Tallmadge Amendment and Missouri controversy | A problem in motivation

Duane Diamond Mercer

The University of Montana

Let us know how access to this document benefits you.
Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.umt.edu/etd

Recommended Citation
https://scholarworks.umt.edu/etd/3840

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate School at ScholarWorks at University of Montana. It has been accepted for inclusion in Graduate Student Theses, Dissertations, & Professional Papers by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks at University of Montana. For more information, please contact scholarworks@mso.umt.edu.
THE TALLMADGE AMENDMENT AND MISSOURI CONTROVERSY:

A PROBLEM IN MOTIVATION

by

DUANE DIAMOND MERCER

B.A. Montana State University, 1960

Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY

1963

Approved by:

[Signatures]

Chairman, Board of Examiners

Dean, Graduate School

AUG 23 1963

Date
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>I. INTRODUCTION: SOME GENERAL REMARKS ON SLAVERY AND POLITICS, 1787-1819</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>II. THE MISSOURI CONTROVERSY AND THE TALLMADGE AMENDMENT</strong></td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>III. THE EVIDENCE OF THE ADAMS PAPERS</strong></td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. The Question of Personal and Sectional Motivation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. The Long-range Effects and Significance of the Controversy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. John Quincy Adams' Role</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**                                                          | 71   |
CHRONOLOGY

December 18, 1818 - Alabama and Missouri petitioned Congress for permission to frame constitutions preparatory to their admission into the Union

February 15, 1819 - Tallmadge amendment introduced into the House

February 17, 1819 - House passage of the Tallmadge amendment

March 2, 1819 - House rejection of Senate bill calling for indefinite postponement of the Tallmadge amendment

December 8, 1819 - John Scott, the Missouri delegate, introduced into the House a memorial of the Territorial Legislature requesting statehood

March 3, 1820 - Congressional passage of first Missouri Compromise

November 16, 1820 - Missouri delegation refused seats in Congress

February 26-28, 1821 - Congressional passage of the second Missouri Compromise

August 10, 1821 - Missouri admitted into the Union
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION: SOME GENERAL REMARKS ON SLAVERY AND POLITICS, 1787-1819

The problem of slavery in the new nation perplexed and exasperated the learned statesmen who were given the task of formulating a constitution for the victorious republic. Americans on both sides of the Mason-Dixon line seemed to agree mutually that the anomalous institution of slavery was morally wrong. However, the fact remained that almost half of the thirteen original states had apologetically accepted slavery as part of their social and economic way of life.\(^1\)

Confronted with this actuality, the founding fathers at the Constitutional Convention were obliged to contrive an agreement which would settle this vexing moral-economic question lest the new-born country be severed by geographic disunion. The solution to this dilemma consisted of two hard-fought compromises.

The first concordance related to slaves and the apportioning of representation in Congress. Southern delegates wished slaves to be counted in the apportioning of representatives for the lower house. Northerners objected to this proposal, stating that slaves were to be regarded only as property. They argued that if slaves should be considered in apportionment, they should also be federally taxed as

\(^1\)William Sumner Jenkins, Pro-Slavery Thought in the Old South (Chapel Hill, 1935), pp. 48-49.
persons. The latter overture proved extremely abhorrent to Southerners. Southern delegates insisted that slave representation in Congress be instituted lest any future attempt would be made by the North to abolish slavery. This resolution was further accentuated with a Southern threat to leave the Convention if affirmative action was not taken on their plan. 2

Finally an agreement was reached that in apportioning representation and direct taxes among the states, three-fifths of the slaves should be counted as part of the population. 3 As with any compromise, neither side was thoroughly satisfied. Nevertheless, the three-fifths agreement, which was referred to as the "federal ratio compromise," staved off a potential split in the Union and helped promote a political balance of power between the North and South. 4

The second slavery compromise related to the so-called African slave trade. This act set a twenty year limit (with January 1, 1808, as the date of expiration) on the importation of slaves. 5 During this period of time each state could pass legislation regulating its own state trade. 6

---

3 Constitution of the United States, Article one, Section two.
5 Constitution, Article one, Section nine.
6 Jenkins, op. cit., p. 49.
Despite the actuality that some Northern abolitionists wanted an immediate end to the slave trade, the twenty year limit pleased most Northerners for they believed that slavery would slowly wither away if it was denied replenishment through foreign slave trade. Further, from an economic point of view, New England shipping interests would profit by a twenty year continuation of the triangular trade.\(^7\)

But one must not overlook the benefits it gave the South. Not only did the South have a twenty year extension of slave trade, but it also had a means of preserving the high price of its Negro "property." The method was as simple as the supply and demand principle. Slave owners and slave traders alike agreed that in order for slave prices to remain high the number of slaves must be limited.\(^8\) In addition, some states, especially Virginia and Maryland, prospered as slave breeding areas.\(^9\) Needless to say, this prosperity would not have been so great if the market had been flooded by Africans. Professor Ulrich Bonnell Phillips noted four Southern considerations against an unlimited slave trade: (1) an abundance of slave labor would lead to a large increase in staple exports and therefore low world market prices; (2) it would result in excessive

\(^7\)Eaton, op. cit., p. 114.


\(^9\)Lewis Cecil Gray, History of Agriculture in the Southern United States to 1860 (Washington, 1933), II, pp. 661-663.
debt to outside interests; (3) it would hinder the civilizing of Negroes already on hand; and (4) an adverse proportion of blacks to whites would heighten the dangerous possibility of slave insurrections. Thus, in retrospect, it is evident that this limitation on slave trade benefited all parties to some extent.

In the subsequent twenty-two year epoch, i.e., 1787 to 1819, there was a relative tranquility between the North and South concerning the salient issue of slavery. Only on rare occasions was slavery openly debated in Congress. During the latter part of this period some anti-slavery agitation was initiated by various church groups, but this, for the most part, was executed on a minor scale. In general, however, it should be noted that the North opposed the "peculiar institution" on moral grounds. The South countered by saying that the slave was absolutely essential for the maintenance of its large-scale and expanding agrarian economy which was becoming increasingly dependent upon slave labor. Furthermore, Southerners stated that Negroes were an inferior race which must be controlled by the white man "if civilization were to be preserved." Some

11 Jenkins, op. cit., pp. 48-49.
12 Probably the most prominent and persistent in this movement were the Quakers.
13 Jenkins, op. cit., pp. 49-50.
believed that they were doing the Negro a service by rescuing him from the African wilds and assimilating him into a more advanced western culture. Moreover, emancipation seemed out of the question because it would lead to economic and social difficulties -- namely the problem of finding work for these unskilled slaves; and the problem of Negroes being "driven into every species of crime for subsistence; and destined to a life of idleness, anxiety and guilt."\(^{15}\)

While there were some who would defend slavery as a positive good, most Southerners were, in varying degrees, quite apologetic about the entire issue. They felt themselves the unfortunate inheritors of a legacy which might gradually be rectified to the satisfaction of all concerned. On numerous occasions responsible Southern spokesmen openly admitted that slavery was a "grave social problem."\(^{16}\) And, in fact, certain prominent figures took steps to correct the nation's blight. One such effort was the American Colonization Society. Founded in Washington in 1817, this organization sought to alleviate the Negro problem by sponsoring the immigration and settlement of American Negroes to Liberia where they could develop their own country. The society enjoyed the active support of some influential Southern men such as Speaker of the House Henry Clay, John Eager Howard, Samuel Smith, and John C. Herbert of Maryland,


\(^{16}\)Charles S. Sydnor, The Development of Southern Sectionalism, 1819-1868 (Baton Rouge, 1948), p. 95.
John Taylor of Caroline, General Andrew Jackson, and General John Mason, District of Columbia. These six men, together with seven distinguished Northerners, were selected as the thirteen original vice-presidents of the organization. 17

Other Southerners such as Thomas Jefferson, John Randolph, and George Washington exhibited a benevolent behavior toward their slaves. By instituting various reforms on their own plantations (e.g., improvement of living and working conditions and the freeing of slaves upon the owner's death) it was hoped that more slave holders would follow their example. But, unfortunately, after the invention of the cotton gin, the profit incentive helped stifle any trend toward gradual emancipation.

An analysis of the period from 1787 to 1819 brings to light a number of state and national acts which promoted the aforesaid degree of harmony. To begin with, Northern fears of being surrounded by slave states were abated by the Northwest Ordinance of 1787 18 which excluded slavery in the territory from the Alleghenies to the Mississippi. On the other hand, Southern slaveholders were free to settle in territory south of the Ohio and, after the Louisiana


18 The Ordinance was largely based upon the Ordinance of 1784 which was drafted by a committee headed by Jefferson. Under the original plan slavery would be excluded from the entire West after the year 1800. This clause, however, failed to pass Congress. Needless to say, the striking out of that section was a victory for the South; and it helped sustain the delicate North-South equilibrium.
Purchase in 1803, west of the Mississippi.  

While the North was able to achieve partial victories through various compromises in 1787, slave states won a smashing coup de maître in the Fugitive Slave Act of 1793. This law, which was passed unanimously in the Senate and by a forty-eight to seven vote in the lower house, provided for the extradition of fugitive slaves to their original masters. Passage of this bill was definitely a triumph for the South. Further, this act was significant as a legal means of allaying potentially explosive disputes between Northern and Southern states.

In the realm of party politics there was for the most part a keen balance between North-South interests. Historians generally agree that political parties did not evolve until the latter part of Washington's first term. In the subsequent decade party lines solidified and the newly-formed Democratic-Republican party, which was chiefly supported by agrarians and the lower economic strata of America, seemed favorably disposed toward the interests of slavery. In a sense this was a marriage of necessity. Although Jefferson's party had substantial support from Northern farmers, small businessmen, city workers, and the middle class in general, it still needed Southern votes to insure victory in the election of 1801. From the

---


standpoint of the South, slave owners and non-slaveholders were obliged to sustain a party which was usually sympathetic to their interests. Within the Democratic-Republican party there seemed to be a degree of understanding between representatives from the free North and the slaveholding South. Party members from both regions recognized the moral wrongs of slavery and there existed a Southern hope that eventually the "peculiar institution" would become obsolete.

But whatever possibilities there were for the gradual elimination of slavery were rudely shattered by an unemployed twenty-eight year old Connecticut schoolmaster. Eli Whitney's invention of the cotton gin in 1793 resurrected slavery from its unprofitability, thereby instilling slavery as a lucrative and seemingly permanent institution. Prior to this time Negro labor was primarily used in the cultivation of three crops: indigo, rice, and tobacco. However, income from such endeavors was waning because of decreasing demand and falling prices. Thus an economic life-or-death situation for slavery had been rapidly evolving.

At this crucial time the cotton gin liberated slavery from the economic doldrums it had occupied. The marvelous machine transformed a relatively unprofitable commodity into the king of the

---

21 Eaton, op. cit., p. 171.

22 Constance M. Green, Eli Whitney and the Birth of American Technology (New York, 1956), pp. 18, 36-37, 144.

agrarian realm. No longer would slaves need to devote a full day's work for the preparation of one or two pounds of lint. Instead of spending countless hours picking cotton seeds, slave labor could be utilized to cultivate more cotton for the insatiable appetite of the new machine.

