

JOHN C. CALHOUN AS A LATER PROPHET

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ABSTRACT

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John C. Calhoun's amazing political career which extended from 1810 to 1850 consisted of three phases: nationalist, nullifier, and sectionalist and slavery advocate. The transitions between phases in his political philosophy were outgrowths of the situations which were affecting the future of the Union. Thus, Calhoun felt that his changes in political philosophy were necessitated, because there were imminent dangers which were threatening the welfare of the United States, and it was in the defense against the dangers of disunion that Calhoun erected his philosophy of government from both ancient and contemporary sources.

Calhoun, however, did not confine himself to the past and present, for he anticipated the development of other events and philosophies of government which are presently considered to be detrimental to the system of capitalism. Calhoun thought, however, that he could prevent the destruction of both capitalism and slavery by persuading the conservative interests of both the North and South to unite against the forces of revolt, abolitionism and socialism. Both of these philosophies, Calhoun contended, were attacks upon the right to own property and both endangered the continuance of the Union.

Calhoun asserted that if his prophetic warnings were ignored, wretchedness, misery, and despair would result, because the Union would have to suffer a Civil War which could only lead to racial conflict and a new form of slavery. Also, the United States would have to endure a class conflict which would be the result of exploitation of the proletariat by the capitalists and the federal government.

The foregoing, Calhoun claimed, could only lead to governments by the "numerical majority" or "mobocracy." Thus, Calhoun constructed the principle of "concurrent majority" and the theory of nullification to protect the constitutional rights of the minority against the "self-interests" of an indiscriminate majority.

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Chapter 1

THE MAN AND HIS CAREER

John C. Calhoun was a unique combination of politician, statesman, and prophet. Throughout his long career from 1810-1850,¹ Calhoun had sought primarily to be a successful politician. However, as events decreed, Calhoun's goal of reaching the peak of his profession was continually denied, for the very method by which he sought to achieve political glory merely resulted in political infamy.

Even though Calhoun was concerned about his political future, he was far more concerned about the future of the section of the nation in which he was born and reared, for the very events which brought Calhoun infamy were bringing disaster to the South. The North was crusading against the "peculiar institution" of the South, slavery. If the crusading was not halted, the Southern way of life to which Calhoun had unswervingly devoted his life would vanish. The institution of slavery was the economic, social, and political foundation of Southern society. Thus, the "peculiar institution" not only shaped the environment in which Calhoun was reared but

¹Richard N. Current, John C. Calhoun (New York: Washington Square Press, Inc., 1966), p. 3.

also shaped the political and constitutional arguments which Calhoun later formulated in defense of slavery.

In the midst of other political battles, Calhoun sought to defend slavery against the accusations of the North by formulating and promoting his concepts of the nature of government. Calhoun contended that if these warnings were not heeded, disastrous events would occur which would affect both the immediate and far-distant futures of both the South and the North. Thus, Calhoun constantly emphasized the crimes which he conceived the North to be committing against the South. To Calhoun, the events and their ramifications were perfectly clear.

Nevertheless, his warnings availed nothing, for Calhoun himself fell victim to the forces of sectionalism which were causing the crises within the nation. As Calhoun continually expanded his political philosophies to adjust to impending political dangers, the goal of being a successful politician became even more elusive, for Calhoun's opponents began to label him as an opportunist. To Calhoun, however, his position was not one of vacillation but one of necessity, for it was the North's relentless pressuring which had later caused Calhoun completely to modify his political views.

This modification was characterized by three distinct phases in Calhoun's political career: nationalist, nullifier, and sectionalist. The transition from each one

of these political philosophies to the other and the attempt to follow them helped to implement the forthcoming doom and destruction which he envisioned. In essence, Calhoun himself became one of the very instruments which brought about the impending disasters.

Calhoun, nevertheless, was predisposed by his childhood environment to pursue the course of action he took. "John Caldwell Calhoun, the third son of Patrick and Martha, was born March 18, 1782, in the Abbeville District, South Carolina."² Though his father died while John was still a boy, his zealous revolutionary ardor influenced his son.³ Because of his political philosophy, Patrick had vehemently opposed the adoption of the Constitution on the basis that it authorized external agents to tax the people of South Carolina. To him, this was a flagrant violation of the fundamental reason behind the cause of the revolution. Philosophically, this attitude was Jeffersonian in nature since it reflected the idea that government which governs best allows the largest degree of liberty possible in conjunction with the security of social order.⁴ Patrick Calhoun, therefore,

²Hermann Edward von Holst, John C. Calhoun (New York: Houghton, Mifflin, and Company, 1899), p. 8.

³Ibid., p. 8.

⁴Gerald M. Capers, John C. Calhoun--Opportunist (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1960), p. 4.

believed that individuals possessed the express right of redress of grievances against government. This belief was manifested on one occasion when Patrick and an armed group of neighbors physically expressed their right of suffrage outside of Charleston. The elder Calhoun, however, as well as being a man of iron will and words, was also a man of moderate wealth, for in 1790, his estate partially consisted of thirty-one slaves.⁵ Thus, John C. Calhoun, the political philosopher and prophet, who owed his education to the wealth of his father's estate and the system of slavery⁶ was compelled by his background and upbringing to defend slavery when it came under attack, and his shifts in philosophy reflected his evolving ideas on how that might be done.

The abrupt transitions and antithetical positions taken by Calhoun, however, have often been attributed to a narrow intellectual perspective and opportunism. After Calhoun's father died, his education was not systematic⁷ and consisted mainly of his own individual efforts and his mother's guidance.⁸ At the age of thirteen under the

⁵Ibid., p. 5.

⁶Ibid., p. 5.

⁷von Holst, John C. Calhoun, p. 8.

⁸Gaillard Hunt, John C. Calhoun (Philadelphia: George W. Jacobs and Company, 1907), p. 17.

sporadic instruction of Dr. Waddell, Calhoun eagerly perused "Rollin's Ancient History, Robertson's History of America and of Charles V, Voltaire's Charles XII and Locke's Essay on the Human Understanding."⁹

From Rollin he learned about the chief empires of the ancient world; from Robertson and Voltaire he obtained an insight into European history in the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries, and also from Robertson a knowledge of early American history; while Locke taught him an elaborate method of analysis and superfine reasoning which he himself afterward applied to the Constitution of the United States.¹⁰

Thus, Calhoun's childhood environment, his educational background, and the political situations in which he was later embroiled culminated in his attempts to rationalize the shifts in his political philosophy. In the first third of his career, Calhoun proposed nationalistic measures which his father would have opposed, because they furthered the consolidation of the national government. Calhoun, however, rationalized such a policy on the basis that it was Jeffersonian in nature.

Stirred by the momentous events of the Napoleonic era in Europe and America, he developed a strong antipathy for the English and for tidewater Federalists, as did his upcountry neighbors at Abbeville. He heartily

⁹Ibid., p. 16.

