, 1831.¹³ In this address he took up the question of the relation which the States and the General Government bear to each other and reargued it in its entirety. The entire argument is woven around the assertion:

The great dissimilarity and, as I must add, as truth compels me to do, contrariety of interests in our country . . . are so great that they cannot be subjected to the unchecked will of a majority of the whole without defeating the great end of government, without which it is a curse,-- justice.¹⁴

Thus, the broad foundation for his doctrine was that the Union

¹²Correspondence, 269, 270.

¹³Works, VI, 59-94.

¹⁴Ibid.

could never have a safe foundation upon any legal basis until the rights of the minority were guaranteed, and the only possible way for such a guarantee was recognition of State sovereignty.

It is doubtful if Calhoun had the slightest hopes that he would be able to convince his adversaries with this doctrine but he could mark off a definite path for his own group. Sufficient notice was paid of this move that early in 1832, a new tariff law was soon under way with the result that the tariff of 1832 was enacted. This act greatly reduced the rates but the South was far from pleased with it. Neither was Calhoun pleased with it. Calhoun and the South took this move on the part of the General Government as an indication that the Government was definitely committed to a policy of protection. Until the passage of this act, Calhoun had held the Carolinians in leash. Being convinced that the South could no longer hope to see the General Government abandon the protective tariff, preparations were at once begun to put into practice the doctrine of nullification as expounded in the "Exposition".¹⁵

At the Jefferson birthday dinner on April 13, 1830, Jackson gave the toast: "Our Federal Union. It Must be preserved." Calhoun countered with, "The Union; next to our liberties, the most dear. May we all remember that it can only be preserved by respecting the rights of States and distributing equally the burdens of the Union".¹⁶

Jackson's toast was interpreted in the North to mean that he would suppress South Carolina by force. In the South it was interpreted to mean that he would be willing to appease South Carolina and the South with a reduction of the tariff.

¹⁵Dictionary of American Biography, 415.

¹⁶McMaster, op. cit., VI, 32.

That Calhoun had become convinced that there was no need to expect relief from the General Government is shown in his letter to James H. Hammond, January 15, 1831, in which he said:

Of one thing we may be perfectly assured, that the General Government will not relax its hold, unless compelled; and that she cannot be compelled, unless the South should unite in one earnest and decided pressure, or some one of the States nullify the unconstitutional tariff acts. It is almost hopeless to expect a cordial Union of the South for redress under existing circumstances.¹⁷

From the above, we may infer that he had hoped all along that concerted action might be secured; that if he could hold South Carolina and prevent individual action the other Southern States would unite with her in resistance to the tariff. That he anticipated a revolution for the future is shown in a letter of December 21, 1831:

When I look back and mark the progress of events for the last fifteen years, and note the decay of honor, honesty, and patriotism, and the growth of the opposite vices, I hold it utterly impossible that the present march of our affairs can continue fifteen years more, without an entire change of system. It must be arrested, or revolution will be the alternative.¹⁸

On December 27, of the same year, he wrote:

If we should be defeated in Carolina, there will be little hope for our system. Let all be animated with the conviction that they are contending for the Constitution; for the Union; and for liberty.¹⁹

In July, the tariff law of 1832 became effective with the President's signature. On August 28, 1832, came Calhoun's third manifesto, This was a letter addressed to Governor Hamilton of South Carolina and consisted of forty-nine printed pages.²⁰ Calhoun was determined to have the

¹⁷Correspondence, 280, 281.

¹⁸Ibid., 307.

¹⁹Ibid., 317.

²⁰Works, VI, 144-193.