In addition to the cotton gin, cotton production was further complemented by prior and subsequent technological advances in the British textile industry. Edmund Cartwright's power loom, Samuel Crompton's "mule," James Hargreaves' "spinning jenny," Richard Arkwright's "water frame," British manufacturing ingenuity, Whitney's cotton gin, and the South's productive cotton fields -- all united in a capitalistic venture which proved worthwhile for all (i.e., white men) concerned. 25

For the next few decades the South had an ever-growing demand for its white fiber. The South responded with remarkable efficiency. In the year prior to the invention of the cotton gin, the total production of raw cotton was 6,270 bales (one bale weighing approximately 500 pounds). 26 Early in 1793 Whitney invented his astonishing machine, 27 and by the end of the year the output of raw cotton rose to 10,449 bales, almost twice that of the previous year. By

26Gray, op. cit., p. 1026.
27Green, op. cit., p. 144.
the turn of the century production increased seven fold to 73,145 bales. And in the year of the Tallmadge amendment cotton output rocketed to 349,005 bales, over thirty times the 1793 figure. 28 Of the total amount of cotton raised in the 1793-1815 period, a majority of most of the yearly crops were exported. To a considerable degree, Great Britain was its chief customer (with, of course, a distinct lull during the War of 1812). 29

Running concurrently to this increase in cotton exports was a gradual expansion in its domestic consumption. Up to the turn of the century home use of the fiber constituted considerably less than fifty per cent of the total production. However, between 1800 and 1819 national use generally made up about half of each year's crop. Several factors were responsible for this fact. America's

28 Other figures from Gray might serve to illustrate the almost uninterrupted expansion of cotton production (all figures are given in bales): 1794 - 16,719; 1795 - 16,719; 1796 - 20,899; 1797 - 22,989; 1798 - 31,348; 1799 - 41,797; 1800 - no figures; 1801 - 100,313; 1802 - 114,943; 1803 - 125,392; 1804 - 135,813; 1805 - 146,290; 1806 - 167,189; 1807 - 167,189; 1808 - 156,740; 1809 - 171,369; 1810 - 177,638; 1811 - 167,189; 1812 - 156,740; 1813 - 156,740; 1814 - 167,189; 1815 - 208,986; 1816 - 259,143; 1817 - 271,682; 1818 - 261,233.

29 Douglass C. North, The Economic Growth of the United States, 1790-1860 (Englewood Cliffs, 1961), p. 231. Figures from the above mentioned source illustrate the rapid growth in volume of cotton exports (please note that these figures were originally in thousands of pounds and had to therefore be converted to bales by dividing by 500 pounds - the average weight of a bale): 1793 - 976; 1794 - 320; 1795 - 12,552; 1796 - 12,214; 1797 - 7,576; 1798 - 18,720; 1799 - 19,064; 1800 - 35,580; 1801 - 41,622; 1802 - 55,002; 1803 - 82,212; 1804 - 76,236; 1805 - 80,666; 1806 - 74,982; 1807 - 132,426; 1808 - 212,128; 1809 - 166,120; 1810 - no figures; 1811 - 124,372; 1812 - 57,906; 1813 - 38,800; 1814 - 35,612; 1815 - 165,998.
development of its own textile industry led to a larger demand for cotton. Moreover, household manufactures exhibited a significant growth. "In the census of 1810 Southern States and Territories, not including Maryland, Kentucky, and North Carolina, reported over 12,000,000 yards of cotton goods produced in households."  

In addition to an expanding foreign demand and a growing domestic textile production, another important incentive for the short-staple cotton grower was the handsome price on the New Orleans cotton exchange. Prices fluctuated considerably from month to month, yet for the period from 1802 to 1819 short-staple cotton brought an average price of more than eighteen cents a pound. In retrospect one can see that this figure far surpassed the price for any comparable span of years during the ante bellum era.

High market prices, foreign requests for more cotton, an expanding domestic consumption, favorable growing conditions, improved agricultural methods, and bountiful virgin lands in the Southwest -

30 Gray, op. cit., pp. 695-696.
31 Ibid., p. 696.
all of these factors emphasized a fuller utilization of the existing slave labor force; and it further accentuated the demand for more slaves. Thus, with the advent of the cotton gin, slavery was revitalized as a profitable institution and the slave trade began a new phase of reactivation.\(^\text{34}\) Between 1790 and 1800 the estimated number of slaves imported into the United States was 30,000; from 1800 to 1810 - 60,000; from 1810 to 1820 - 50,000. After 1807 the illicit slave traffic replaced the legally sanctioned trade, and for the 1808-1820 period it was approximated that 60,000 slaves were smuggled into America. In addition to this enlargement in the slave population, good treatment and encouragement of breeding helped further multiply the Negro numbers.\(^\text{35}\) As the black throngs grew and the "King Cotton" economy expanded, a subsequent transformation was taking place in the minds of the Southern leadership.

In the quarter-century period prior to the Tallmadge amendment one can see a picture of a prosperous Southern culture becoming increasingly dependent upon slavery as a means of economic livelihood. Correspondingly, slave owners felt that the "peculiar institution" was perhaps more permanent and economically sound than they had previously thought. Therefore, within the Southern mind a new attitude toward slavery was developing. This frame of mind, which was closely interwoven with economic considerations, was destined to play a signi-


\(^{35}\) Gray, op. cit., pp. 640-650.
cant role in the congressional debates of the Missouri controversy.

Turning once again to political attitudes toward slavery, it might be noted that the marriage of convenience or necessity between the Democratic-Republicans and the slave interests had certainly not been affirmed by any admiration of slavery by the party's leader. Unmistakably Jefferson was against slavery, but his party regarded slavery as a local issue which should be dealt with locally. Similarly, through their strict interpretation of the Constitution, Jefferson and his followers believed in a broad spectrum of states' rights. 36

On the other side of the political ledger, to some extent, Federalists, most of whom were located in the North, differed from their Democratic-Republican compatriots. Generally, Federalists could be seen in the ranks of wealthy merchants, well-to-do farmers, bankers, factory owners (what few there were), and various professional people. Nevertheless, a number of Federalists could also be found in the lower strata of society. Regardless of their station in life, party members were joined by certain fundamental beliefs.

Federalist doctrine was based upon a liberal interpretation of the Constitution, an interpretation which promoted a strong central government. Needless to say, this principle negated the states-rights aspirations of the opposition. Furthermore, most Federalists were opposed to slavery. Indeed, Federalist disdain toward the issue intensified as slavery in the North decreased and as Federalist

political power began ebbing.\textsuperscript{37} Perhaps this suggests that other than humanitarian motivations were at work in the anti-slavery movement within the party. This contravention of slavery became a unifying force and a rallying cry for all party members.

Party leaders from both sides not only disagreed politically but they also did not share the same opinion about the development of the United States. The party of Alexander Hamilton, George Washington, and John Adams envisioned an industrial America, a nation of cities and factories. Jefferson, on the other hand, despised and discounted any forecasts of an urban America. He instead believed that the America of the future would consist of endless small farms with a tolerable minimum of cities. Indeed, Jefferson equated urban areas with dens of iniquity, and he regarded "the mobs of great cities" as similar to sores on the human body.\textsuperscript{38} Jefferson's view was in accord with the tenor of the South and the Democratic-Republican party.

Because of these mutual disagreements, both political and economic, there was a degree of political balance between the free North and the slave South. An analysis of presidential elections between 1789 and 1816 indicates that the two political parties were almost equal in strength. For the first three presidential terms the Federalists were in power. On the other hand, the Democratic-


\textsuperscript{38}Nettels, op. cit., p. 127.
Republicans held the presidency by a substantial plurality in the elections of 1804, 1808, and 1816. In 1800 and 1812 the Democratic-Republicans also captured the presidency. However, both of these elections were relatively even. On the eve of the Missouri controversy Federalist influence had waned. The political balance of power had been put in jeopardy by a party which tended to favor a states-rights philosophy analogous to the popular feelings of the

39Thomas Hudson McKee, The National Conventions and Platforms of all Political Parties, 1789-1905 (Baltimore, 1905), pp. 2-18. In the 1789 electoral college vote the Federalists had overwhelming control. Washington had 69, Adams 34, and Jay 9, while a number of other candidates had from six to one votes. In the 1792 vote the Federalists elected Washington - 132, and Adams - 77; and the Democratic-Republicans made some gains with Clinton - 50, and Jefferson - 41. In the 1796 electoral vote Federalist candidates, Adams and Thomas Pinckney, received 71 and 59 votes; and the Democratic-Republican candidates, Jefferson and Aaron Burr, received 59 and 30 votes. Adams became president and Jefferson was made vice-president. In the election of 1800 both Democratic-Republican candidates, Jefferson and Burr, received 73 votes and the House elected Jefferson as president and Burr as vice-president. In this election the Federalists made a strong showing with Adams and Pinckney polling 65 and 64. In the election of 1804 the Democratic-Republicans won by a landslide. Jefferson and Clinton won the presidency and vice-presidency by the same 162 vote. Pinckney and Rufus King each polled 14. In the election of 1808 James Madison and Clinton, the Democratic-Republican candidates, won 122 and 113. Pinckney and King polled 147 each. In the election of 1812 the Democratic-Republicans, Madison and Elbridge Gerry won by 128 and 131. The Federalists with Clinton and Jared Ingersoll made a relatively strong showing with 89 and 86. In the election of 1816 James Monroe and Daniel Tompkins, Democratic-Republicans, won with votes of 183. The Federalists, King and John E. Howard, received votes of 34 and 22.
The impending Missouri controversy proved a threat to both sides of the political balance. During the previous thirty years both had lived amicably with the problem of slavery, i.e., neither side had done much to irritate the other. A survey of congressional debates indicates that slavery and laws pertaining to slavery were discussed only on rare occasions during this period. A status quo situation was desired by both parties.

Democratic-Republican power was much more pronounced in the legislative branch. Almost from the very beginning the Democratic-Republicans had a majority in one or both houses. These figures will bear out that point: First Congress: Senate - 26 Federalists, House - 53 Federalists, 12 Democrats; Second Congress: Senate - 17 Federalists, 13 Democrats, House - 55 Federalists, 14 Democrats; Third Congress: Senate - 18 Federalists, 12 Democrats, House - 51 Federalists, 54 Democrats; Fourth Congress: Senate - 19 Federalists, 13 Democrats, House - 56 Federalists, 59 Democrats; Fifth Congress: Senate - 21 Federalists, 11 Democrats, House - 51 Federalists, 54 Democrats; Sixth Congress: Senate - 19 Federalists, 13 Democrats, House - 57 Federalists, 58 Democrats; Seventh Congress: Senate - 13 Federalists, 19 Democrats, House - 31 Federalists, 71 Democrats; Eighth Congress: Senate - 10 Federalists, 24 Democrats, House - 38 Federalists, 103 Democrats; Ninth Congress: Senate - 7 Federalists, 27 Democrats, House - 29 Federalists, 112 Democrats; Tenth Congress: Senate - 7 Federalists, 27 Democrats, House - 31 Federalists, 110 Democrats; Eleventh Congress: Senate - 10 Federalists, 24 Democrats, House - 46 Federalists, 95 Democrats; Twelfth Congress: Senate - 6 Federalists, 30 Democrats, House - 36 Federalists, 105 Democrats; Thirteenth Congress: Senate - 9 Federalists, 27 Democrats, House - 67 Federalists, 115 Democrats; Fourteenth Congress: Senate - 12 Federalists, 26 Democrats, House - 61 Federalists, 122 Democrats; Fifteenth Congress: Senate - 10 Federalists, 34 Democrats, House - 57 Federalists, 128 Democrats.