¹⁰Ibid., pp. 16-17.

espoused the agricultural imperialism of the Republican party, which pointed to Florida and Louisiana.¹¹

Calhoun and the War Hawks, however, were contending for more than just a program of agricultural imperialism, for they were talking about a newly invigorated national honor which had sustained injury from England and France. Thus they boldly agitated for a vindictive war against foes who were considered to be less of a challenge than the wilderness in the American heartland.¹²

By following this program, however, Calhoun unwittingly attained deadly far-reaching goals which were later to implement the doom of the South. Therefore, when Calhoun sounded the war-trumpet on November 29, 1811, he inadvertently engaged in a lifetime of bitter war which he was to be plagued with to his dying day. Unlike the War of 1812, however, this war was to pit internal adversaries against the South.¹³

In defense against John Randolph's accusations concerning the War Hawks' movements, however, Calhoun delivered a speech in which he uttered prophetic truths

¹¹Capers, John C. Calhoun--Opportunist, p. 8.

¹²Ibid., p. 30.

¹³von Holst, John C. Calhoun, pp. 15-16.

which, though only initially intended to justify the cause of nationalism in that particular place and time, contained meanings yet unknown to him and all others.

I know of one principle to make a nation great, to produce in this country not the form but real spirit of union, and that is to protect every citizen in the lawful pursuit of his business. He will then feel that he is backed by his Government; that its arm is his arm; and will rejoice in its increased strength and prosperity. Protection and patriotism are reciprocal.¹⁴

At this particular time, Calhoun pleaded for protection of national unity and pride. Later, he was to declare that patriotism to the Union could only be secured by the North's vows to protect the interests of the South.

Thus fate ironically positioned Calhoun in a role in the early part of his career which he was to disparage for the rest of his life. In the War of 1812, a rash majority, of which Calhoun was a prominent member, had trampled the rights of the minority. When Calhoun later became the spokesman for an oppressed minority, the South, he was poignantly reminded of the fact that the majority not only has the right to rule, but it can also be unjustly abusive of the rights of the minority.¹⁵ Thus

¹⁴Capers, John C. Calhoun--Opportunist, p. 31. See, also, John C. Calhoun, The Works of John C. Calhoun, ed. Richard K. Cralle, II (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1888), 5-7.

¹⁵von Holst, John C. Calhoun, p. 22.

Calhoun and his comrades were not following the tenets of true Jeffersonianism.

. . . they reversed early Jeffersonianism and accelerated the transition to a strange new Republicanism. Jefferson had laid down fundamental principles in 1800: a frugal, simple, and unobtrusive government, strict construction of the Constitution, state rights, a quiet not a rampant patriotism, peace, no army, no navy, no taxes, no debt. Each of these the War Hawks specifically, and in many instances deliberately, violated.¹⁶

Like Hamilton in the 1790's, therefore, Calhoun favored a broad, nationalistic program which was also in complete accord with Marshall's interpretations of the Constitution.¹⁷ Thus Calhoun at this time was completely free of any sectional prejudice or narrowness in his political views, for he had not yet become an "attorney of a special cause."¹⁸

However, once the defense of slavery became a necessity, Calhoun made the transition to the second third of his career as a nullifier by searching the Constitution in pursuance of legal shelter for the South and its "peculiar institution." Paradoxically, however, though Calhoun did persist in following his father's footsteps in arguing adamantly for personal freedom

¹⁶Capers, John C. Calhoun--Opportunist, p. 35.

¹⁷Ibid., pp. 46-47 and p. 55.

¹⁸von Holst, John C. Calhoun, pp. 26 and 29.

against the encroaching powers of the federal government, he was denying to the Negroes their personal freedoms which were guaranteed in the Bill of Rights. Nevertheless, Calhoun conceived his political course to be one of necessity rather than opportunism, for as W.J. Cash said:

. . . the South was steadily driven back upon the defensive. It had begun with the control of the national government in its hands, but even there it lost ground so surely and so rapidly that it early became plain that it was but a matter of time before the Yankee would win to undisputed sway in the Congress and do his will with the tariff.¹⁹

Thus, as Calhoun had previously stated on a former occasion in behalf of the now inimical or antagonistic cause of nationalism and consolidation, the government of the United States is "a government founded on the rights of man; resting, not on authority, . . . but reason."²⁰ In his opinion, therefore, union could not be maintained without liberty and vice versa, for the two were inextricably mixed,²¹ and it was this formula which encompassed all of the issues which were to plague Calhoun and the nation throughout his political career and the Civil War.

¹⁹W.J. Cash, The Mind of the South (New York: Vintage Books, Random House, Inc., 1941), p. 62.

²⁰Capers, John C. Calhoun--Opportunist, p. 50.

²¹Ibid., p. 51.

Because of the threat to the security and liberty of the South, Calhoun saw many of his political dreams fade, for events which were detrimentally affecting the welfare of the South were beginning to have adverse effects upon Calhoun's career.

. . . the Missouri controversy of 1819-21, when Northern politicians tried to prevent the admission of Missouri as a slave state . . . increased the sectionalization of politics--which, in turn, destroyed Calhoun's chances of riding into the presidency . . . on a wave of nationalism such as he had been seeking to arouse.²²

In the final analysis, the debates concerning the admission of Missouri into the Union and the efforts to establish the theory of nullification in 1831 evinced that slaveowners no longer considered gradual emancipation feasible, for slavery had become a dire necessity due to the demands and expansion of the cotton culture. Panic and resignation to destiny on the part of the South, therefore, were the inevitable results.²³

Slavery, however, was only one of the causes from which sectionalism received its impetus. After the election of 1828, Calhoun and other political leaders were compelled to reconsider their stand on national

²²Current, John C. Calhoun, p. 9.

²³Charles M. Wiltse, John C. Calhoun--Nullifier, 1829-1839, Vol. II (New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1949), p. 117.

policies because the various sections in the country were being affected differently.²⁴ These changes were manifest in the various controversial political issues, such as national banking, land policy, protective tariffs, and slavery, which had divided the nation's sections and their respective political leaders prior to the election of 1824.²⁵ As late as the summer of 1825, however, Calhoun declared that he personally still disdained any action by any group of interests or states which would result in the attainment of sectional goals. Nevertheless, Calhoun was eventually compelled to change his philosophy, for slavery and tariffs were already proving to be incompatible since the South was destined to pursue agriculture.²⁶ Matters reached a critical stage, however, with the advent of the election of 1828. This was the period which entailed the dramatic shift in Calhoun's political career.

It is at this time that Calhoun and Daniel Webster, Calhoun's well-known nemesis on the floor of the United States Senate, almost completely reversed their political

²⁴Current, John C. Calhoun, p. 10.

²⁵John A. Garraty, The American Nation (2d ed.: New York: American Heritage Publishing Co., Inc., 1966, 1971), pp. 285, 286, and 287.

²⁶von Holst, John C. Calhoun, p. 66 and pp. 70-71.

philosophies. Calhoun began to abandon his goals of nationalism for the protection of states' rights, while Webster began to abandon states' rights for the protective tariff, which the New Englanders had begun to favor. Thus, sectionalism was yet to receive further impetus from the philosopher-statesman when he began to come to the South's aid in the fight against protective tariffs.