die cast without further delay. Von Holst says, "This letter to Governor Hamilton of South Carolina is the final and classical exposition of the theory of State sovereignty. Nothing new has ever been added to it."²¹ In this document, Calhoun assumed that the people were sovereign; that the central government as well as the States were mere organs of popular power. He claimed that "we, the people" in the Federal Constitution meant the people of the several states, whose delegates and conventions framed and ratified the Constitution, creating the General Government as their common agent. He asserted that there could not be citizens of the United States for people must be citizens of States. He claimed that the ratification of the Constitution by any State bound all of its citizens to obey the Constitution, even though some might have opposed its ratification. He put forth again practically the same arguments with respect to his theory of nullification as was given in the two previous documents, and claimed, "It is the Constitution then annuls an unconstitutional act. Such an act is itself void and of no effect."²² Further elaborating on his nullification theory, he said, "Nullification would give no ground for clash of arms: it would be a moral conflict before courts and juries."²³ He asserted that the object of secession was a withdrawal from the Union, while that of nullification was to confine the General Government within the prescribed powers laid down by the Constitution in order to perpetuate the Union on an equitable basis. He admitted that nullification weakened the General Government but insisted that this weakness could be overcome through amendments to the Constitution and through appeals on the nullifications of the States.²⁴

²¹John G. Calhoun, 98.

²²Works, VI, 149.

²³Ibid., 190.

²⁴Ibid., 191.

South Carolina passed the Nullification Ordinance in October 1832, and in December came the "battle of proclamations" between President Jackson and Governor Hamilton.²⁵ Nullification was to become effective February 2, 1833. Jackson asked Congress to pass the "Force Bill" which would give him authority to use the military power of the Government to suppress this movement in South Carolina. He also proposed a reduction of the tariff.²⁶

Clay, not willing that the President should receive credit in the South for a reduction of the tariff, secured Calhoun's support of a compromise tariff. Although the compromise tariff was far from satisfactory to Calhoun, he supported it rather than see Jackson claim credit for any tariff reduction, and also because it was better than none. He fully realized that South Carolina would attempt secession unless some effort was made toward a reduction of the tariff. In the meantime, he again persuaded his State to withhold action on the Nullification Ordinance.²⁷ The Compromise Tariff and the "Force Bill" both became laws March 2, 1833.²⁸

By this time, what Calhoun willed, South Carolina did. Believing that the Compromise Tariff was the best that could be obtained, he recommended that the Nullification Ordinance be repealed.

Calhoun opposed the "Force Bill" to the bitter end. On the 15th and 16th of February in one of the most memorable speeches of his entire career, he spoke at length on this bill.²⁹ He began by questioning the constitutionality of the bill as well as protective tariffs, saying:

²⁵Dictionary of American Biography, II, 415.

²⁶Richardson, op. cit., II, 617-631.

²⁷McMaster, op. cit., VI, 165.

²⁸Ibid., 168.

²⁹Register of Debates in Congress, 22 Cong. 2 sess., IX, pt.1,

The real question at issue is: has this government a right to impose burdens on the capital and industry of one portion of the country, not with a view to revenue, but to benefit another? ³⁰

He then admitted the right of the General Government to lay on imposts for revenue but insisted that any tariff for protection is unconstitutional. He claimed that Carolina did not assert the right to annul the Constitution nor a right to resist any law made in pursuance to the Constitution, but that she did assert the right to annul any and all laws enacted by Congress without the authority of the Constitution. He claimed that there could be no just division of powers as outlined in the Constitution unless the States should have some authority in the matter. He then reverted in his speech to a discussion of his position on the tariff in 1816, saying:

My speech on that occasion, has been brought in judgment against me by the Senator from Pennsylvania. I have since cast my eyes over the speech; and will surprise, I have no doubt, the senator, by telling him that, with the exceptions of some hasty and unguarded expressions, I retract nothing on that occasion. I only ask that I be judged in reference to it, in that spirit of fairness and justice which is due to the occasion; taking into consideration the circumstances under which it was delivered, and bearing in mind that the subject was a tariff for revenue, and not for protection; for reducing and not raising the duties.³¹

He said that the speech of 1816 was delivered without any serious consideration beforehand, and at the request of a friend, Samuel D. Ingham, of Pennsylvania. He further insisted, "Let it be remembered that it was a revenue bill, and of course that it was constitutional." ³² As proof of the fact that he had at that time and before, opposed measures tending to restrict trade, he cited his

³⁰Ibid., 519.

³¹Ibid., 525.

³²Ibid.

hearere to his actions and speeches on the repeal of the embargo. He denied that Carolina had acted precipitately as she had been accused. He said that Carolina had persistently opposed protection from 1816. Thus for twelve years she had vigorously opposed the tariff before any action was taken other than protests.