40Democratic-Republican power was much more pronounced in the legislative branch. Almost from the very beginning the Democratic-Republicans had a majority in one or both houses. These figures will bear out that point: First Congress: Senate - 26 Federalists, House - 53 Federalists, 12 Democrats; Second Congress: Senate - 17 Federalists, 13 Democrats, House - 55 Federalists, 14 Democrats; Third Congress: Senate - 18 Federalists, 12 Democrats, House - 51 Federalists, 54 Democrats; Fourth Congress: Senate - 19 Federalists, 13 Democrats, House - 56 Federalists, 59 Democrats; Fifth Congress: Senate - 21 Federalists, 11 Democrats, House - 51 Federalists, 54 Democrats; Sixth Congress: Senate - 19 Federalists, 13 Democrats, House - 57 Federalists, 58 Democrats; Seventh Congress: Senate - 13 Federalists, 19 Democrats, House - 31 Federalists, 71 Democrats; Eighth Congress: Senate - 10 Federalists, 24 Democrats, House - 38 Federalists, 103 Democrats; Ninth Congress: Senate - 7 Federalists, 27 Democrats, House - 29 Federalists, 112 Democrats; Tenth Congress: Senate - 7 Federalists, 27 Democrats, House - 31 Federalists, 110 Democrats; Eleventh Congress: Senate - 10 Federalists, 24 Democrats, House - 46 Federalists, 95 Democrats; Twelfth Congress: Senate - 6 Federalists, 30 Democrats, House - 36 Federalists, 105 Democrats; Thirteenth Congress: Senate - 9 Federalists, 27 Democrats, House - 67 Federalists, 115 Democrats; Fourteenth Congress: Senate - 12 Federalists, 26 Democrats, House - 61 Federalists, 122 Democrats; Fifteenth Congress: Senate - 10 Federalists, 34 Democrats, House - 57 Federalists, 128 Democrats.

41Jenkins, op. cit., pp. 49-50.
But it was inevitable that the status quo would be threatened and eventually broken. Slavery was too torrid a topic to lie tranquil under a status quo. This issue provided a fulcrum which anti-slave congressmen used to menace the balance of power. Indeed, it can be said that the United States was never the same after the Missouri controversy had run its course.
CHAPTER II

THE MISSOURI CONTROVERSY AND THE TALLMADGE AMENDMENT

On the eve of the Missouri controversy the free states possessed a substantial majority in the House while a delicate eleven to ten balance in the upper house favored the anti-slave states.\(^1\) This situation did not remain unchallenged for on December 18, 1818, Alabama and Missouri, two slave territories, petitioned Congress for permission to frame constitutions preparatory to their admission into the Union.\(^2\)

Both states next proceeded to draw up constitutions which allowed slavery. No serious objection was raised to Alabama's entrance into the Union and on December 14, 1819, it achieved statehood. The admission of Alabama evened the number of senators from both sides of the Mason-Dixon line. However, this status quo situation was threatened by Missouri and a series of long congressional debates arose. One important and often misunderstood figure in this dispute was a

---

\(^1\)Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, North and South Carolina, Georgia, Kentucky, Tennessee, Louisiana, and Mississippi made up the ten slave states. The eleven free states included New York, New Hampshire, New Jersey, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, Pennsylvania, Vermont, Ohio, Indiana and Illinois.

freshman representative from New York, James Tallmadge, Junior.3

Tallmadge was born on January 20, 1778, in Stanford, Dutchess
County, New York. The son of a Revolutionary War hero, Colonel
James Tallmadge, and a descendant of one of the earliest New England
families, James Tallmadge, Junior, graduated from Rhode Island Col­
lege (now Brown University) in 1798. During the next two years he
worked as the private secretary of the Democratic Governor of New
York, De Witt Clinton. Following that politically enlightening ex­
perience, Tallmadge studied law and was admitted to the New York bar
in 1802. He commenced his practice in Poughkeepsie, New York, and
soon became one of the state's most prominent and successful lawyers.
In addition to his professional pursuits, he was a gentleman farmer,
owning a sizable farm in Dutchess County. At the beginning of the
War of 1812 he was appointed brigadier general of the New York militia
and toward the end of the war he took charge of the defense of New
York City. After the war he continued his law practice and in 1817
he was elected to the House of Representatives.

Tallmadge's national political career proved to be both short
and significant. Serving only one term (from June 6, 1817, to March
3, 1819), he made an unmistakable imprint on American history.4

3Lucien Carr, Missouri - A Bone of Contention (Boston, 1894)
p. 139.

4Dumas Malone, editor, Dictionary of American Biography (New
York, 1936), XVIII, pp. 285–286; Biographical Directory of the
cited as Directory).
On February 15, 1819, Tallmadge introduced an amendment to a bill concerning the admission of Missouri as a state. The bill stated:

That the further introduction of slavery or involuntary servitude be prohibited, except for punishment of crimes, whereof the party shall have been fully convicted; and that all children born within the said State, after the admission thereof into the Union, shall be free at the age of twenty-five years.  

The debate which followed thus entailed two questions: (1) Had Congress the right to designate conditions for a state government, i.e., requirements other than a republican form of government; and (2) would it be wise to exercise this power?

Although Tallmadge introduced the amendment, poor health prevented him from taking a truly active part in the discussion which followed. It was thus fortunate that John W. Taylor, a fellow colleague from New York, was able to carry the burden of the debate in the early stages. Taylor began by emphasizing the magnitude of a congressional decision to extend slavery beyond the Mississippi. Continuing his oratory, he posed the question of whether or not congressional power was supreme over territorial governments. The New York representative answered affirmatively, citing Article four, Section three of the Constitution as proof of his reply. Taylor went on to say that slavery had been excluded by the new state constitutions

---

5 Annals, op. cit., p. 1170.

6 This section provides that "the Congress shall have the power to dispose of and make all needful rules and regulations respecting the territory or other property belonging to the United States."
of Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois; and that since Missouri was in the same latitude and had similar soil products and climate, it should be treated likewise. Continuing his attack, Taylor asserted moral, humanitarian, and socio-economic reasons for his position. The Scriptures provided the primary basis for his admonishment of slavery on moral grounds. Closely akin to moral considerations was a strong humanitarian concern for the disenfranchisement of the Negroes. Taylor felt that "every citizen is entitled to equal rights." 

More elaborate arguments were posed against slavery on the socio-economic front. It was argued by Taylor that slavery in Missouri would stimulate the already illicit African slave trade. Moreover, he contended that acceptance of slavery in Missouri would cause the state to become settled by rich planters whereas the exclusion of slavery would bring emigrants from the "poorer and laborious classes of society." Taylor next castigated the Southern contention that a prohibition of slavery in Missouri would diminish the price and sales of public land. He made his point by comparing land prices of equivalent holdings on both sides of the Pennsylvania-Maryland border. He illustrated how slave-free Pennsylvanian acreage sold for more than that of its southern neighbor. Acting as a partisan Northern politician of the first order, Taylor gave this frank observation:

7Annals, op. cit., p. 1177.
8Ibid., p. 1176.
Who has travelled along the line which divided that state [Maryland] from Pennsylvania, and has not observed that no monuments are necessary to mark the boundary; that it is easily traced by following the dividing lines between highly cultivated and plantations laying open to the common and overrun with weeds; . . . between a neat, blooming, animated, rosy-cheeked peasantry on one side, and a squalid, slow-motioned, black population on the other? Our vote this day will determine which of these descriptions will hereafter best suit the inhabitants of the new world beyond the Mississippi?

With those stirring words Taylor concluded his speech and yielded to another Northerner.

Representative Timothy Fuller of Massachusetts sided with Taylor's constitutional argument and stated slavery was contrary to this country's republican form of government. The second paragraph of the Declaration of Independence was quoted and from this he reasoned that since slaves were "born free" in this country, they should also be entitled to equal privileges.

The Massachusetts representative was then interrupted by several congressmen who felt it improper to question the republican form of government of slaveholding states and their right to hold slaves as property. Fuller quickly asserted that he was not denying the property rights of original slave states, i.e., slaveholding states at the time the Constitution was promulgated, but rather that slavery should not be planted in future states. Moreover, he stated that the

\[^{9}\text{Ibid.}, \text{p. 1178.}\]

\[^{10}\text{The second paragraph of the Declaration of Independence reads: }"\text{We hold these truths to be self-evident - that all men are created equal - that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights - that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."}\]
Constitution prohibited slave importation and exportation after 1808 and any transporting of slaves across state lines would be in violation of that law. With the termination of Fuller's speech the North temporarily rested its case.

Fuller's oration was particularly significant in that he used the Declaration of Independence in defense of the Tallmadge amendment. This was the first reference to the document during the course of the 1819 debate, and it gave rise to a variety of later interpretations. With the exception of a few remarks on the Declaration by Tallmadge, representatives preferred to cite other evidence. However, as Phillip F. Detweiler notes in "Congressional Debate on Slavery and the Declaration of Independence, 1819-1821," in the Missouri debates of 1820 a more elaborate specter of opinions evolved. He emphasizes that while some congressmen denied or discounted the applicability of Jefferson's work to the question of slavery, a number of congressmen from both sides of the Mason-Dixon line employed the document in support of their contentions. Northerners chiefly echoed the earlier remarks of Fuller, whereas their Southern compatriots asserted that a restriction of slavery would be contrary to the natural right of property and the principle of national

---

11 Fuller admitted that Congress had not enforced this law but that it possessed the power to do so.

12 Annals, op. cit., pp. 1178-1184.

sovereignty, namely the privilege of Missourians to form their own government. Detweiler closes his article by stating that the most significant aspect of the controversy was that the Declaration had been analyzed and utilized by both sides. In short, the Missouri debates provided the first opportunity for slavery to be fully considered in light of the Declaration. Yet the arguments over the relationship between the Declaration and slavery only constitute a minor portion of the discussion of the Tallmadge amendment. Moreover, although the North had effectively used the document on behalf of its beliefs, the South was not without capable spokesmen or quick rebuttals.

The South found its champion in Representative Phillip Pendleton Barbour of Virginia. The Virginian began his oration by conceding that the Constitution had granted Congress legislative power over territories. However, Barbour explained, sovereign states came under different regulations. Under the Constitution all powers not specifically granted to the national government belong to the states. Thus, he reasoned, since the Constitution did not exclude slavery from any state, each state should decide the issue itself.