The first incident concerned the Woolens Bill of 1827. The bill had survived the rigors of the House of Representatives, but its fate was now to be decided by the Senate, the last bastion of the South. As it was, the deadlock over the bill was broken only when Calhoun, the presiding officer or President of the Senate, cast a negative vote which most definitely marked the end of the nationalistic phase of his career.²⁷

The crisis, however, was not concluded with the defeat of the Woolens Bill, for it led to the passage of the Tariff of Abominations, to which the Southerners attributed all of their economic troubles.²⁸ Now, it was the South's turn to rise in indignation. This was epitomized by Calhoun's formal protest in which he delineated one of his concepts concerning the nature of government.

²⁷Current, John C. Calhoun, p. 11.

²⁸Ibid., pp. 11-12.

In the "South Carolina Exposition and Protest," Calhoun reached cogent political conclusions from his economic reasoning. Essentially, Calhoun maintained that economically there was "a permanent conflict of interest" between the North and the South. Most of all, however, Calhoun explicitly stated that there existed within the political system of the United States a diversity of interests among the geographical sections of the community.²⁹

The moment was ripe for the flaring of Southern tempers:

In South Carolina a faction of radicals demanded immediate and drastic action. They talked of withdrawing their state from the Union that treated them so ill. They would escape the tariff levies through secession. They advocated revolution, no less. And they were rapidly becoming a majority in the state.³⁰

Calhoun had to keep the state's support if he was to remain in politics. He needed Jackson's friendship and Northern backing if he was to succeed Jackson as President. He could not do this if he joined the Carolina revolutionaries. He could do still less if he defied them.³¹

Calhoun, however, did not wish to precipitate any radical action, for it could only lead to dissolution of the Union and abandonment of his aspirations for the presidency. Calhoun revealed this frustrating fact when he uttered

²⁹ von Holst, John C. Calhoun, pp. 75-76.

³⁰ Current, John C. Calhoun, p. 12.

³¹ Ibid., p. 13.

the statement "that the selfish efforts of the protectionists had created a crisis which tended 'to make two out of one nation,'" He hoped that the South, however, would not yield to the temptation to seek redress by any means other than those specified in the Constitution.³²

Calhoun, then, was compelled to make a fateful choice between two political philosophies. Being an ingenious logician, Calhoun sought through logic to resolve the dilemma with which he was confronted. Calhoun, however, only succeeded in making matters worse, for as Richard Hofstadter has stated:

Calhoun had a touching faith in his ability to catch life in logic. His political reasoning, like so many phases of his personal life, was a series of syllogisms. Given a premise, he could do wonders, but at times he showed a fantastic lack of judgment in choosing his premises, and he was often guilty of terrible logic-chopping.³³

The preceding fault was most likely the result of Calhoun's defective educational background, because his thoughts were characterized by a one-sided narrowness throughout most of his life. Calhoun was guilty of selecting premises and syllogistically erecting false postulates from them.³⁴

³² Capers, John C. Calhoun--Opportunist, pp. 106-107.

³³ Richard Hofstadter, "John C. Calhoun: The Marx of the Master Class", The American Political Tradition (New York: Vintage Books, Inc., 1948), p. 75.

³⁴ von Holst, John C. Calhoun, pp. 8-10.

It was Calhoun's logic, however, which led him to assume the leadership of the secessionist radicals in the South. From Calhoun's perspective, secession would not have occurred if nullification had not failed, and nullification would not have occurred without the introduction of protective tariffs. As Capers stated: "It was the tariff which led to the first formal attempt of a state at nullification, a procedure suggested by Jefferson and Madison which Calhoun borrowed and developed."³⁵ Calhoun, however, "found himself in the impossible position of attempting to ride two horses which were heading in opposite directions."³⁶

Nevertheless, Calhoun's position even as late as September 11, 1830 was still one of sanguine hopefulness, for he had not interfered in the struggle in the state except to admonish adherence to the Constitution.³⁷

"My friends out of the state, seem to think, at least many of them, that another duty is imposed on me, to step forward in order to arrest the current of events. They appear to take it for granted, that it is in my power. In this they make a great mistake. In my opinion there is but one man in this Union, who can quiet the state;--I mean the President of the United States. If he were to come out decidedly in his message

³⁵Capers, John C. Calhoun--Opportunist, p. 99.

³⁶Ibid., pp. 102-103.

³⁷Hunt, John C. Calhoun, p. 72.

to Congress, recognizing the justice of the complaints of the South, and throwing his weight without equivocation on the side of equalizing the burdens and benefits of the Union, the state would undoubtedly pause, in the hope of redress by the general government; but for me, who have so little control over its movements, to attempt to stay the present current, were I so inclined, would, under my impression, be almost an act of madness."³⁸

Therefore, it is apparent that Calhoun did not resort to nullification out of opportunism, for he generally sought to promote his political prestige on the basis of a "coherent and well-stated body of principles in which he actually believed." Calhoun's failure was in not comprehending that successful politics requires loyalty to people as well as ideas.³⁹ Calhoun's inability to reconcile loyalty to people and fidelity to ideas was most aptly illustrated near the end of his nationalistic phase.

In 1828, Calhoun searched the Constitution in efforts to placate both the secessionists in South Carolina and the Unionists throughout the country. Calhoun thought that the constitutional answer to the South's problems was the theory of nullification,⁴⁰ which was contained in "The South Carolina Exposition and Protest."

³⁸Ibid., p. 72.

³⁹Hofstadter, The American Political Tradition, p. 76.

⁴⁰Current, John C. Calhoun, p. 13.

In the "Exposition," Calhoun gave a realistic economic survey of the unjust and what he considered to be unconstitutional effects of the tariff, meticulously explained the constitutional procedure by which the South Carolinians could reject the tariff, and pleaded with the oppressed planters to procrastinate in employing the constitutional right of nullification in an attempt to give the congressional majority time to rectify its crimes.⁴¹ In this attempt, Calhoun was anticipating the future by hoping to prevent the South from becoming a disenchanting, oppressed, and hostile minority,⁴² for in 1827, Calhoun had already come to the conclusion that power is dangerous in itself because it can be executed for private and selfish ends.⁴³ This belief was perhaps a reflection of Calhoun's Calvinistic heritage and of his belief that life was a continual struggle against evil.⁴⁴ Probably to his disappointment, however, Calhoun was later to discover that he could not renounce his part in instigating the secession and nullification controversies by simply

⁴¹Capers, John C. Calhoun--Opportunist, p. 118. See, also, John C. Calhoun, The Works of John C. Calhoun, ed. Richard K. Crallie, VI (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1888), 1-59.

⁴²Ibid., pp. 118-119.

⁴³Ibid., p. 109.

⁴⁴Wiltse, John C. Calhoun--Nullifier, 1829-1839, II, pp. 155-156.

elaborating upon the legal and constitutional aspects of states' rights.