In discussing the "Force Bill" he said:

We are told the Union must be preserved, without regard to the means. And how is it proposed to preserve the Union? By force? Does any man believe that this beautiful structure-- this harmonious aggregate of states, produced by the joint consent of all-- can be preserved by force? . . . No, no, You cannot keep the states united in their constitutional and federal bonds by force.³³

Again referring to his attitude in 1816 and his state's willingness to adjust the matter, he said:

Sir, I am willing, as one of the representatives of Carolina, and I believe I speak the sentiments of the State, to take that act as the basis for a permanent adjustment of the tariff, simply reducing the duties on all items, to the revenue point.³⁴

The compromise tariff was a measure designed to do this very thing. It provided for a gradual reduction for the next ten years when at the end of that period the average duty would be about twenty per cent. Protectionists accepted this rather than see nullification put into practice. They knew full well that sympathy for South Carolina existed in nearly all of the Southern States and action by any one might mean action by all and possible disruption of the Union.

Calhoun had resigned the Vice-presidency in 1832 to become a Senator from South Carolina when Senator Hayne became governor of the State. Although prior to the nullification movement he had been asso-

³³Ibid., 539.

³⁴Ibid., 542.

ciated with what was then the Democratic-Republican party and had been elected vice president by that party, he entered the Senate in 1833 as a plain honest "nullifier".³⁵ In a speech in 1835, he said:

I stand wholly disconnected with the two great parties contending for supremacy. My political connections are with that small and denounced party which has voluntarily retired from the party strifes of the day, with a view of saving, if possible, the liberty and the constitution of the country in this great crisis.³⁶

The "small and denounced" group that he referred to here was the group that had been definitely committed to States rights and the nullification doctrine. From this time until his death, he held himself aloof from the two major parties, uniting his forces with one or the other only as he saw necessary to pass or defeat measures of Congress.

Calhoun never gave up his theory of "State interposition". From the day that he first propounded the doctrine until his death, his every move seemed to be toward securing a "united" South to oppose the encroachments of the North. It was the only means he could see of preserving the Union. In 1834, he wrote:

I regret to see the course the Whig is pursuing. It is calculated to weaken both the editor, and our party in Virginia. He appears to be ready to abandon the great right of State interposition in favor of the phantom of Strict Construction--a good thing in the abstract, but in practice not worth a farthing, without the right of interposition to enforce it; as the experience of more than forty years has shown. ³⁷

³⁵Von Holst, op. cit., 185.

³⁶Debates in Congress, II, pt. 1, 206-221.

³⁷Correspondence, 341.

The passage of the Compromise Tariff and Force Bill in 1833 closed the tariff controversy so far as we are concerned here. Although Calhoun again opposed the tariff in 1842, there were other issues that overshadowed the tariff issue at that time and made it seem of little importance.

From 1833 to 1850 the slave question took precedence over all others and it is to that issue that we now turn and devote the fourth and final chapter of this paper.

It will be remembered that although no occasion arose that State interposition was threatened as it was in 1833, Calhoun never gave up his contention that a State had a constitutional right to interpose.

Chapter IV

Calhoun and Slavery Extension

The Missouri Compromise was effected in 1820 while Calhoun was secretary of war, hence he had no direct influence. It is very likely that he, with other members of President Monroe's cabinet, agreed that the act was constitutional and that Congress did have the right to prohibit slavery in the territories if it so desired. That Calhoun did give some consideration to the slave issue in 1820, while the Missouri case was being considered is shown in a conversation with John Q. Adams in which he said,

he did not think it would produce a dissolution of the Union, but if it should the South would be from necessity compelled to form an alliance, offensive and defensive, with Great Britain.¹

And with a seer-like vision which was ever to characterize him, he wrote in the same year that he could,

scarcely conceive of a cause of sufficient power to divide this Union, unless a belief in the slave-holding States that it is the intentions of the other States gradually to undermine their property in their slaves and that a disunion is the only means to avert this evil. Should so dangerous a mode of believing once take root, no one can calculate the consequences.²

From either or both of the above statements, it must be agreed that even at that time, Calhoun believed that the Union was merely a confederation of the States from which each was privileged to withdraw at any time it willed. In this belief he was not alone for the greater portion of the statesmen had held the same views. With this attitude, it

¹Von Holst, op. cit., 75.