After lauding the treatment of Negroes in the South, Barbour said that an expansion of slavery into the West would lessen the likelihood of insurrections. He made a nationalistic appeal for Congress to realize that the only way that sectionalism could be

\[1\] Ibid.
alleviated would be by integrating the two ways of life, slaveholding and free, west of the Mississippi. From nationalistic considerations Barbour transferred his argument to economic thoughts. He alleged that a prohibition of slavery would decrease the number of prospective buyers of western lands and this, in turn, would depress land values. Shrewdly Barbour inferred that Northern interests would profit by purchasing this land at deflated prices.\(^{15}\)

Upon completion of the Virginian's speech, Representative Arthur Livermore of New Hampshire rose to voice his feelings. His short oration was largely a reiteration of what previous Northerners had said. Livermore deplored the existence of slavery in America and contended that it should be confined to its present area. He flatly denied that slavery was established by the Constitution. Terminating his discourse, he made a plea for the prevention of the growth of "a sin which sits heavy on the soul of every one of us."\(^{16}\)

With the conclusion of debate, in the words of the Annals, "The question being put on the motion of Mr. Tallmadge to amend the bill, the vote was -- for the amendment 79, against it 67."\(^{17}\) After the vote the House discussed other provisions of the Missouri bill until the hour of adjournment.

On the following day, February 16, 1819, the House convened

\(^{15}\text{Annals, op. cit., pp. 1181-1191.}\)
\(^{16}\text{Ibid., p. 1193.}\)
\(^{17}\text{Ibid.}\)
and continued the discussion. John Scott, a delegate from Missouri, was first to rise and voice his opinion. Scott argued against the amendment primarily on constitutional grounds. He reiterated the Southern contention that Congress had the power only to admit states into the Union and that any restrictions imposed upon new states would be contrary to Article Four, Section three of the Constitution which stated that: "The citizens of each State shall be entitled to all the privileges and immunities of citizens in the several states."\(^{18}\) Moreover, Scott declared that the three-fifths compromise provided for the admission of slaveholding states (sic).\(^{19}\) Therefore, he reasoned, there should be no constitutional objection to further acceptance of other slave states, and from this discussion Scott proceeded to explain why slavery was disallowed northwest of the Ohio River. According to the Ordinance of 1787, future slavery was prohibited in the Northwest Territory. To Scott's way of thinking this was an equitable provision because at that time few settlements existed in the territory and slaveholding inhabitants who resided therein before the signing of the Ordinance were permitted to keep forever their


\(^{19}\) This was an erroneous supposition. Article one, Section two of the Constitution (the federal ratio clause) states: "Representatives and direct taxes shall be apportioned among the several states which may be included within this Union, according to their respective Numbers, which shall be determined by adding to the whole Number of free Persons including those bound to Service for a Term of Years, and excluding Indians not taxed, three fifths of all other Persons." No mention was made in the Constitution concerning the future admission of slaveholding states.
dark-skinned property, including future-born children. Scott then suggested that the Louisiana Territory's treaty of cession had guaranteed Missouri speedy entry into the Union on an equal footing with other states. Thus Congress was duty-bound not only by the Constitution but also by treaty. He next turned his attack upon Representative Taylor.

Scott acknowledged that Taylor purported to be motivated by humanitarian considerations. Yet the Missouri delegate suggested that Taylor was also moved by "political views." Scott did not elaborate further on what he meant by "political views." Moreover, he criticized the notion that Missouri was too far north to admit slavery. He showed that part of Kentucky and the entire states of Virginia and Maryland were above the northern boundary of Missouri.

Scott closed his speech declaring that a restriction of slavery would result in starvation for those Negroes "penned up in the swamps and morasses" of the South.

Tallmadge, who by his own admission was suffering from illness

---

20 The latter comment was an oblique criticism to the section of Tallmadge's amendment which would grant freedom at age twenty-five to all children born after the amendment was enacted.

21 To prove his statement Scott quoted the third article of the treaty: "The inhabitants of the ceded territory shall be incorporated in the Union of the United States, and admitted as soon as possible, according to the principles of the Federal Constitution, to the enjoyment of all the rights, advantages, and immunities of citizens of the United States, and in the meantime, they shall be maintained and protected in the free enjoyment of their liberty, property, and the religion which they profess."

22 *Annals, op. cit.*, p. 1202.
and who had the day before returned from a long journey, could re-
strain himself no longer and rose in defense of his amendment. He
opened by saying that he had hoped "to avoid any debate on the
present painful and unpleasant subject." In reference to his
amendment he stated that its only purpose was to prohibit slavery
in territories across the Mississippi. Furthermore, he mentioned
that he had prefaced his amendment with a statement that he had no
intention of intermingling in the affairs of any slaveholding states.
Moreover, he explained that he had not opposed the admission of Ala-
abama because it was surrounded by slave states. On the other hand,
he contended, Missouri was not in a similar condition and therefore
should be treated differently. Tallmadge's remarks then took a
personal note.

The New York representative admonished the "harsh expressions"
and "unfriendly imputations" which had been leveled against him.
Thanking his friends for their support, he assured them that in
spite of the "violence" of his opponents he had not been nor would
he be driven from the debate. He then quoted a statement which
Representative Thomas W. Cobb of Georgia had addressed directly to
him. Cobb had said, "that if we persist, the Union will be dissolved;
we have kindled a fire which all the waters of the ocean cannot put
out, which seas of blood can only extinguish." ^21 In perhaps the

---

21Ibid., p. 1203.
22Ibid., p. 1204.
most poignant words of the debate Tallmadge retorted:

Sir, if a dissolution of the Union must take place, let it be so! If civil war, which gentlemen so much threaten, must come, I can only say, let it come! . . . If blood is necessary to extinguish any fire which I have assisted to kindle, I can assure, gentlemen, while I regret the necessity, I shall not forebear to contribute my mite.  

Further, he professed to be merely echoing the sentiments of his constituents.

Proceeding to a different aspect of the discussion, Tallmadge described the West as a land of limitless opportunities which could be successfully exploited by hardy freemen. Contrasted to this he pictured an expanse cankered by "this abomination of heaven," a land permeated by a weakness which would surely lead to the destruction of the Union.

Turning to the Constitution, Tallmadge admitted that the document had been notably silent about the terms under which new states might be accepted into the Union. However, he continued, Article four, Section three, of the Constitution inferred that Congress could prescribe conditions under which new states might seek admission into the Union. Moreover, he suggested that Article

25 Ibid.
26 Ibid., pp. 1205-1206.
27 This section states: "The Congress shall have power to dispose of and make all needful rules and regulations respecting the territory or other property belonging to the United States."
one, Section ten of the Constitution prohibited the importation of slaves into any new states because those states were not specified in that section. Tallmadge then enumerated other conditions which Congress had required for the admission of new states.

As Representative Taylor had done, Tallmadge mentioned that the Ordinance of 1787 had specifically prohibited slavery in any new states in the Northwest Territory. Tallmadge castigated the Missouri delegate's contention that Congress through the Louisiana Territory treaty had allowed slavery within its bounds. The New York Representative explained that since this treaty had guaranteed equal rights and privileges to all inhabitants, slaves would become free upon entering Missouri or any other part of the Louisiana Territory. However, continued Tallmadge, since the Senate had not the exclusive power to endorse terms for the admission of new states, it was therefore the right of both houses to decide accordingly.

Turning from the topic of congressional jurisdiction, he stated that the introduction of slavery in the West would provide a greater market for the illicit slave trade. Concerning the allegation that prohibition of slavery would retard the settlement of the West, Tallmadge bluntly said that he would prefer an unsettled West to a slave-ridden area.

Tallmadge mentioned that it was the duty of Congress to show

---

28 Article one, Section ten specified that "the migration or importation of such persons as any of the states now existing shall think proper to admit, shall not be prohibited by the Congress prior to the year 1808."
the "legitimates of Europe" (i.e., the ruling class) that America would not extend slavery, an institution contrary to the Declaration of Independence, into the territories west of the Mississippi. He concluded that slaves were not justly treated by Southerners and it was the House's duty to pass the measure. After terminating the debate, the House commenced voting on the first section of the proposed amendment which read: "That the further introduction of slavery or involuntary servitude be prohibited, except for the punishment of crimes, whereof the party shall have been duly convicted." This provision was passed by an eighty-seven to seventy-six vote.

On the affirmative side all votes, except for that of Representative William Hall of Delaware, came from free states. On the other hand, in addition to nearly unanimous Southern support, there were ten free state representatives who voted against the bill.

Immediately after the first action another vote took place on the latter half of the amendment: "And that all children born

29Annals, op. cit., pp. 1206-1213.

30On February 15, 1819, the day that Tallmadge introduced his amendment, the House agreed by a 79 to 67 vote to "the question being put on the motion of Mr. Tallmadge to amend the bill." Since there was more discussion and voting on the amendment, it would seem that this was a vote to further consider the topic.

31Annals, op. cit., p. 1214.

32Of these ten representatives three were from New York, three from Massachusetts, one each from New Jersey, New Hampshire, Ohio, and Illinois. In the case of the latter two border states, Ohio Representative Harrison was the only one of five Ohio representatives to vote negatively while McLean was the sole Illinois representative.
within the said State after the admission thereof into the Union, shall be free at the age of twenty-five years." On this question the yeas and nays were much closer, eighty-two voting for and seventy-eight against. In this vote fourteen free-state representatives sided with the South and two New York delegates who had voted affirmatively on the first measure abstained on the second. The South held its ground reasonably well with but one change in vote.

With the termination of that voting, the House by a ninety-seven to fifty-six majority ordered that the amendment "be engrossed for a third reading." On the following day, February 17, 1819, the amendment was read and passed.

The Senate acted quickly on the Missouri bill and returned the same measure to the lower house together with an amendment negating Tallmadge's amendment. On March 2, 1819, the Senate bill was introduced into the House, whereupon Tallmadge moved for indefinite postponement. This motion was discussed at length and turned down by a vote of sixty-nine to seventy-four.

After the defeat of Tallmadge's motion, the House voted on

33 Annals, op. cit., p. 1215.

34 In addition to the ten free state delegates who had voted negatively on the first part of the amendment, four others, Representatives Beecher and Campbell of Ohio, Linn of New Jersey, and Mason of Rhode Island, took the same stand on the second section.

35 Annals, loc. cit.

36 Ibid., II, p. 1217.

37 Ibid., p. 1433.
the Senate's bill. By seventy-six yeas and seventy-nine nays the
lower house decided not to concur with the upper house.\(^{38}\) That same
day the bill was returned to the Senate and again the upper house
refused to accept the Tallmadge amendment. Acting just as swiftly,
the House by a seventy-eight to sixty-six vote decided to adhere to
its original position.\(^{39}\) Despite congressional failure to reach an
agreement over the Tallmadge amendment, Missouri was granted permis-
sion to frame a constitution preparatory to its admission into the
Union. However, congressional discord over the amendment had, in
effect, cast a shadow upon Missouri's hopes for statehood. It was
quite evident that Missouri would not be admitted until the slavery
question was settled.

Another chapter in Missouri's struggle for statehood opened
when on December 8, 1819, John Scott, the Missouri delegate, intro-
duced in the House a memorial of the Territorial Legislature request-
ing statehood. The bill was reported to a committee of five headed
by Scott and the following day it was submitted to the House floor
where it was discussed for the duration of the month. During this
same period the Maine statehood bill was initiated and Speaker of the
House Henry Clay suggested the two statehood bills be joined, but no
immediate action was taken on his motion. On January 3, 1820, the

\(^{38}\) Ibid., p. 1434.