This fact was brought to Calhoun's attention at a Jefferson Day dinner not long after the Webster-Hayne debate. At this dinner, President Jackson made it perfectly clear in his toast that his position was the antithesis of what Calhoun had desired. "Our Federal Union--It must be preserved."⁴⁵ Calhoun countered with the only thing he could say. "The Union--next to our liberty most dear. May we always remember that it can only be preserved by distributing equally the benefits and the burthens of the Union."⁴⁶ "The next year, 1831, Calhoun came out publicly as the leading nullification-ist."⁴⁷

As a result of Calhoun and South Carolina's political stand, Jackson secured measures to force the South Carolinian radicals in line. Calhoun, therefore, realized that South Carolina was in the precarious position of facing alone the nation's armies,⁴⁸ for Calhoun and the radicals realized that none of the other Southern

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 70.

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 71.

⁴⁷Current, John C. Calhoun, p. 15.

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 16.

states supported their program.⁴⁹ Calhoun also began to realize that the South did not stand united against the oppressions of the North, for the Southerners were united in sentiment only. Furthermore, the aggressions of the North were definitely not recognized by the rest of the nation. Therefore, Calhoun deemed the states' rights beliefs essential to the preservation of liberty and Union. Calhoun's efforts, however, were in vain, for they were negated by those outside the South. ". . . nullification had not really worked the way Calhoun had intended and had promised it would work. It had not been generally accepted as a legitimate and constitutional procedure . . ."⁵⁰

In August, 1833, Calhoun wrote:

"I utter it under a painful but a solemn conviction of its truth that we are no longer a free people,--a people living under a Constitution, as the guardian of their rights; but under the absolute rule of an unchecked majority, which has usurped the power to do as it pleases, and to enforce its pleasure at the point of the bayonet This condition we had been long approaching; and to it we are now absolutely reduced by the proclamation and force act"⁵¹

Thus, the nature of events compelled Calhoun to go one step further toward rending the nation asunder, the fate

⁴⁹Capers, John C. Calhoun--Opportunist, p. 140.

⁵⁰Current, John C. Calhoun, p. 18.

⁵¹von Holst, John C. Calhoun, p. 108.

he wished so sincerely to avoid.

By the rejection of nullification in 1830, Calhoun clearly saw that his chances for elevation to the presidency in 1832 would be lost if he openly espoused the doctrine. Therefore, Calhoun sought privately to stir his supporters in South Carolina to bring pressure to bear upon Jackson's administration. Calhoun, however, had attempted to achieve the impossible when he instigated the movement under the delusion that he could control it without becoming officially involved. Ultimately, the nullification controversy "became a raging conflagration which swept him before it."⁵²

Therefore, though one step nearer disunion, Calhoun began to attempt to unify the interests of the South, for nullification and secession could work only if the entire political weight of a section was behind them.⁵³ However, while promoting the interests of the section of the nation he represented, Calhoun necessarily furthered the disintegration of the Union as he himself had prophesied. Thus, Calhoun himself contributed heavily once again to the ever-widening rift within the nation.

This rift attained crisis proportion with the aid of the individuals who followed Calhoun's persuasive

⁵²Capers, John C. Calhoun--Opportunist, p. 141.

⁵³Current, John C. Calhoun, pp. 18-19.

political theories of sectionalism and advocacy of slavery. Thus, during the last phase of Calhoun's career, the issue of slavery was the critical issue which divided the North and South. Therefore, to unify the South for its own protection against the North, Calhoun developed defensive arguments concerning the issue of slavery. As Calhoun had ascertained in 1831, slavery was being threatened by the abolitionists in the North, the slaves, and the non-slaveholders in the South. As a result, Calhoun and the Southern planters tightened slave codes and attempted to justify the institution of slavery.⁵⁴ Calhoun being an owner of slaves depicted slavery as a paternal relationship in which he viewed himself as master and guardian.⁵⁵ Indeed, Calhoun took pride in his position as a slave-owner.

Thus even in 1828, when Calhoun first put forth his nullification theory concerning the effects of the tariff on the two different geographical sections of the Union, Calhoun was defending the "peculiar labor" system in the South, slavery.⁵⁶ "After 1833 he brought the slavery issue boldly to the front."⁵⁷ It may be noticed,

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 20.

⁵⁵Hofstadter, The American Political Tradition, p. 76.

⁵⁶von Holst, John C. Calhoun, p. 77.

⁵⁷Current, John C. Calhoun, p. 20.

then, that by Calhoun's position on the issues in 1828, he did not resort to a policy of sectionalism because of frustrated ambitions.⁵⁸ In 1837 under the influence of past experience and Madison's resolutions of 1798, Calhoun admitted that his earlier observations concerning the powers of government over minorities and slavery were erroneous⁵⁹ and declared that slavery "is, instead of an evil, a good--a positive good."⁶⁰ Calhoun also stated that "Many in the South once believed that it was a moral and political evil. That folly and delusion are gone. We see it now in its true light, and regard it as the most safe and stable basis for free institutions in the world."⁶¹

In 1837, Calhoun confronted the North with resolutions which sustained state sovereignty in respect to slavery, deprecated the acts of abolitionists, and denied citizens of other states the right to interfere in the establishment of slavery in the territories.⁶² As a result, Calhoun was accused of going on a quixotic expedition

⁵⁸von Holst, John C. Calhoun, pp. 93-94.

⁵⁹Capers, John C. Calhoun--Opportunist, p. 57.

⁶⁰John C. Calhoun, The Works of John C. Calhoun, ed. Richard K. Cralle, II (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1888), 631.

⁶¹Ibid., p. 180.

⁶²Current, John C. Calhoun, p. 24.

to needlessly assert abstract principles as he had done on January 7, 1836 concerning the jurisdiction of Congress over abolitionists' petitions.⁶³ Calhoun, however, was only attempting to unify the South against the attacks of the abolitionists.⁶⁴ More than this, though, Calhoun firmly believed that the abolitionists' petitions "were blows on the wedge, which would ultimately break the Union asunder."⁶⁵ Calhoun's resolutions, however, were intended as a program for the future.⁶⁶ Calhoun, therefore, held tenaciously to this line of reasoning concerning the question of annexing Texas.

When Calhoun became President Tyler's Secretary of State, he discovered a dispatch dated December 26, 1843 from Lord Aberdeen's British minister plenipotentiary, Pakenham, to Upshur. In this letter, Aberdeen expressed the desire to see slavery abolished in Texas. As a result, Calhoun declared in his reply of April 18, 1844 to Pakenham that:

"The United States have heretofore declined to meet her [Texas'] wishes; but the time has now arrived when they can no longer refuse, consistently with their own security and peace,

⁶³von Holst, John C. Calhoun, p. 123.

⁶⁴Current, John C. Calhoun, p. 24.

⁶⁵von Holst, John C. Calhoun, p. 124.

⁶⁶Ibid., p. 188.

and the sacred obligation imposed by their constitutional compact for mutual defense and protection They remained passive so long as the policy on the part of Great Britain, which has led to its adoption, had no immediate bearing on their peace and safety."⁶⁷

The reason for such a response was that Calhoun wanted to consolidate the South and to secure the continuation of slavery in the Union. The Pakenham correspondence, however, made the issue so unpopular that the Senate failed to ratify the treaty of annexation. Also, as von Holst contends, "there was not a particle of truth" in Calhoun's allegations against Great Britain. Therefore, the ire of the North was aroused.⁶⁸

In Calhoun's eyes, however, it was imperative that slavery be preserved, for slavery was an ideal institution for both Negroes and their white masters. To substantiate this, Calhoun statistically asserted "that feeble-mindedness and insanity were more common among the free Negroes of the North than the slaves of the South."⁶⁹ This line of reasoning was quite normal for him, for Calhoun had often made similar claims on the Senate floor. However, Calhoun's assertions were published, and he was

⁶⁷Ibid., pp. 230-232.