²William Montgomery Meigs, Life of John Caldwell Calhoun, II, 134, citing a letter to Gallaway in the Markoe Papers in the Library of Congress.

was not hard for him to become the ardent supporter of states rights that he became when the tariff controversy reached its climax a few years later.

The Missouri Compromise was accepted by both sections as a definite solution of the slave question so far as territory included in the Louisiana Purchase was concerned. For the next several years the two sections became involved with the tariff, but in 1833 when the nullification controversy was settled, there appeared a new problem. The abolitionists had begun their work.

The abolitionists were first ignored in both sections, but by the time Congress convened in 1836, they had created so much excitement in the South that President Jackson, in his annual message, complained of their attempts to circulate "inflammatory materials" through the mails with the intention of exciting the slaves to insurrection, and asked Congress to enact a law giving postal officials authority to refuse to receive and send through the mails these "incendiary publications".³

Calhoun requested that a special committee be named to consider this part of the President's message, giving as his reason that the regular committee of the mails was not qualified to act because this was a problem for Southerners and there was only one Southern man on the committee.⁴ The request was granted and Calhoun with four other southern men represented a majority of the committee.⁵ Calhoun reported for the committee that such a law as the President recommended would violate the Constitution, overturn the reserved power of the States, and be dangerous to their peace and safety. At the same time, he proposed a law that would recognize the authority of the States in determining what "incendiary materials" were,

³Works, II, 509.

⁴Ibid.,

⁵Ibid.

and impose a penalty by the General Government upon any official that permitted such to be sent through the mails. According to Calhoun, Congress had no authority whatever to meddle in any way with this question other than to force its officials to abide by various state laws. In discussing his position, he said:

If you refuse co-operation with our laws, and conflict should ensue between yours and ours, the Southern States will never yield to the superiority of yours. We have a remedy in our hands, which, in such event, we shall not fail to apply. We have high authority for asserting that in such cases, "State interposition is the rightful remedy"-- a doctrine first announced by Jefferson.⁶

On March 9, 1836, Calhoun moved that the Senate refuse to receive two petitions from Ohio requesting that slavery be abolished in the District of Columbia.⁷ He said he demanded this on behalf of the state he represented; because the petitions were a foul slander on nearly one-half of the states of the Union; and because the question they involved was one over which Congress had no power to act.⁸ His motion was considered in the North as a malicious attack upon the right of petition. In his defense, he said:

We are about to take the first step that must control all our subsequent movements. . . . If we receive this petition and thereby establish the principle that we are obliged to receive such petitions, . . . I fear the consequences will be ultimately disastrous. Such a course would destroy the confidence of the people of the slave-holding states of this Government. We love and cherish the Union. . . . We will not, cannot permit it to be destroyed. . . . If we are to be exposed here in the heart of the Union, to endless attacks on our rights, our character, and our institutions, . . . we will be compelled to turn our eyes to ourselves. Come what will, should it cost every drop of blood and every cent of property, we must defend ourselves.⁹

⁶Ibid., 533.

⁷Ibid., 465-490.

⁸Ibid., 465.

⁹Ibid., 487-489.

After pointing out the vast possibilities of the South, he said further:

We can take care of ourselves. It is not we, but the Union that is in danger. It is that which demands our care-- demands that the agitation of this question shall cease here-- that you shall refuse to receive these petitions, and decline all jurisdiction over the subject of abolition in every form and shape. It is only on these terms that the Union can be safe. We cannot remain here in an endless struggle in defence of our character, our property, and our institutions.¹⁰

Calhoun was right in thinking that abolition petitions should not be received in Congress but he erred in even hoping that there was anything that he could do to prevent the agitation. Instead, all the discussions in Congress and his "gag resolutions" only tended to add fuel to the fire. The petitions continued to come and Calhoun continued to oppose them, always asserting his devotion to the Union and expressing fear for its safety. He now assumed the attitude and asserted boldly that slavery, instead of being an evil, had proved itself to be a positive good. On this point he argued that certainly the negro race was much better off than they were in Africa. He declared:

I hold concession or compromise to be fatal. If we concede an inch, concession would follow concession, compromise would follow compromise, until our ranks would be so broken that effectual resistance would be impossible.¹¹

Calhoun clearly saw that these abolition petitions were the fore-runners of what the South could expect sooner or later. The only solution he looked for was to quiet the abolitionists. While his colleagues could not so well see it, it was bound to lead to abolition of slavery in all of the states. In a general speech in 1837, he prophesied:

¹⁰Ibid., 489.