\(^{39}\) Ibid., pp. 1435, 1438.
Maine bill passed the lower house and was sent to the upper house.\textsuperscript{40} The Senate had already received the Missouri memorial and had forwarded it to the Judiciary Committee which was also considering the Maine bill. After deliberating the two bills, the committee sent to the floor the Maine bill, with the Missouri bill added as an amendment. The Senate tried to separate the two but this effort failed by a vote of twenty-five to eighteen.\textsuperscript{41} On January 17, 1820, two anti-slavery amendments to the statehood bills were introduced in the upper house. The first, submitted by Senator Ninian Edwards of Illinois, would exclude slavery from any United States territory. This amendment, however, was soon withdrawn.\textsuperscript{42} The second, written by Senator Jonathan Roberts of Pennsylvania, was similar to the first section of Tallmadge's amendment.\textsuperscript{43}

As one might expect, Robert's provision was hotly debated and eventually was defeated.\textsuperscript{44} On the following day Senator Jesse B. Thomas of Illinois introduced a bill which would prohibit slavery in all United States territory north and west of Missouri, with the line

\textsuperscript{40}Annals of Congress, Sixteenth Congress, First Session, I, p. 848.
\textsuperscript{41}Ibid., p. 118.
\textsuperscript{42}Ibid., p. 119.
\textsuperscript{43}Robert's amendment read: "Provided, that the further introduction into said State of persons to be held to slavery or involuntary servitude within the same, shall be absolutely and irrevocably prohibited."
\textsuperscript{44}Annals, op. cit., p. 359.
of demarcation being latitude thirty-six degrees, thirty minutes. For the remainder of January, and well into February, the bill was discussed and later attached as an amendment to the Missouri bill. On February 18, 1820, the Maine-Missouri bill, together with the Thomas amendment, was passed. ⁴⁵

Meanwhile, the House was also considering the Missouri question. The Senate's Maine-Missouri bill was taken up and on January 23, 1820, the lower house voted to reject the upper house's notion that the two statehood bills should be joined. The House then, on March 1, 1820, passed and sent a separate Missouri bill, together with a slavery restriction amendment, back to the upper house. Upon receiving the House's bill, the Senate deleted the slavery restriction clause and in its place substituted the Thomas amendment. A final solution to the problem was proposed by a joint committee which recommended: (1) that the two bills be passed separately; (2) that the House's slavery restriction amendment be negated; and (3) that the Thomas amendment be made part of the Missouri bill. Both houses concurred with the three suggestions. ⁴⁶ Thus another, but not final, phase in the Missouri odyssey toward statehood had ended.

During 1820 Missouri prepared for statehood by drafting a constitution, electing state and local officials, and organizing a state government. But certain Northern statesmen and their consti-

---

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 430.
⁴⁶ Ibid., pp. 1586-1587.
tudents sought to delay, if not defeat, the admission of Missouri into the Union. According to Floyd Calvin Shoemaker, a prominent Missouri historian, Eastern newspapers advocated the same exclusion policy. Thus, in view of the concerted opposition, it was no surprise that Missouri Senators David Barton and Thomas Benton and Representative Scott were refused seats in Congress on November 16, 1820. The opposition alleged that the new Congressmen could not be seated until the 1820 constitution was accepted by Congress.

For the duration of the year and into 1821 Congress once again debated the Missouri question. As before, the Senate favored admission while the House disapproved, the chief bone of contention being a clause in the new state's constitution which would bar free Negroes and mulattoes from settling in the state. After a great

---

17 In his *Slavery in Missouri, 1804-1865*, Harrison Anthony Trexler (a former assistant professor of economic history at Montana State University) notes that authorities on the topic believed that these Northern attacks caused a change in the attitude of the Missouri public toward slavery. According to this orthodox line, Northern hostility "pricked her [Missouri's] pride" and thus induced her into an ardently pro-slavery position. Trexler disputes this notion by stating that: "The people of Missouri were in favor of slavery from the earliest days of its existence as a Territory." Harrison Anthony Trexler, *Slavery in Missouri, 1804-1865* (Baltimore, 1911), p. 100.


19 Ibid., pp. 290-291.

deal of debate and a number of negative votes by the House, a joint committee, with Speaker of the House Henry Clay as chairman, was selected to decide the issue.

On February 26, 1821, the committee reported with what was later to be called the Second Missouri Compromise. A proviso, which was written by Clay, asserted that citizens of other states settling in Missouri should enjoy "the privileges and immunities to which such citizen is entitled under the Constitution of the United States." The House adopted the report the same day and the Senate approved it on February 28, 1821. President James Monroe signed the measure on March 2, 1821.

51 The full report of which this was only a part reads: "Resolved, by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That Missouri shall be admitted into this Union on an equal footing with the original States in all respects whatever, upon the fundamental condition, that the fourth clause of the twenty-sixth section of the third article of the constitution submitted on the part of said State to Congress shall never be construed to authorize the passage of any law, and that no law shall be passed in conformity thereto, by which any citizen of either of the States in this Union shall be excluded from the enjoyment of any of the privileges and immunities to which such citizen is entitled under the Constitution of the United States: Provided, that the Legislature of the said State, by a solemn public act, shall declare the assent of the said State to the said fundamental condition, and shall transmit to the President of the United States, on or before the fourth Monday in November next, an authentic copy of the said act; upon receipt whereof the President, by proclamation, shall announce the fact: whereupon, and without any further proceeding on the part of Congress, the admission of the said state into this Union, shall be considered as complete."

52 Shoemaker, op. cit., p. 300.
Without doubt the Missouri controversy was an opening chapter to a series of sectional antagonisms which culminated in the War between the States. Equally without doubt James Tallmadge played an instrumental role in promoting disagreements between the two sides. Strangely enough, though, he bowed out of national politics shortly after introducing his famous amendment. Although Tallmadge has been best remembered for his fight against slavery, he had also distinguished himself by vigorously defending General Andrew Jackson's conduct during the Seminole campaign of 1819. His term of office expired March 3, 1819, and for some unexplained reason he declined renomination, choosing instead to run as a Clintonian candidate for the New York Senate.

During the course of his campaign for the New York Senate, the Missouri question was an issue and one argument on behalf of Tallmadge was that he had "dared to oppose the aristocratical southern influence." His stand brought support from the Negroes, Quakers, and Manumission Society, but their votes were not enough and he was defeated by the Tammany candidate. Shortly thereafter he broke with De Witt Clinton and joined the Tammany or Bucktail wing of the New

---


54Moore, loc. cit.

55According to Moore, Tallmadge felt that he had embittered Clinton by supporting the Monroe administration in the debate on the Seminole War. Furthermore, Tallmadge had hard feelings because Clinton had not earlier rewarded him with an appointive office.
York Democratic party. After his defeat he retired to private life, spending his summer months at his Dutchess County estate and his winters in New York City.

Two years later he returned to the political front as a delegate to the New York constitutional convention. In 1821 he was elected to the State Assembly. The following year he lost out in his attempt to receive his party's nomination as governor. However, as a consolation he was unanimously nominated lieutenant governor. Tallmadge was elected to that office and served one two-year term. This was his last tenure in an elective political position.

For the remainder of his life Tallmadge was occupied with non-political activities. He helped found the University of the City of New York (now New York University) and was its president from 1834 to 1846. He also originated the New York City American Institute which was devoted to the promotion of useful arts. From 1831 to 1850 he acted as president of the institute. At the age of seventy-five, after a life of conspicuous public service, James Tallmadge, Junior, died in New York City on September 29, 1853.

---

56 Moore, op. cit., p. 38.
59 Malone, loc. cit.
61 Directory, loc. cit.
Tallmadge's legacy of achievements has certainly been significant in American history, but no accomplishment has brought more discussion and controversy than his amendment to the Missouri statehood bill. Its consequences are well known to all students of American history but there have been uncertainties regarding the author's reason or reasons for introducing the amendment. While many historians have not ventured an opinion concerning the New Yorker's motives, others have developed historiographical analyses of the interesting problem.

Perhaps the first historian to comment was James Schouler who in his multi-volume work stated that Tallmadge was motivated by "deep conviction." The author, however, neglected to explain what he meant by those two words. Nevertheless, one could probably assume that he was referring to a fervent humanitarian anti-slavery conviction.

Several years later another historian, Lucien Carr, suggested that ostensibly the amendment was introduced for moral-humanitarian reasons. However, he asserted that the underlying rationale was political, i.e., Northerners such as Tallmadge and Rufus King were attempting to check the aggrandizement of Southern political power.

According to the opinion of Homer Carey Hockett, Tallmadge's amendment was the beginning of an effort on the part of Northern


63 Carr, op. cit., p. 139.
leaders to prevent the spread of the "moral and political evils" of the Southern institution. Similarly, Ulrich Bonnell Phillips' work, *The Course of the South to Secession*, told of a concerted Northern effort to check the South's political expansion. Moreover, Phillips recognized a North-South conflict regarding the protective tariff which the North preferred. In light of this background the author regarded the amendment as a drive to stem the South's political and economic power.

Within five years of Phillip's book two other historians added their contributions to the historiographical problem. Still following an economic interpretation, Glyndon Van Deusen explained that Northern "moral animosity" toward slavery (of which Tallmadge was a spokesman) manifested itself only after the "peculiar institution" became unprofitable above the Mason-Dixon line. Francis Franklin likewise gave an economic interpretation, but he expressed himself in a different manner. According to him, Tallmadge, together with other Northern and Western capitalists, sought to prohibit the growth of slavery west of the Mississippi, presumably so they themselves

---


64 Francis Franklin, *op. cit.*., pp 218-219.
could develop that section of the nation. 68

In the late 1940's two Southern historians added their opinions to the discussion. The first of these scholars, Charles S. Sydnor, made a positive, unqualified assertion that the representative from Dutchess County had been "moved solely by humanitarian considerations." 69 One year after the publication of Sydnor's work, Clement Eaton discounted humanitarian motives stating that Tallmadge was pressed by the political intention of preventing the growth of Southern congressional representation. 70

In the next decade two more historians made their contributions to the academic discussion. In a scholarly work, The Era of Good Feelings, George Dangerfield frankly admitted that "nothing is known" about the reason or reasons for Tallmadge's amendment. The author illustrated how the New Yorker perplexed his contemporaries by changing his political alignment on several occasions. As a close to his evaluation, however, Dangerfield commented that Tallmadge may have introduced his amendment "because he abominated slavery." 71

68 The latter statement was not directly made by Franklin. It was therefore an assumption that the writer makes from the context of Franklin's writing.

69 Charles S. Sydnor, op. cit., p. 127.


Perhaps the most penetrating analysis of Tallmadge was made by Glover Moore in his lucidly-written and detailed book, *The Missouri Controversy, 1819-1821*. Like Dangerfield, Moore acknowledges the difficulty in making a judgment of Tallmadge's motives. The author admits that the New York representative was a complex individual, both politically and personally. After an interesting survey of Tallmadge's background, Moore stated that the New Yorker "seems to have been motivated primarily by humanitarian and patriotic considerations."\(^{72}\) However, the author does not stop his discussion at that juncture. As a secondary motive he suggested that long established Clintonian anti-South feelings also moved Tallmadge to his stand against slavery.\(^{73}\)

A recent volume by Dwight Lowell Dumond asserts: "Tallmadge was a man of broad humanitarian principles, strongly opposed to slavery and his action was in the liberal tradition of those who had abolished slavery in New York state."\(^{74}\) This comment is possibly the most current addition to the ever-growing historiography of the motives behind the Tallmadge amendment.