⁶⁸Ibid., pp. 232-233, 236-237, and 244.

⁶⁹Current, John C. Calhoun, p. 26. See, also, John C. Calhoun, The Works of John C. Calhoun, ed. Richard K. Cralle, V (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1888), 333-339.

caused much embarrassment by his statements. Thus, Calhoun's tenure as Secretary of State was short-lived, and he was soon replaced.

When Polk was inaugurated in 1845, he did not keep Calhoun in his cabinet,⁷⁰ for Calhoun already had begun to differ with him on various matters. Prior to the War with Mexico, he had believed that Polk had needlessly provoked hostilities with Mexico, and Calhoun criticized the war even at the risk of losing some of his popularity in the South. Calhoun was afraid of what might happen from the acquisition of territory from Mexico.⁷¹ Therefore, Calhoun maintained that the United States should maintain only a defensive strategy in the War with Mexico⁷² and should initiate negotiations for a peaceful settlement of all disputes.⁷³ Calhoun mainly opposed the war, however, on the grounds that such a rampant nationalism would tend to consolidate the nation even more. "Mexico is to us the forbidden fruit," he warned, "the penalty of eating it

⁷⁰Ibid., pp. 26-27.

⁷¹Ibid., p. 28.

⁷²Capers, John C. Calhoun--Opportunist, p. 233.

⁷³von Holst, John C. Calhoun, p. 274.

would be to subject our institutions to political death.'"74

Sectional conflict and the danger of disunion, therefore, increasingly centered on the acquisition of new representation, for the theory of nullification had not worked, and the Senate's equilibrium between the North and South was being threatened. Also, Calhoun could not seem to effect a Southern alliance with either the West or the capitalists of the North, for free labor areas desired the West for their posterity.⁷⁵ Calhoun's fears were soon realized:

The sectional crisis he predicted was not long in coming. Only a few months after the beginning of the war, a Pennsylvania Democrat, David Wilmot, introduced in Congress a resolution to exclude slavery from all the new territories to be acquired. Calhoun hoped that Southerners would rally to defeat the Wilmot Proviso. "If they regard their safety they must defeat it even if the union should be rent asunder," . . . "I desire above all things to save the whole; but if that cannot be, to save the portion where Providence has cast my lot, at all events."⁷⁶

Thus, Calhoun made it perfectly clear that he had subordinated the concept of unionism to sectionalism. This stand was in behalf of the minority who believed they were facing

⁷⁴Capers, John C. Calhoun--Opportunist, p. 233. See, also, John C. Calhoun, The Works of John C. Calhoun, ed. Richard K. Cralle, IV (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1888), 308.

⁷⁵Hofstadter, The American Political Tradition, pp. 84-85.

⁷⁶Current, John C. Calhoun, pp. 28-29.

oppression from an indiscriminate majority, the North. However, the aggression of the North increased, and matters worsened until the harshest blow yet was dealt in the next presidential election.

In the election of 1848 according to Foote, Calhoun "stated privately that he would 'prefer the election of any respectable southern planter whatever to any man of northern birth and residence.'" Unfortunately, Taylor was elected, and he did nothing to halt the progress of political conflicts between the North and South.⁷⁷ On December 3, 1849, "slavocrats" discovered that they had forever lost California by President Taylor's informal sanction of a constitution which prohibited slavery.⁷⁸ Thus, the sectional crisis of 1849-1850, the worst "crisis up to that time," was hastening the rift.⁷⁹ Northern senators began to make overtures to Calhoun and his followers, but they had little or no effect.

As in the past, the key individuals who debated this sectional crisis were Clay, Webster, and Calhoun. In this debate, Clay proposed a compromise which made concessions to both the North and the South. In response to

⁷⁷Capers, John C. Calhoun--Opportunist, p. 239.

⁷⁸von Holst, John C. Calhoun, pp. 334-335.

⁷⁹Current, John C. Calhoun, p. 31.

the Northern overtures, however, the mortally-ill Calhoun had a colleague read a previously prepared speech which consisted of amazing provisions and demand. Calhoun contended that the Union was endangered by the anti-slavery agitation and the numerical preponderance of the North. This was a discrimination which had resulted from federal policies that favored the North.⁸⁰

The only way to preserve the Union was to guarantee the security of the South within it. Runaway slaves must be returned, but more than that: the antislavery agitation must be stopped, and the South must be given complete equality in the territories. All this was familiar, for Calhoun had said it often enough before, but now he added something new: the Constitution must be amended so as to provide absolute protection for the South. It was the establishment of a dual presidency, with one President to be elected by the North and the other by the South, each President to have a veto on all federal legislation.⁸¹

This proposal was Calhoun's final and strongest step toward the formation of a constitutional system which would contain more effective checks for safeguarding the rights of the minorities.

However, Calhoun had asked a price which the Northerners considered to be exorbitant. Nevertheless, Calhoun insisted that if the North did not wish to pay it,

⁸⁰Ibid., pp. 31-32.

⁸¹Ibid., p. 332.

thereby granting the South political justice, there was always the one remaining alternative:⁸²

If you, who represent the stronger portion, cannot agree to settle them on the broad principle of justice and duty, say so; and let the States we both represent agree to separate and part in peace. If you are unwilling we should part in peace, tell us so, and we shall know what to do, when you reduce the question to submission or resistance. If you remain silent, you will compel us to infer by your acts what you intend. In that case, California will become the test question. We would be blind not to perceive in that case, that your real objects are power and aggrandizement, and infatuated not to act accordingly.⁸³

Thus, Calhoun's political theories had traversed a path from one end of the political scale to the opposite extreme. This is self-evident, for, in a matter of words, Calhoun stated that the alternative to continued union on his terms was secession, and if that should be resisted, civil war. This belief was diametrically opposed to the beliefs that Calhoun held in his earlier political life. Yet, one must remember that Calhoun was not inconsistent in his loyalty, for his philosophy of government was a direct outgrowth of his loyalty to the South and the political situations in which he was embroiled. Thus, Calhoun himself had become a victim of the very

⁸²Ibid., pp. 32-33.

⁸³Calhoun, The Works of John C. Calhoun, IV, p. 573. See, also, Richard N. Current, John C. Calhoun (New York: Washington Square Press, 1966), p. 33.

circumstances which he feared would transpire, for he had only hastened the approaching catastrophe when he led the South into a confrontation with the North.⁸⁴

Calhoun did not live to see the results that his political policies had for the South. On March 31, 1850, three weeks after his speech on the proposal of a dual presidency, Calhoun died.⁸⁵ Though he did not live to see his prophecies fulfilled, they were and still are being enacted. Nevertheless, Calhoun was acutely aware of that which was to happen. "'The South! The poor South!' 'There, indeed, is my only regret at going,' . . ."⁸⁶

Calhoun's mistake, then, was in attempting "to achieve a static solution for a dynamic situation," for his theories concerning the nature of slavery were disastrously reactionary in that they promulgated the premise that there must be an exploited class at the base of society.⁸⁷

If there must always be a submerged and exploited class at the base of society, and if the Southern slaves, as such a class, were better off than Northern free workers, and if

⁸⁴von Holst, John C. Calhoun, p. 347.