¹¹Ibid.

Be assured that emancipation would not satisfy these fanatics:-- that gained, the next step would be to raise the negroes to a social and political equality with the whites; and that being effected, we would soon find the present condition of the two races reversed.¹²

His contentions here were based on his conclusions on the same occasion, that the negro population was increasing much faster than that of the whites in the South, an indication that the race was much better off than abolitionists were willing to admit.

So bitter had Galhoun become against abolition petitions by the close of 1837, he even contemplated a dissolution of the Union, however, he was resolved to labor for less drastic means of solution. In December, 1837, he wrote:

I think the sooner the issue is made the better for us and the country; but how it is to be brought on, I am not prepared to say. I think a Southern convention at the earliest period that the South can be brought to act indispensable.¹³

And again, in January 1838, he wrote:

Speaking of abolition, you say it is better to part peaceably at once, than to live in a state of indecision we do. That is a natural and common conclusion, but those, who make it up, do not think of the difficulty involved in the word; . . . We cannot and ought not to live together as we are at present, exposed to the continual attacks and assaults of the other portion of the Union; but we must act throughout on the defensive, resort to every probable means of arresting the evil, and only act, when all has been done, that can be, and when we shall stand justified before God and man in taking the final step. Any other course would fail in its object, and ruin those, who may attempt it. We must remember, it is the most difficult process in the world to make two people of one; and that there is no example of it, if we except the Jews; I mean by interior cause of complaint, as in our case, though I do not doubt, if the evil be not arrested at the North, we shall add another example.¹⁴

¹²Works, II, 625-633.

¹³Correspondence, 386.

¹⁴Ibid., 391.

Since the first abolition petitions were presented to Congress, Calhoun had feared the consequences if they were received. Now, he had become thoroughly convinced that the Union was in danger and that only a united action on the part of the South could possibly avert the catastrophe. All along, he had believed that the States had the constitutional right to leave the Union, but he was far from wishing that to be done. He continued to hope that the Union might yet be saved. All his correspondence on the subject from this time until his death points to the danger as he sees it.

In May, 1836, he had spoken in Congress in favor of the annexation of Texas. His assertion at the time that the slave-holding states had a special interest in Texas hindered the annexation because it aroused indignation among the abolitionists.¹⁵

When Calhoun became Secretary of State under Tyler he found a note from Pakenham communicating a dispatch to Lord Aberdeen to the effect that the British Government desired to see slavery abolished in Texas, and throughout the world, however, it had no intentions of disturbing the domestic tranquility of the slave-holding states. Calhoun at once wrote and published a reply to Pakenham insisting that abolition in Texas would naturally impinge upon the domestic tranquility of the states adjacent. He then proceeded to praise slavery stronger than ever before.¹⁶ This was poor strategy for Calhoun's note only incensed the abolitionists and delayed annexation still further. Annexation was finally accomplished just before the expiration of Tyler's term.¹⁷

Calhoun was definitely convinced that the territory, or at least

¹⁵Debates in Congress, 24 Cong. 1 sess., XII, pt.2, 1532.

¹⁶Dictionary of American Biography, II, 417.

¹⁷Ibid.

portion of the territory, ceded to the United States by Mexico, was unfit for slavery, but when the Wilmot Proviso came before the Senate, he opposed it with all his might. He took this measure to be a direct affront upon the South. He believed it to be an indication that the North was ready to force the issue with the South. In order to make State sovereignty applicable, he framed a new set of resolutions and presented them to the Senate. His resolutions declared:

- (1) That the territories were the common property of the States.
- (2) That Congress could not deprive any state of its equal rights in any territory acquired or to be acquired.
- (3) That a law depriving the citizens of any state of their right to emigrate with their property would be a violation of the Constitution and the rights of the States.
- (4) That Congress could impose on a state at the time of its admission to the Union no other condition than that its constitution should be republican in form.¹⁸

Therefore, no slaveholder could be barred by Congress from transporting and continuing the use of his slaves in any territory of the United States.