In concluding a survey of Tallmadge's motivation it might be noted that three interpretations -- humanitarian, political, and economic -- were brought to light. Of the three, the humanitarian

\(^{72}\)Moore, *op. cit.*, p. 38.

\(^{73}\)Ibid., p. 39.

motive seems to have been the most popular explanation of the historiographical problem. Van Deusen, Sydnor, Moore, and Dumond recognized this as being Tallmadge's primary consideration. In less specific terms Schouler and Dangerfield also followed that line of reasoning. Hockett would at least fall partly in this category since he listed both moral and political reasons behind the initiation of the amendment.

While Hockett and Moore felt that Tallmadge was partially moved by political considerations, Carr, Phillips, and Eaton asserted that the New York representative was chiefly influenced by political motives. Moreover, Phillips, Van Deusen, and, in less specific terms, Franklin maintained that Tallmadge was motivated in part by economic considerations.

After reviewing secondary accounts of Tallmadge and his amendment, it seems quite evident that historians writing on this topic have been laboring under less than desirable circumstances. Tallmadge's true motivation remains largely a mystery because there is no evidence that he left either a diary, autobiography, or other personal papers. This scarcity of material has perhaps led to a greater variety of interpretations of the problem. Nevertheless, in spite of somewhat insufficient information, one cannot but believe that Tallmadge was probably moved by many considerations—humanitarian, political, and economic.

In view of the fact that Tallmadge never attempted to achieve any significant political gains through his amendment, and since he
evidently did not receive any noticeable economic rewards or benefits through his amendment, one might conclude that he was primarily motivated by his humanitarian sentiments.
CHAPTER III

THE EVIDENCE OF THE ADAMS PAPERS

A. THE QUESTION OF PERSONAL AND SECTIONAL MOTIVATIONS

Investigation of the background, congressional debates, and secondary reports of the Missouri controversy unveils an interesting, but incomplete, picture of Tallmadge’s motivation and the even broader problem of the reasons behind the dispute. Fortunately, the Adams Papers provide a penetrating insight into the topic. For example, Secretary of State John Quincy Adams believed that the Speaker of the House, Henry Clay (of Kentucky), and Secretary of the Treasury, William H. Crawford (of Georgia), were using the controversy as a vehicle to perpetuate the downfall of the Monroe administration. In his diary entry for February 20, 1820, Adams foresaw this move as part of a Clay-Crawford drive to form a new party which would realize the presidential aspirations of one of them.¹ According to the Secretary of State, these opponents of the administration had embarked upon a divide-and-conquer campaign within the executive, i.e., through splitting the cabinet into factions and creating distrust and resentment among its members, the

¹Diary of John Quincy Adams, February 20, 1820, Adams Papers microfilm (Hereafter cited as Diary).
administration would be weakened to such an extent that it could not win in any future election.

This strategy was aptly described in Adams' memoirs. In the latter part of 1819, the year that the Tallmadge amendment had been struck down, Adams observed: "The enemies of Monroe's Administration and my enemies have been continually laboring with the industry and venom of spiders to excite in his mind a jealousy of me. They have so far succeeded that whatever I recommend he distrusts." Earlier that year Adams had been warned about Clay's ambitions.

During the first Missouri debate Henry Middleton, a Southern friend of Adams, informed the Secretary that Clay had been using the controversy as a means of advancing his own political aspirations. According to Middleton, the Speaker of the House had established himself as "the champion of the Southern interest" in order that he might assume leadership of their party and ride into the 1820 presidential elections on the crest of his popularity. Adams also observed that Crawford was actively courting Southern interests by espousing his belief that slavery should not be restricted in

---


3Middleton had been the former governor of South Carolina (1810-1812) and a member of the House of Representatives from 1815 to 1819. He was an unsuccessful candidate for renomination in 1818. On April 6, 1820, he assumed the appointment as Minister to Russia. He held this post for ten years.

4Diary, op. cit., February 16, 1819.
any section of the Union.  

While viewing the Clay-Crawford maneuver, the Secretary of State regarded the debate as simply being a dispute between slaveholders and non-slaveholders. Moreover, he ardently disapproved of the over-heated agitation which Southerners exhibited. He recognized the Southerners as being blustering, violent, and unreasonable in their defense while Northern congressmen were quiet and sensible in presenting their position.

Though the Secretary of State mentioned that personal ambitions were involved in the issue, he also envisioned the contest as a struggle for power between the states of Virginia and New York. Adams felt that the controversy was being utilized as an opportunity to topple the "Virginia Dynasty" which had heretofore played a key role in national politics. Moreover, Adams reported that many Southerners regarded the Tallmadge amendment as a deliberate effort to stifle Southern power. Adams believed that the Southern slaveholders possessed a disproportionately large amount of political influence. He accredited this phenomena to several factors. First, the slaveholders had an overly abundant supply of competent spokesmen in Congress. In the House there were no equals to the rhetorical

---

5 As a matter of fact, in a January 19, 1819, letter to John Quincy Adams, Jonathan Jennings, the governor of Indiana, stated that Crawford, together with others, was promoting the adoption of an Indiana legislative measure which would allow slavery.

6 Diary, op. cit., July 5, 1819.

7 Ibid., January 20, 1820.
talents of John Randolph (of Virginia) and Henry Clay. And in the Senate Rufus King (of New York) had a difficult task in staving off the verbal onslaughts of men like James Barbour (of Virginia) and William Pinkney (of South Carolina). Secondly, Southern congressmen were more vehement in their defense of slavery because their own personal and selfish interests were at stake. Lastly, the free states were rent by dissension within their ranks. A number of Northerners had chosen to side with the slave men for a variety of reasons. The sum total of these factors resulted in a political balance of power which, according to Adams, tended to favor the South.

Commenting later on the defeat of the slavery restriction, Adams observed that selfish slaveholding elements had vanquished the free state members who possessed a majority in both houses. Adams reasoned that since Southern congressmen were all slaveholders and since almost all of their constituents also owned slaves (sic), they would naturally oppose any threat to their political and economic status. On the other side of the controversy the Secretary felt that the free state representatives were moved by republican principles and humanitarian motives. However, in a partial rebuttal to this former comment, Adams recognized political and sectional

---

8Ibid., January 10, 1820.

9In his The Last of the Cocked Hats: James Monroe and The Virginia Dynasty, Arthur Styron writes: "Only about 5 per cent of the South's population owned more than three slaves, and this small percentage never had the power to force its predilections upon the rest of the people."
interests as being equally operative on both sides. But in closing his remarks he again referred to the issue as a struggle between self-interested elements and those on the side of humanitarianism.  

Probably no person was more prominent in the Missouri question than Henry Clay. Adams observed that Clay played a dual role in the dispute. On one hand, the Speaker helped keep the Missouri pot boiling so that he could receive publicity and renown as the spokesman of the South. On the other hand, after the issue began threatening a dissolution of the Union, Clay did his part in effecting a compromise. Although Adams did not state that Clay promoted the Missouri Compromise in order to set aside a dangerous political issue, i.e., dangerous because it could promote a dissolution of the Union, he may have subtly inferred that Clay was moved by political considerations. This conclusion is easy to assume if one follows Adams' logic, namely, that Clay was motivated by his own selfish interests. Moreover, since there were several mentions of a Clay-Clinton or Clay-

---

10 Diary, March 7, 1820.

11 This statement was originally ascribed to Middleton (see pages 157 and 158). However, Adams accepted it as valid and incorporated it into his own views.


13 The Clinton referred to here is De Witt Clinton. He is not only famous for his promotion of the building of the Erie Canal but also for his active political interests. He served in both houses of the New York legislature, as mayor of New York City, a United States Senator, and lieutenant governor of New York. At the time of the Missouri controversy he was governor of New York. He was an unsuccessful Federalist presidential candidate in the election of 1812.
Clinton-Crawford coalition against the administration, it would seem more expedient for Clay to dispose of the Missouri question rather than risk a break with his Northern ally over the slavery issue.

There is in Adams' writings some mention of De Witt Clinton taking a behind-the-scene role in the Missouri controversy. According to John W. Taylor, some Southerners believed that Clinton was the true author of the Tallmadge amendment. However, Taylor derided that rumor by stating that Clinton had only taken an interest in the dispute after he found it politically profitable in his state.

Clay, like Clinton, was first and foremost a politician and in his diary Adams assailed him repeatedly for opportunism. Adams thought that Clay was his chief political adversary. The Secretary had won the only cabinet post which Clay desired. Likewise, the Speaker regarded Adams as one of his foremost opponents in any future presidential contest. Adams was fully aware of Clay's sentiments but he preferred not to publicly oppose him or air his own views on the Missouri question. Nevertheless, he felt that the time might come when he would be called upon to voice his opinion.

---

15 Ibid., p. 203.
16 Ibid., pp. 90-91
17 Ibid., IV, p. 502.
In the course of Adams' commentary on the Missouri controversy a vivid analysis evolves of Clay as a person, politician, and future president. Despite his many condemnations of the Speaker, Adams could not but admire Clay's ability. But, in a typically puritanical fashion, he disapproved of the Speaker's moral standards. On this subject he wrote: "In politics, as in private life, Clay is essentially a gamester, and, with a vigorous intellect, an ardent spirit, a handsome elocution, though with a mind very defective in elementary knowledge, and a very undigested system of ethics, he has all the qualities which belong to that class of human characters."^\textsuperscript{18} After Clay had chosen to retire from politics in order to revamp his personal finances, Adams speculated upon what kind of president the Kentuckian would make. The Secretary conceived that Clay's administration would result in numerous internal improvements, but that his presidency "would be sectional in its spirit and sacrifice all other interests to those of the Western country and the slaveholders."^\textsuperscript{19}

While Clay's part in the Missouri controversy was regarded as selfish and sectional, the North's most ardent spokesman, Rufus King (of New York) was seen by Adams as a true humanitarian whose only motives were pure and just. Adams believed that King was receiving vigorous encouragement from his friends. Moreover, the Secretary observed that the New Yorker was overestimating his future

\textsuperscript{18}Allan Nevins, editor, The Diary of John Quincy Adams, 1794-1845 (New York, 1928), p. 293.

\textsuperscript{19}Ibid., p. 263.
anti-slavery support. According to Adams, King felt that the slavery question would continue to stimulate strong Northern ardor for his anti-slavery policy. Adams, on the other hand, asserted that after the compromise was reached, Northerners would soon forget about the dispute because it did not directly affect them either personally or economically. Concerning accusations that personal aggrandizement was motivating King, Adams conceded that all politicians are moved by selfish as well as public considerations. Yet, the Secretary declared that King was driven by humanitarianism. Likewise, his high regard for King's integrity can be witnessed in repeated passages throughout his diary.