⁸⁵Ibid., p. 33.

⁸⁶Capers, John C. Calhoun--Opportunist, p. 254.
See, also, Richard N. Current, John C. Calhoun (New York: Washington Square Press, 1966), p. 34.

⁸⁷Hofstadter, The American Political Tradition, pp. 90.

slavery was the safest and most durable base on which to found political institutions, then there seemed no reason why all workers, white or black, industrial or agrarian, should not be slave rather than free.⁸⁸

Thus, Calhoun's unacceptable, intricate syllogisms only led to the inevitable. In the desolated South of 1865, Calhoun's monuments lay everywhere.⁸⁹ Calhoun, however, also left his philosophy of government,⁹⁰ which was an outgrowth of political situations during Calhoun's political lifetime.

⁸⁸Ibid., p. 90.

⁸⁹Capers, John C. Calhoun--Opportunist, p. 254.

⁹⁰Current, John C. Calhoun, p. 34.

Chapter 2

THE EVOLUTION OF CALHOUN'S THEORY OF GOVERNMENT

Calhoun did not limit himself to the study of merely one or two philosophies of government, for he studied many. Within the bounds of his inclination, Calhoun read profusely. "For fiction, poetry, or other forms of belles-lettres he cared little; he preferred the more solid studies of history and politics, ancient and modern."¹ In this manner, Calhoun derived a unique view of the nature of the relationship between government and man which he expounded throughout his writings.

In his Disquisition on Government which dealt only with the theoretical approaches to problems and the Discourse on the Constitution and Government of the United States which elaborated upon the nature of the Union and the federal government, Calhoun philosophically justified government by the "concurrent majority," denied the validity of the existence of natural rights, defined slavery, explained his views of state sovereignty, and defined the nature of the Union. "It is from these works and from his speeches, reports, addresses, and letters that the political theory of Calhoun

¹Richard N. Current, John C. Calhoun (New York: Washington Square Press, Inc., 1966), p. 43.

is to be derived."²

Calhoun's theory of government was eclectically chosen from the works of several of his immediate states' rights predecessors, such as Jefferson and Madison. Though Calhoun read their writings with avid interest, he did not always adhere to their doctrines.

Though Jefferson had been interested in defending states' rights simply to reconcile individual liberty with limited government, Calhoun was more concerned with establishing the constitutional rights of the minority against the majority. Whereas John Taylor and Jefferson both believed in "the inalienable natural rights of individuals" and the theory of social compact,³ concepts which were derived from Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, and Algernon Sydney, Calhoun stressed the Aristotelian contention, which Bledsoe and Dabney were later to utilize, that government was universal among men and did not arise from any rational contract.⁴ In addition, Calhoun differed from Jefferson, Madison, and Taylor and agreed with Edmund Burke that natural rights were a curse to the welfare and order of society, and it was from these ideas that American abolitionism originated. However,

²August O. Spain, The Political Theory of John C. Calhoun (New York: Bookman Associates, 1951), pp. 29-30.

³Ibid., pp. 50-51.

⁴Ibid., p. 46 and 82-88.

Calhoun displayed Burke's influence over him when he asserted that neither the social compact theory nor the philosophy of natural rights possessed any sense of historical continuity.⁵

Though Calhoun did not accept Madison's ideas of human equality and natural rights, he did study Madison's writings for ideas in developing and supporting his theory of nullification.⁶ Calhoun, however, did not agree with Madison upon the location of sovereignty which was the vital foundation for nullification and secession. Madison could not accept nullification, because he believed that sovereignty was divided between the legislative bodies of both the central and local governments.

In contrast, St. George Tucker, who prolifically cited "Locke, Rousseau, Paine, Vattel, and Pufendorf," staunchly supported the theories of natural rights and social compact but was unable to clarify what his concept of a compact was and was equally unsuccessful in defining where sovereignty, the legitimate source of a compact, lay. William Rawle, though certain about the right of secession, was equally confused upon the source of sovereignty.⁷

In furtherance of Calhoun's conception of the source

⁵Ibid., pp. 89, 90, and 92.

⁶Current, John C. Calhoun, pp. 43-44.

⁷Spain, The Political Theory of John C. Calhoun, pp. 56-59.

of sovereignty, Taylor, Thomas Cooper,⁸ and Tucker all concurred that the individual states in the Union were the source of sovereignty.

The reservation of powers to the States in the Tenth Amendment was no idle phraseology; and to give it effect the implied powers of the federal government should be restricted to those "indispensably necessary." Only such were "proper." Otherwise the reserved powers of the States would be subject to unlimited invasion through construction.⁹

Calhoun, therefore, contended that the federal government was a limited, delegated government which originated from a compact between sovereign states,¹⁰ for if the framers of the Constitution had indicated that the adoption of the Constitution would have created a national sovereignty, the Constitution might not have been adopted.¹¹ Thus, Calhoun alluded to what he conceived to be the nature of the Union.

Calhoun later clarified his concept of the nature of the Union by stating that the social compact theory, which functioned as the basis for government under the Constitution

⁸Ibid., pp. 60-61, and 66. See, also, "Dumas Malone, The Public Life of Thomas Cooper (New Haven, 1926), pp. 302-306." Thomas Cooper was the "President of the College of South Carolina, and probably the first teacher of political economy in America."

⁹Ibid., p. 61.

¹⁰Charles M. Wiltse, John C. Calhoun--Sectionalist, 1840-1850, Vol. III (New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1951), p. 418.

¹¹Spain, The Political Theory of John C. Calhoun, p. 167.

was limited by the sovereignty of the states. According to Calhoun, no one political body of people had created the Constitution, and the Constitution created no political body of people.¹² To substantiate this position, Calhoun contended, as Taylor had, that the members of the convention which drafted the Constitution were chosen as representatives of the individual states, voted on the proposed measures in the convention as units composed of states, and did not explicitly bind any state which might fail to ratify the Constitution to the union formed therefrom.

Also, further evidence from the internal structure of the federal government clearly illustrated that this centralized system of government began under the control of the states. Senators were chosen by the states, suffrage for the House of Representatives was regulated by the states, and only a three-fourths majority of the states could ratify amendments to the Constitution. Moreover, there was no historical evidence to support the contention that the people of the several and separate states had ever given their consent to form a common people of the United States.¹³ Thus, Calhoun had so defined the nature of the Union only in an effort to

¹²Hermann Eduard von Holst, John C. Calhoun (New York: Houghton, Mifflin, and Company, 1899), p. 97.

¹³Spain, The Political Theory of John C. Calhoun, p. 60.

safeguard or set forth the constitutional rights of the minority, the Southern states, against an ever encroaching congressional majority.