In 1849, Calhoun summoned a meeting of Southern Senators and Congressmen to consider an address he had prepared, and to be endorsed by them and sent to their constituents. It was Calhoun's purpose to appeal to the South to present a united front in the fight for States rights. In the address, he reviewed the slavery controversy and foretold disaster from the existing relations unless the South should unite and hold her rights above the rights of parties. He prophesied: abolition of slavery by a dominant North; hatred between the whites of the two sections; enfranchisement of the negroes; and a party union between the Northern whites and negroes to hold Southern whites in subjection.¹⁹

¹⁸Works, IV, 348, 349.

¹⁹Ibid., VI, 310-311.

The meeting was a failure but within two decades the prophecy was fulfilled in its entirety.

Calhoun wrote in December, 1849, that "The South is more united than I ever knew it to be".²⁰ He was now ready to take a last stand. In July of that year he had written Andrew Pickens Calhoun suggesting a convention of Southern States to be held not later than the following summer. He also suggested that Alabama be persuaded to call the convention. He had begun to realize that such a move would be more effective if led by some state other than South Carolina. The call for the convention was finally made by Mississippi. The convention was to be held in Nashville in the summer of 1850. Calhoun's suggestion was that the call "should be addressed to the people of the South who are desirous of saving the Union and themselves, if the former be possible".²¹

The Thirtieth Congress adjourned with the question of slavery in the territories still unsettled. For the next nine months, Calhoun spent his time in completing his "Disquisition on Government" and "Discourse on the Constitution and Government of the United States". Before either of them were in print, Calhoun was in his grave. Both were essays developing the States rights theory of Government as seen by Calhoun. In the latter essay, he recommended a reorganization of the executive department such that instead of a single officer, it would be vested in two presidents, one to be elected from each of the two great sections of the country. All laws would require the approval of both. This, Calhoun thought would serve as a check upon either of the sections against the other.²²

²⁰Correspondence, 776.

²²Ibid., 769.

²³Von Holst, op. cit., 346.

When the Thirty-first Congress convened, many thought it would be the last. Calhoun even thought so himself. In a conversation with Senator Mason of Virginia, Calhoun said:

The Union is doomed to dissolution; There is no mistaking the signs. I am satisfied in my judgment even were the questions which now agitate Congress settled to the satisfaction and with the concurrence of the Southern States, it would not avert, or materially delay the catastrophe. I fix its probable occurrence within twelve years or three Presidential terms. You and others of your age, will probably live to see it; I shall not. The mode by which it will be done is not so clear; it may be brought about in a manner that none now foresee. But the probability is it will explode in a Presidential election.²³

Certainly, few if any saw that the catastrophe was bound to come. How nearly accurate Calhoun was in this prediction can be seen if we only recall that the election of Lincoln in 1860, brought about the secession of the Southern States and its resultant, the Civil War.

In 1849, an irregular convention was held in California which applied to Congress for statehood with a constitution forbidding slavery. This at once met with Calhoun's opposition. He claimed that California had not been authorized by an enabling act to write a constitution and apply for admission, and that to validate their claim by admitting the state to the Union would forever destroy the senate equilibrium.²⁴ According to this statement, it is to be supposed that Calhoun hoped from this time forward to prevent any states entering the Union forbidding slavery because the slave-holding section had no territory to be admitted as states.

Calhoun's last effort to reconcile the two sections and save

²³Meigs, *op. cit.*, citing The Life and Diplomatic Correspondence of James Murray Mason, by his daughter, Virginia Mason. (The quotation is from a memorandum in Mason's handwriting.)