In surveying Adams' diary for the 1819-1821 period it seems evident that New Yorkers -- Taylor and Tallmadge in the House and King in the Senate -- took the lead in promoting a restriction of slavery. This New York leadership might be regarded as either coincidental or deliberately devised. The Adams Papers shed some light upon this question. While John Quincy Adams ascribed nothing more than humanitarian motives to King's actions, there was one reference made to a Southern accusation that the conflict was perpetuated by New York's governor, De Witt Clinton, in the hope of forming a new political party. Thus, as the allegation suggested, Clinton was

---

21 Diary, op. cit., March 4, 1820.
the true originator of the Tallmadge amendment and the three New York congressmen merely carried out his wishes. According to the Adams Papers, there is no substantiation of this idea on the part of either King or Tallmadge; but there is some evidence that Taylor may have been involved with Clinton.

John Quincy Adams noted that Taylor had disavowed any pro-Clintonian connections before he was chosen Speaker of the House for the 1821 session. Yet, continued Adams, Taylor had openly accepted Clintonian support in his 1820 re-election. The Secretary further reported that John C. Calhoun, the Secretary of War, thought that Taylor was in league with Clay and Crawford against the administration. Taylor's anti-administration attitude was further witnessed by his appointment of committee chairmen who, to paraphrase Calhoun, did not act in accord with the executive.

In view of Taylor's apparent political opportunism in 1820, one might also assume that perhaps his efforts in the Missouri debates were motivated by other than humanitarian reasons. His liaison

---

23 The Adams Papers make very scant reference to Tallmadge. John Quincy Adams was the only person who mentioned the New York representative and his comments related to Tallmadge's role in the Seminole War debates and the fact that he had introduced an amendment which would prohibit slavery in Missouri. Adams conversed several times with Tallmadge but unfortunately he did not elaborate in any of his writings.

24 On November 15, 1820, John W. Taylor was elected as Speaker. His election came on the twenty-third ballot, only after he had promised that he was not a partisan of De Witt Clinton.

with Clinton in 1820 was undoubtedly necessary for his re-election, but it would seem that in accepting the governor's support he was also obligating himself to return the favor.

The actions of Clinton induce some additional speculations. While it might be true that Clinton fostered the Missouri controversy in order to form a new Northern political party, it would seem more likely that he would not desire to formulate such a move. It would seem more politically advantageous to unite with Clay and Crawford against the administration. Such a union would join all sections of the country -- North, South, and West -- since all three men represented different parts of the United States. In retrospect, though, if any such political maneuvers were taking place at that time, they certainly were not successful because Monroe won by a landslide in the 1820 presidential election.

Whether or not the speculations about Clinton are valid, one cannot but notice that John Quincy Adams accredited a large portion of the controversy to personal and sectional motives of Southerners. He regarded the dispute as a contest between right and wrong; and, of course, the cause of slavery was viewed as totally incompatible with any of his principles. One can thus conclude that Adams was bigoted in his attitude and failed to recognize the problem from the standpoint of the South. Nevertheless, in spite of his over-simplifications and intolerance, valuable insights can be derived from his writings.

An interesting counterpoint to the evidence of the Adams Papers
can be found in the comments of Senator Charles Tait of Georgia.  

Tait saw the Tallmadge amendment as a Northern attempt to gain political control. He thought that Rufus King rather than James Tallmadge was the instigator of the controversy, and that King had, in the words of Tait, "raised this tempest merely to ride into power."  

Unlike either of the Adamses, the Georgia senator pictured King as a "plausible, insidious, and insincere politician" who was in league with De Witt Clinton in an effort to exalt himself politically. Unable to see any of the admirable humanitarian qualities of which the Adamses had spoken, Tait noted: "All that wicked ambition can suggest he is capable of."  

In 1820, after having stepped down from the Senate, he observed that the Missouri question

Charles Tait was born in Hanover, Virginia, on February 1, 1768. In 1783 he moved to Wilkes County, Georgia, where he attended Wilkes Academy. After graduating from Cokesburg College (Avingdon, Maryland) in 1789, he served as professor of French at his alma mater until 1794. In 1795 he was admitted to the bar and from 1795 to 1798 he held a law professorship at Richmond Academy in Augusta, Georgia. From 1803 to 1809 he acted as presiding judge of the western circuit court of Georgia. In 1809 he was elected to fill out the unexpired term of Senator John Milledge of Georgia. Tait was re-elected in 1813 and served until March 3, 1819. At the time of the introduction of the Tallmadge amendment he presided as Chairman of the committee which reviewed the New Yorker's amendment. His committee struck down the amendment.


Ibid.
had grown into more than a political dispute. He regarded it as a serious national problem which, if not resolved, would result in the formation of a confederacy of slaveholding states. Like many other Northern and Southern politicians, Tait recognized the need for cool heads and compromise. Although Tait and the Adamses differed on their assessment of King's motivation, all agreed that compromise would be the only solution to the Missouri controversy.

B. THE LONG-RANGE EFFECTS AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE CONTROVERSY

While a large segment of the Adams Papers is occupied with protestations against selfish motivations of slaveholders, there are also entries which dwell upon the long-range effects and/or significance of the controversy. Although he was rather one-sided in his opinion toward the extension of slavery, John Quincy Adams nevertheless felt that the contest was the beginning of a potentially disastrous chapter in American history. On January 10, 1820, he wrote: "I take it for granted that the present question is a mere preamble -- a title page to a great tragic volume." As a humanitarian Adams favored emancipation of the slaves, but as a statesman he realized that such a move would result in a perilous situation for the Union. Adams knew that abolition could be effected by the national government, but, in view of staunch Southern senti-

29 Ibid.

ments to the contrary, he also believed that dissolution of the Union would be the price his beloved country would have to pay. Division of the Union seemed too high a price for emancipation.

Adams' train of thought on this topic was stimulated by a conversation with Secretary of War John C. Calhoun. The South Carolinian did not think the controversy would result in dissolution. However, if the opposite were true, he thought that the South would be compelled to enter into an alliance with Great Britain. Adams replied that this would reduce them to colonial status. Calhoun agreed and said it would nevertheless be necessary. He continued by saying that the South would also militarize all of its communities. At this point Adams pressed the discussion no longer and pondered the problem to himself. He felt that if the slave question produced a schism within the Union, "universal emancipation of the slaves" would be necessary shortly thereafter. Adams did not elaborate further concerning "universal emancipation." Nevertheless, it might be assumed that he meant emancipation of slaves in all sections of the dissolved Union. Just how he proposed to do this is open to speculation. Perhaps he envisaged an armed conflict -- "a great tragic volume" in American history -- as being the solution. Continuing his speculation, Adams believed that emancipation might give rise to a gradual assimilation of the Negro into the more predominant white race. The Secretary found

31 Diary, op. cit., February 23, 1820.
the entire issue quite perplexing and thought-provoking because it presented him with a contest between his patriotic principles on one hand and humanitarian ideals on the other.\textsuperscript{32}

While Adams was noticeably disturbed by the controversy, President James Monroe was exhibiting restraint and cautious optimism toward the subject. The surprised Secretary envisioned three alternative reasons for the chief executive's behavior: (1) There might have been some unknown movement under way with which the President was familiar; (2) possibly he did not recognize the gravity of the problem; or (3) he had assumed such an air in order to lend stability to an otherwise hectic situation.\textsuperscript{33} In retrospect, the latter seems the feasible explanation.

President Monroe later revealed his thoughts in a letter to Adams. The President conceived the controversy as a contest for power rather than for humanitarian considerations. He fully acknowledged the seriousness of the struggle and believed that it could only be resolved by a compromise. To him victory for either side would prove detrimental for the Union.\textsuperscript{34}

Several months before the chief executive's letter Adams stated in his diary that the Missouri question had unwittingly provided the basis for two new political parties, one pro-slave and the

\textsuperscript{32}\textit{Ibid.}

\textsuperscript{33}\textit{Memoirs, IV, op. cit., p. 199.}

\textsuperscript{34}\textit{President James Monroe to John Quincy Adams, May, 1820, Letters Received and Other Loose Papers, Adams Papers microfilm.}
other anti-slave. However, Adams thought that the potential development of a new pro-slavery party was proving undesirable to both Clay and Crawford because it threatened dissolution of the Union. Adams observed that after the Speaker had helped dispose of the problem through the Missouri Compromise, he fell upon more politically profitable ground, e.g., issues such as the Florida treaty and South American affairs.

Though Clay had acted to preserve the Union, the Kentuckian still believed that the Republic would soon be divided. Shortly before the Compromise Clay stated that he felt that in five years the Union would be separated into three distinct confederacies. At this juncture Adams commented no more on Clay's speculation.

After the Compromise of 1820 was passed, Adams made no mention of the Missouri question until November of 1820 when that state submitted its constitution to Congress. The Secretary was disturbed by a provision in the document which would prohibit the settlement of free Negroes within Missouri. Adams recommended that the restrictive clause be struck out by Congress because it denied free Negroes their rights as citizens of the United States. The Secretary asserted that if he was a member of a state legislature, he would introduce a declaratory act which would grant that so long as free Negroes were deprived of their liberties in Missouri, white Missouri citizens

35 Diary, op. cit., February 20, 1820.
37 Ibid., IV, p. 525.
would be treated likewise in his state. Adams went even further by saying that he would not recognize a fugitive slave law if he was a state legislator. Terminating his commentary, he realized that all of his proposed motions would be unconstitutional and would lead to dissolution; however, he concluded by saying that the Missouri restriction would have been the first violation of constitutional principles. 38

In addition to John Quincy Adams and James Monroe's remarks, the Adams Papers also contain some relevant entries by Thomas Jefferson and John Adams. All viewed the situation with alarm; yet no one showed greater concern than the Secretary of State's father, John Adams. In his letters John Adams made repeated references to the dispute. Nor did he minimize the gravity of the issue. Adams regarded the debate as a controversy over the constitutional right of Congress to restrict slavery. Concerning this question, he asserted that Congress definitely possessed that power. 39 Furthermore, Adams contended that a majority of the inhabitants of Missouri actually favored the Tallmadge amendment. 40 Looking into the future, he predicted that passage of the amendment would encourage more settlement in Missouri and would increase the state's land values. Adams

38 Diary, op. cit., November 29, 1820.


40 John Adams to Jared Ingersol, Thomas Siper, Benjamin P. Morgan, Robert Walsh, Jr., Robert Veruse, Quincy, December 9, 1819, ibid.
accredited this prognostication to his belief that vast hordes of freemen would stream into a slaveless Missouri while only a trickle would come if slavery were allowed.\(^1\)

John Adams saw even graver consequences if slavery were permitted to expand. The ex-president anticipated a series of slave insurrections in which large numbers of blacks and whites would be massacred.\(^2\) In a letter to Jefferson he pondered the possibility of losing Missouri "by revolt." Regarding the controversy, he stated: "From the battle of Bunker's hill to the treaty of Paris we never had so ominous a question."\(^3\) Thus Adams recognized its threat to the Union, yet he, unlike his son, thought that the greatest peril to the Union would result from an extension of slavery. John Quincy Adams, on the other hand, professed that a complete victory for either side would effect a national calamity. Therefore, although his humanitarian sympathies were with his father, he saw no choice but a compromise.

Like John Quincy Adams and John Adams, Thomas Jefferson acknowledged the gravity of the controversy. To Hugh Nelson he wrote: "In the gloomiest moment of the revolutionary war I never had any apprehensions equal to what I feel from this source."\(^4\) The apprehension

\(^{1}\)John Adams to Louisa Catherine Adams, Quincy, December 23, 1819, ibid.