It was the threat to the constitutional rights of the South that caused Calhoun to rely so heavily on the words of the founding fathers in ascertaining exactly what the nature of the Union was. The South's "peculiar institution," slavery, was receiving ever-widening criticism from the exponents of natural rights. These verbal attacks, Calhoun vigorously protested, were in violation of the Constitution since the Constitution recognized, supported, and protected slavery.¹⁴ Moreover, Calhoun attempted to justify slavery with the Aristotelian argument that Negroes were "natural" slaves since they were "physically, mentally, and morally inferior to the white; . . ."¹⁵ It was not only the attacks on slavery which caused Calhoun concern for the constitutional rights of the Southern minority, however, for the South was economically being discriminated against by the protective tariff. It was the economic question which first caused Calhoun to pursue the theory of nullification.¹⁶

His theory of nullification was the application of

¹⁴von Holst, John C. Calhoun, p. 125.

¹⁵Spain, The Political Theory of John C. Calhoun, p. 227.

¹⁶von Holst, John C. Calhoun, p. 74.

the principle of "concurrent majority" to the federal system of government.¹⁷ Calhoun sincerely believed that this form of government was originally intended by the founding fathers.¹⁸ Indeed, as Spain contends, Calhoun was in accord with the founding fathers in desiring to limit majority rule, for Montesquieu, who influenced the philosophy of the founding fathers, believed in protecting the rights of minorities. This, however, could only be effected by a system of government under the "concurrent majority," for all interests in society would need to be consulted before governmental decisions were made. Calhoun also consulted ancient sources for the confirmation of his theory of government by the "concurrent majority." Demosthenes, Cicero, Machiavelli,¹⁹ the fifteenth century Italian political theorist, and Polybius, "the venerable Greek historian,"²⁰ were cited frequently by him.

Since he had adopted the principle of "concurrent majority" because of the economic issue, Calhoun was perhaps more thoroughly influenced in this area by Cooper, "the

¹⁷Spain, The Political Theory of John C. Calhoun, p.154.

¹⁸Wiltse, John C. Calhoun--Sectionalist, 1840-1850, III, p. 418.

¹⁹Current, John C. Calhoun, p. 43.

²⁰Spain, The Political Theory of John C. Calhoun, p. 136.

anti-tariff economist," Adam Smith, John Locke,²¹ and the English economists from whom he borrowed "the labor theory of value."²² Calhoun concurred with these economists that "labor was the only source of wealth"²³ and that men had a right to the property acquired from their labor.²⁴ In Calhoun's thinking, this theory clearly pertained to the protection of the slaveowner's rights against abolitionism and justified the South's economic grievances against discriminatory protective tariffs. This is why Calhoun was so concerned with the intent of the founding fathers at the Philadelphia convention in 1787 and why he was so insistent upon government by the "concurrent majority."

As Calhoun contended, the founding fathers incorporated a system of checks and balances into the Constitution to protect the economic interests of the minority against the potential onslaughts of a "numerical majority." To prove this, Calhoun cited three features of the Constitution which were designed to serve as defenses for the minority. First, Calhoun noted that the Constitution provided for the election

²¹Current, John C. Calhoun, pp. 43-44.

²²Spain, The Political Theory of John C. Calhoun, p. 232. See, also, John C. Calhoun, The Works of John C. Calhoun, ed. Richard K. Cralle, V (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1888), 207-208.

²³Ibid., p. 232.

²⁴Current, John C. Calhoun, p. 44.

of two senators per state regardless of the difference in population between them. Second, the president served as a check against any discriminatory bills that Congress might pass, and third, the Supreme Court, free from the burden of electioneering, was the ultimate check upon the actions of the majority.²⁵ Calhoun observed, however, that these checks had begun to fail upon many issues and had already failed upon the economic issue, for as William L. Yancey declared in 1845:

. . . although the slave States since 1789 had paid sixty-three per cent of the common revenues, the free States had received in disbursements for internal improvements ten million dollars compared with three million for the slave States.²⁶

Yancey's assertion, however, was contested by M.R.H. Garnett, a pamphleteer, who found the economic disparity to be even greater than Yancey had imagined. Garnett argued that though the South's population only constituted forty per cent of the nation's population, the South had contributed \$700,000,000 out of a total of \$900,000,000 which had been collected in import duties.²⁷ This claim of discriminatory federal action was reinforced by the influence of Thomas Hobbes upon Calhoun's conception of the nature of man

²⁵Gerald M. Capers, John C. Calhoun--Opportunist (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1960), pp. 95-96.

²⁶Spain, The Political Theory of John C. Calhoun, p. 119.

²⁷Ibid., pp. 119-120.

and government, for Calhoun thought that the furtherance of Northern self-interests was endangering the security of citizens within the Union.

Calhoun agreed with Plato, Aristotle, and Hobbes, in depicting man "as a creature of appetites and aversions" and "the natural enemy of every other man." In conjunction with David Hume, Adam Smith, and the nineteenth century English political economists, Calhoun believed that an individual's self-interest was the prime motive in his economic activities which affected political policies. This premise, Calhoun maintained, allowed few exceptions. The outstanding exception to this rule, Calhoun noted, was the benign relationship between a mother and her child. In fact, Calhoun believed that self-interest was so strongly ingrained that no amount of increase in knowledge or intelligence through education or environment would alter it.²⁸ Calhoun believed that man's self-interest pervaded all aspects of human life. Thus, all of Calhoun's immediate states' rights predecessors and ancient sources of philosophy influenced him into concluding that man could not exist without the order and balanced security and liberty that society and government had to offer.²⁹

²⁸ Ibid., pp. 78-79. See, also, John C. Calhoun, The Works of John C. Calhoun, ed. Richard K. Cralle, I (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1888), 74. See, also, John C. Calhoun, The Works of John C. Calhoun, ed. Richard K. Cralle, II (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1888), 24.

²⁹ Current, John C. Calhoun, p. 44.

As Calhoun stated in his Disquisition on Government, the reason which made government necessary was the incontestable fact that man was a social being who possessed wants and desires which irresistibly impelled him to associate with other humans. Though man had never been found to exist in any other manner, Calhoun stated, he emphatically believed that man's self-interests superseded his interests for others and therefore made government an absolute necessity.³⁰ Calhoun attributed this need to the law of self-preservation from which "the desire to live, or the will to exist" emanated. Thus, man had a selfish nature to guarantee his survival.³¹ Therefore, Calhoun contended, since self-interests would take precedence over social interests, conflict between individuals would be the inevitable result³² of differing interests.

In contemplating what this "Hobbesian war of each against all"³³ would entail, Calhoun reasoned what the resulting situation would be without the presence of government.

Each, in consequence, has a greater regard for his own safety or happiness than for the safety or happiness of others, and where these come in opposition, is ready

³⁰John C. Calhoun, A Disquisition on Government, ed. C. Gordon Post (New York: The Liberal Arts Press, 1953), p. 3.

³¹Spain, The Political Theory of John C. Calhoun, p. 80.

³²Calhoun, A Disquisition on Government, pp. 4-5.