²⁴Works, VI, 310,311.

the Union was made on March 4, 1850. He was heard a few times briefly after this date but he had grown too weak to force attention. His speech of March 4, 1850, was read by Senator Mason. The entire speech was an appeal to the North to take warning and save the Union before it was too late. He began by saying:

I have, Senators, believed from the first that the agitation of the subject of slavery would if not prevented by some timely and effective measure, end in disunion. Entertaining this opinion, I have on all proper occasions endeavored to call attention of each of the two great parties which divide the country to adopt some measure to prevent so great a disaster, but without success. . . . You have thus forced upon you the greatest and gravest question that can ever come under your consideration. How can the Union be saved? . . . ²⁵

He then went into the history of the slavery issue. He showed how the country had developed and how the population of the North had upset the equilibrium of the House of Representatives and threatened the Senate. He discussed the acts relating to territorial acquisitions and how slavery had been forbidden or excluded. In discussing the abolition petitions, he said:

As for myself, I believed, at an early period, if the party who got up the petitions should succeed in getting Congress to take jurisdiction, that agitation would follow, and that it would, in the end, if not arrested, destroy the Union. I then so expressed myself in debate, and called upon both parties to take grounds against assuming jurisdiction, but in vain. . . . That was the time for the North to show her devotion to the Union; . . . ²⁶

After discussing at length some of the things that he claimed could not save the Union, he then turned to a discussion of the question, "How can the Union be saved?"

To this I answer, there is but one way by which it can be, and that is, by adopting such measures as will satisfy the States belonging to the Southern section that they can remain in the Union consistently with their honor and safety.²⁷

²⁵Congressional Globe, 31 Cong. 1 sess., XXI, pt.1, 451.

²⁶Ibid., 452.

²⁷Ibid., 453.

He had reference here to a constitutional amendment that would guarantee to the Southern States such security for their "peculiar institution" as they desired. He continued:

The South asks for justice, simple justice, and less she ought not take. She has no compromises to offer but the Constitution. She has already surrendered so much that she has little left to surrender. . . . At all events, the responsibility of saving the Union rests on the North and not on the South. . . . If the question is not now settled, it is uncertain whether it can ever hereafter be. . . . If you are unwilling that we should part in peace, tell us so, and we shall know what to do when you reduce the question to submission or resistance.²⁸

Referring to the California question, he said:

California will become the test question. If you admit her, under all the difficulties that oppose her admission, you compel us to infer that you intend to exclude us from the whole of the acquired territories, with the intention of destroying irretrievably the equilibrium between the two sections. . . . I have exerted myself, during the whole period, to arrest it, with the intention of saving the Union if it can be done. . . .²⁹

He closed his speech with these words:

Having faithfully done my duty to the best of my ability, both to the Union and my section, throughout this agitation, I shall have the consolation, let what will come, that I am free from all responsibility.³⁰

But was he free from responsibility? Had he not done more than any other men to keep alive the slavery issue? On the following day in the course of a running debate with Senator Foote from Mississippi, he said:

But I will say--and say it boldly,--for I am not afraid to say the truth on any question,--that as things now stand, the Southern States cannot remain in the Union. . . . If I am judged by my acts, I trust that I shall be found as firm a friend of the Union as any man in it.³¹

²⁸Ibid., 454.

²⁹Ibid., 455.

³⁰Ibid., 456.

³¹Ibid., 464.

No man would dare deny that Calhoun spoke the truth when he said that he was not afraid to speak on any question. Throughout his entire career, he had always been ready and willing to assert himself. Undoubtedly, he was a friend of the Union. From 1833 to 1850 he was constantly putting forth efforts to reconcile the two sections of the country. With the diversity of interests, it was natural that what would please one section would be opposed by the other, but he, more than any one else was able to foresee disaster if some reconciliation were not made.

Conclusion

It is generally agreed that Calhoun was a nationalist from the time he entered national politics until he became involved in the nullification controversy. From that time forward he is treated as a localist. I am constrained to believe that he was a nationalist until the day of his death. If we may take his actions during the first mentioned period of his political career, there must be no question concerning his nationalist views, yet if we take his own words, he was no stronger nationalist than the latter part of his career.

It is admitted that he became champion of States' rights when he wrote the "Exposition" for the legislature of South Carolina but he did so not with any intention of destroying the Union but to secure justice for his section of the country.

The grievance of the South when the "Tariff of Abominations" was passed in 1828 is undeniable. So long as the exports of the country were almost exclusively Southern products--cotton and tobacco--and so long as the Federal revenue was almost entirely derived from duties on imports, it is certain that the Southern industries either supported the Federal Government or paid tribute to Northern manufacturers. The Southerners could not even get a hearing or proper study of the economic issues involved. Their interests were being sacrificed to pretended national interests.