\(^{2}\)Ibid., January 13, 1820.


\(^{4}\)Paul Leicester Ford, The Writings of Thomas Jefferson (New York, 1899), X, p. 156.
of which Jefferson spoke was not a fear of slavery but of how slavery was being used by politicians. He believed that Federalists had used the issue to resurrect their party along sectional lines. Jefferson was afraid that this development would eventually lead to a schism within the Union. He recognized slavery as an evil but asserted that "spreading them slaves over a larger surface adds to their happiness and renders their future emancipation more practicable." Moreover, although he undoubtedly disagreed with the Adams family's contention that slavery should not be allowed new ground, he made no mention to that effect in his letters to either Adams. In retrospect, one can see that Jefferson's forecast held true. Both Adames foresaw difficulties for the Union, yet neither realized, as did Jefferson, that dissolution would be caused by individuals on both sides of the Mason-Dixon line. Of the three men, Jefferson seems the least prejudiced. He appears to have been able to perceive both sides of the complex question. In the aggregate, history proved Jefferson more correct in his assumptions.

C. JOHN QUINCY ADAMS' ROLE

Through his own admission, Adams took a rather passive role in the Missouri controversy. Yet, there was one exception to this statement. On March 3, 1820, the day that both houses passed the

\[\text{Ibid.}, \text{p. 172.}\]

\[\text{Memoirs, IV, op. cit., p. 502.}\]
Missouri Compromise, President Monroe called a cabinet meeting for the purpose of seeking counsel on the Missouri question. The two topics of discussion related to Congress' right to prohibit slavery and whether or not the Compromise bill forever prohibited slavery in states, as well as territories, north of the 36 degree, 30 minute parallel. Concerning the first question, Crawford (the Secretary of the Treasury), Calhoun (the Secretary of War), and William Wirt (the Attorney General) believed that the Constitution made no provision for that power. The Attorney General added that he was opposed to any acceptance of implied powers of Congress. The trio further contended that the congressional power to make needful rules and regulations for territories referred only to jurisdiction over land and not its inhabitants.\(^7\) Adams countered their argument by stating that he believed that Congress had the constitutional right to make needful rules and regulations over territorial settlers as well as their property.\(^8\) Otherwise, Adams continued, that part of the Constitution would be meaningless.

After their brief discussion on the first question, they turned to the second matter. Adams asserted that the prohibition of slavery north of the 36 degree, 30 minute parallel must apply to states as

\(^7\)Dairy, op. cit., March 3, 1820.

\(^8\)The constitutional principle which Adams was referring to was the third section of Article four of the Constitution. This section reads: "The Congress shall have Power to dispose of and make all needful Rules and Regulations respecting the Territory or other Property belonging to the United States; and nothing in this Constitution shall be so construed as to Prejudice any Claims of the United States, or of any particular State."
well as territories because this was a condition for admission into
the Union, i.e., all prospective states north of the line must have
a slavery prohibition clause in their original state constitutions.\footnote{69}
Crawford interrupted by saying that a state legislature could nullify
such an act. The Secretary of State answered that an action of that
kind would be contrary to the Declaration of Independence which pro­
vided for equality among men and a government controlled by the
governed. He went on to say that it certainly would not be consis­
tent with the Constitution for one segment of the population to make
slaves of another part of the populace. Crawford said that those
words had been "attributed" to Senator King.\footnote{50} Adams responded that
it was the opinion of both King and himself and that he had not pub­
licly expounded his feelings because he did not wish to add more fuel
to the controversy. Moreover, he added, it was also the sentiment
of those congressmen who voted for the slavery restriction and many
who voted against it.\footnote{51} After Adams had finished his short speech,
Crawford repeated his assertion that even the states of the former
Northwest Territory possessed the right to pass legislation which

\footnote{69}{Diary, op. cit., March 3, 1820.}
\footnote{50}{Ibid.}
\footnote{51}{Earlier Adams had alluded to the fact that the anti-slave
contingent of Congress was weakened by dissension within its own
ranks. Later, on February 28, 1821 (Memoirs, V, p. 307), he wrote
that anti-slave congressmen had possessed a majority before the
Compromise, but that "timid weak-minded" individuals switched
their votes in favor of the Compromise. Through this change of
votes, Adams concluded, the Compromise was passed by Congress.}
would prohibit slavery. At this point Adams felt he should practice restraint. In his own mind he knew that the Ordinance of 1787 was a "sacred," unbreakable "compact"; however, he thought it wise to temper his remarks lest the executive be shaken by the same dissen­sion which had raged in Congress for several sessions. Adams chose instead to state that the Ordinance had been passed by the Continental Congress without the approval of the states, but that adoption of the Constitution gave tacit approval of the Northwest Ordinance. In short, nothing to the contrary was passed after 1787. Furthermore, the Secretary of State once again repeated that the Constitution invested Congress with the right to make rules and regulations for territories.52

With the termination of Crawford's remarks, the Attorney General joined in the discussion by agreeing with Adams that Congress did not possess the power to establish slavery where it did not already exist. At this juncture the President asserted that the Constitution had, in fact, given Congress certain implied powers. He added that the supreme law of the land had granted broad general powers to both state and national governments. As an example he cited a congressional appropriation for the relief of Caracas earthquake victims. To Monroe's thinking this was a use of implied con­gressional powers. Turning to the question at hand, he agreed with Adams that Congress had the right to govern the inhabitants, as well as

52Diary, op. cit., March 3, 1820.
the land, of new territories.\textsuperscript{53}

After a few remarks on the Northwest Territory and the subsequent admission of several states therein, the President requested without further discussion a short summation of each cabinet member's opinion regarding the two questions. In reference to the second question Adams mentioned that he would be forced to issue a negative response if slavery was to be allowed in states above the proposed boundary (referring of course to the right of a state to decide whether or not to allow slavery). Moreover, he felt that he would be obliged to list the reasons for his sentiments. Crawford had no objections but Calhoun thought that such a disagreement should not arise. As an alternative to the second question he suggested that the President should rephrase the inquiry to read \textit{whether} or \textit{not} the eighth section of the Missouri bill was constitutional. Thus, as Adams later explained, the other members would vote affirmatively with the understanding that the second question applied only to territories, and Adams would assent without any further qualifications.\textsuperscript{54} Calhoun's suggestion was agreed to by the chief executive and Adams quickly acted in accord. Needless to say, although Adams made no further mention of the meeting, it would seem that it ended

\textsuperscript{53}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{54}Hence all cabinet members would answer positively to both questions; but Adams voted affirmatively believing that states could not permit slavery above the 36 degree, 30 minute parallel while the others alleged that slavery could be allowed if a state passed an enabling act. In short, Adams asserted that the Compromise line related to both states and territories. On the other hand, the remainder of the cabinet thought that the boundary referred only to territories.
in an almost outright rebuff toward him.

It seems clear that the Secretary sought to prevent the possible spread of slavery into states north of the compromise boundary, but that the other members of the administration felt otherwise. It is unfortunate that Adams did not analyze the reasons for the cabinet's unanimity. Nevertheless, it would seem reasonable to assume that the executive did not wish to prolong the controversy by vetoing the compromise measure.

In short, Adams' role throughout the Missouri debates was largely passive. In spite of his strong opinion on the matter, he kept silent to the public and relatively so to the administration. Adams admittedly pursued this course because he did not wish to promote dissension within the executive branch. Nevertheless, he did express his feelings to himself and a select group of friends.

In surveying Adams' conception of the controversy certain contrasts in his character come to light. There seem to have been three or possibly four distinctive sides to his personality. First, there was Adams the sectionalist. In his grossly oversimplified manner he regarded Southern congressmen as selfish slaveholders. With few exceptions (notably Middleton, Jefferson, Monroe, and Calhoun) he seemed to categorize all Southerners in the same mold. Little did he realize that only a small percentage of all Southerners owned slaves. Nor did he show any sympathy for the dilemma which many slaveholders had inherited from their forefathers, namely, their dependence upon the repugnant institution of slave
labor. On his side of the Mason-Dixon line Adams made little men­
tion or criticism of what Southerners called "white slavery," i.e.,
factory sweatshop conditions in the industrial states.

Closely associated to Adams' sectionalism was his humanitar-
ianism. Again in his one-sided viewpoint he regarded slavery or any
extension thereof as absolutely and irrevocably abominable. He
could see nothing but evil in the "peculiar institution" and in his
moral conscience he believed that it should be eradicated. But
above both sectionalism and humanitarianism was Adams' Americanism.
He was realistic and patriotic enough to understand that any exclu-
sive prohibition of slavery in the territories would promote a
schism within his beloved country. Thus, against his sectiona-
listic, and especially moralistic inclinations, he favored and sup-
ported a compromise. In view of his staunchly puritanical temper-
ament, it must have been a difficult decision to make. Nevertheless,
through reading his diary and letters one senses that he was first
and above all an American.

Quite possibly, and in a much more subtle fashion, a fourth
side of his personality might be noted. Unwittingly or not Adams
during this period was acting as the second most powerful figure in
the Monroe administration. In such a capacity, providing the admin-
istration retained its popularity, he would be the President's logi-
cal successor in 1824. Therefore, it would be to his political
advantage to act in agreement lest he might lose favor as presidential
heir apparent. Nevertheless, the latter conclusion that possibly
Adams was also acting as a politician is only scantly verified in the Adams Papers.

Regardless in what capacity -- sectionalist, humanitarian, patriot, or politician -- Adams was motivated, history has shown that his support of compromise was the correct course. While the Missouri Compromise did not prevent an eventual conflict, it certainly helped forestall the event for forty years. It seems quite possible that without this interim period the North would not have emerged victorious in the War between the States.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

A. BOOKS


B. PUBLICATIONS OF THE GOVERNMENT, LEARNED SOCIETIES, AND OTHER ORGANIZATIONS

(Note: As the title of the third chapter of this study suggests, the Adams Papers constitute the primary foundation for that chapter. However, in addition to the Papers, there are other references to John Adams and John Quincy Adams, e.g., Memoirs of John Quincy Adams (edited by Charles Francis Adams), The Diary of John Quincy Adams (edited by Allan Nevins), and The Adams-Jefferson Letters (edited by Lester J. Cappon). To a considerable degree Charles Francis Adams' Memoirs and the Papers' "Diary" are identical. One noteworthy difference was that the "Diary" was blank for the period from May 7 to August 20, 1821, while the Memoirs lacked entries from May 7 through October 7, 1821. In the course of reviewing the Missouri controversy it was necessary to quote directly from the Memoirs instead of the "Diary" because quoting from the latter requires the permission of the Massachusetts Historical Society. Therefore, where quotations were needed, the Memoirs were cited. Allan Nevins' edition of the Diary was an abridged version of the original work. The author's commentaries proved quite useful. Lester J. Cappon's edition of the Adams-Jefferson letters contains correspondence which is also found in the Papers. Cappon's work was utilized for quotations. Where paraphrasing was sufficient, the Papers were cited. Thus, while the bulk of the third chapter's information came directly from the Adams Papers microfilm, it was not always directly cited.


Constitution of the United States of America.

Declaration of Independence.


C. PERIODICALS