It was in an effort to force consideration of this economic issue that Calhoun propounded the nullification doctrine. Then when his section was still ignored, it became necessary that some effort be made on the part of the South to bring the other sections to their

senses.

Had Calhoun been the arch-conspirator that some have claimed, he could have wished no better time to destroy the Union than in 1833 when the Nullification Ordinance was passed by South Carolina. There is no question but that he was the most popular man in the South at that time, and there is little question that but for his influence, the Ordinance would not have been repealed as it was.

Certainly Calhoun had as much right to support such legislation as would favor his own section as did Clay and Webster. So also did he have the right to oppose legislation that was against the interests of his own section. Yet, Clay and Webster always favored such legislation as would promote the interests of their own section and were never accused of being conspirators or even sectionalists.

That he sought to protect his own section from the encroachments made against it from 1828 to 1850 is shown in his actions in the Senate. He repeatedly asserted on the floor of the Senate and in his correspondence that all his efforts were directed at saving the Union. If others could have realized the actual danger of the Union that he foresaw, it is very likely that something could have been done that would have reconciled the two sections and averted the Civil War that was to come after Calhoun's death.

It is the writer's conviction that Calhoun was as devout a nationalist even to the day of his death as was any other man then living, and had his advice been heeded there would have been no conflict.

Bibliography

Primary Sources:

Cralle, Richard K., Works of John C. Calhoun, 6 vols., D. Appleton and Company, New York, 1855.

Meigs, William Montgomery, Life of John Caldwell Calhoun, 2 vols., Neale Publishing Company, New York, 1917.

Jameson, J. Franklin, (editor) Correspondence of John C. Calhoun, American Historical Association Annual Report, 1899, II, House Document 115.

Von Holst, Herman Eduard, American Statesmen Series, John C. Calhoun, Houghton Mifflin Company, New York and Boston, 1894.

Dodd, William Edward, Statesmen of the Old South, or From Radicalism to Conservative Revolt, The MacMillan Company, New York, 1911.

Richardson, James D., (compiler) A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents, 10 vols., Bureau of National Literature and Art, New York, 1909.

Annals of Congress, Gales and Seaton, Washington, D. C.

1. 12 Congress, 1 session, part 1.
2. 13 Congress, 3 session, part 3.
3. 14 Congress, 1 session,
4. 14 Congress, 2 session, part 2

Register of Debates in Congress, Gales and Seaton, Washington, D. C.

1. 22 Congress, 1 session, X, part 1.
2. 22 Congress, 2 session, XI, part 1.
3. 24 Congress, 1 session, XII, part 2.

Congressional Globe, Blair and Rives, Washington, D. C.

1. 29 Congress, 1 session, XV, part 1.
2. 30 Congress, 1 session, XIX, part 1.
3. 31 Congress, 1 session, XXI, part 1.

Secondary Sources (Books):

Encyclopaedia Britannica, Encyclopaedia Britannica Corporation, 24 vols., 14th edition, New York, 1936.

Dictionary of American Biography, 20 vols., edited by Allen Johnson, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1928.

Bibliography (continued)

Bowers, Claude G., The Party Battles of the Jackson Period, Houghton Mifflin Company, New York, 1922.

McMaster, John Bach, History of the People of the United States from the Revolution to the Civil War, 8 vols., D. Appleton Company, New York, 1883-1913.

Lord, John, Beacon Lights of History, 10 vols., Fords, Howard, and Hulbert, New York, 1894.

Secondary Sources (articles):

Wamsley, James Elliot, "Calhoun's Return to the Senate", American Historical Association Annual Report, 1913, I, 161-165.

Wise, Henry A., "How Calhoun was made Secretary of State", Historic Characters and Famous Events, XI, 323-326. J. B. Millet, Boston, 1902.

White, Henry Alexander, "John C. Calhoun", Library of Southern Literature, II, The Martin and Hoyt Company, Atlanta, 1907.

STRATFORDMORE PARCHMENT

100% RAG U.S.A.