³³Spain, The Political Theory of John C. Calhoun, p. 82.

to sacrifice the interests of others to his own. And hence the tendency to a universal state of conflict between individual and individual, accompanied by the connected passions of suspicion, jealousy, anger, and revenge--followed by insolence, fraud, and cruelty--and, if not prevented by some controlling power, ending in a state of universal discord and confusion destructive of the social state and the ends for which it is ordained. This controlling power, wherever vested or by whomsoever exercised, is Government.³⁴

Thus, Calhoun agreed with Cooper when he declared that it was necessary for men to unite in some kind of union to prevent the mischiefs which arise from selfish individualistic exercise of power.³⁵

However, government must not be too restrictive. For development of intellectual and moral faculties and, in turn, the perfection of society, man must have an appropriate balance of liberty and security. "To Calhoun it was not a matter of natural right, but one of the conditions of human progress that the individual should be allowed a large field of action free of community control."³⁶ Nonetheless, Calhoun also asserted that government must also provide enough security to an individual to assure him that he will not be deprived of the fruits of his labor. Only in this manner, Calhoun added, could the mainspring of progress and the

³⁴Calhoun, A Disquisition on Government, p. 5.

³⁵Spain, The Political Theory of John C. Calhoun, p. 83.

³⁶Ibid., p. 101.

development of society be safeguarded.³⁷ This belief was only a reflection of laissez faire economics which stated that since an individual knew his business better than the government possibly could, the government should leave him free to pursue it in the manner that he deemed best. Only in this way would individualistic labor profit society.³⁸

Calhoun also added, however, that the precarious balance of liberty and security was subject to change because of the varying external and internal conditions affecting the security and liberty of each community. Calhoun contended that the degree of liberty to be allowed in any one community was contingent upon such considerations as the defensibility of borders, the proximity of enemies, the intelligence, the virtues, and the experience and proficiency of the community in self-government.³⁹ Thus, Calhoun reached two basic assumptions. A community which possesses a high degree of mental and moral development may be capable of effective self-government under the most trying circumstances, while another may be so ignorant, that it can only be governed by absolute or despotic government even under the most favorable conditions. Thus, Calhoun clearly illustrated that too much

³⁷Calhoun, A Disquisition on Government, p. 40.

³⁸Spain, The Political Theory of John C. Calhoun, p. 63.

³⁹Calhoun, A Disquisition on Government, pp. 40-41.

liberty or freedom to make decisions in the hands of ignorant people could endanger the security and welfare of a democratic community, and because of this, Calhoun asserted that liberty was not a natural right. Instead, it was a social reward which had to be merited.⁴⁰ In essence, "a community must be prepared for a large share of liberty,"⁴¹ because liberty is not a gift to be equally bestowed upon all people.⁴²

Liberty . . . though among the greatest of blessings, is not so great as that of protection, inasmuch as the end of the former is the progress and improvement of the race, while that of the latter is its preservation and perpetuation. And hence, when the two come into conflict, liberty must, and ever ought, to yield to protection, as the existence of the race is of greater moment than its improvement.⁴³

Thus, having established the premise that liberty is a reward which is to be earned by the socially intelligent, Calhoun elaborated upon the kindred error of liberty being connected with equality.

Calhoun believed that equality did not necessarily mean equal degrees of freedom. This was primarily due to the types of social structure within the United States. As he

⁴⁰Ibid., pp. 41-42.

⁴¹Spain, The Political Theory of John C. Calhoun, p. 101.

⁴²Calhoun, A Disquisition of Government, p. 42.

⁴³Ibid, p. 42.

contended, citizens were equal in the eyes of the law,⁴⁴ but they were not equal in economic, social, and political conditions. Calhoun also stressed, however, that even though there was equality before the law, there were no uniform demands upon the citizens concerning legal duties and rights. In fact, Calhoun maintained that if there were uniform demands, they would destroy both liberty and happiness. Thus, Calhoun clearly espoused the Greek idea of "proportional equality."⁴⁵ As Calhoun stated in his Disquisition:

. . . to go further and make equality of condition essential to liberty would be to destroy both liberty and progress. The reason is that inequality of condition, while it is a necessary consequence of liberty, is at the same time indispensable to progress. In order to understand why this is so, it is necessary to bear in mind that the mainspring to progress is the desire of individuals to better their condition, and that the strongest impulse which can be given to it is to leave individuals free to exert themselves in the manner they may deem best for that purpose, . . .⁴⁶

The resulting effect of allowing individuals of differing mental and physical capacities to better their respective conditions would be to establish an ever-growing inequality between them. Thus, inequality itself is the source of progress.⁴⁷

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 43.

⁴⁵Spain, The Political Theory of John C. Calhoun, p. 104.

⁴⁶Calhoun, A Disquisition on Government, p. 43.

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 44.

The only way to halt such a steadily increasing inequity, Calhoun asserted, was to restrict the more gifted individuals to a level of mediocrity or to deprive them of the rewards of their labor. However, the imposition of such restrictions would be destructive of liberty, because the deprivation of the rewards of labor would destroy all desire to improve social conditions and would thereby bring progress to a standstill.

Indeed, as Calhoun contended, it was the inequity between the upper and the lower ranks in society which gave the lower strata the incentives to press forward in their pursuit of progress, thus, providing the upper strata the initiative to maintain their positions in the social scale. This, Calhoun stressed, gives progress its greatest drive. To alter the situation with governmental interference would be to impede progress.⁴⁸

To Calhoun, the ideas of natural liberty and equality were also dangerous, because they gave rise to revolutionary discontents and abolitionism. These ideas, Calhoun maintained, gave impetus to disunion and civil war within the United States. Calhoun stressed that these ideas only reflected the false adage that "all men are born free and

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 44. See, also, John C. Calhoun, The Works of John C. Calhoun, ed. Richard K. Cralle, I (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1888), 1-7, 56-57.

equal."⁴⁹ In a speech concerning the Oregon Bill in June, 1848, Calhoun vehemently attacked this philosophy which permeated the Declaration of Independence. First of all, Calhoun stated that there was not a word of truth in the proposition, because it began with the utterly false declaration that "all men are born." With utmost sarcasm, Calhoun asserted that only infants are born, and then, infants grow to be men. The words, "free and equal," Calhoun declared, were equally fallacious, for babies were born without any choice of freedom and did not have the intellectual capacity to choose freedom.

Besides, they are necessarily born subject to their parents, and remain so among all people, savage and civilized, until the development of their intellect and physical capacity enables them to take care of themselves. They grow to all the freedom of which the condition in which they were born permits, by growing to be men. Nor is it less false that they are born "equal."⁵⁰

Indeed, as Cooper concurred with Calhoun, no man ever had been or would be born free of his fellow men, and no two of them would ever be identical in physical and mental capacities. Even if they were, Cooper added, the environment would mold them differently.⁵¹

⁴⁹Current, John C. Calhoun, p. 47.

⁵⁰Spain, The Political Theory of John C. Calhoun, pp. 84-95. See, also, John C. Calhoun, The Works of John C. Calhoun, ed. Richard K. Cralle, IV (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1888), 507-508.

⁵¹Ibid., pp. 85-86.

Calhoun also critically analyzed the statement in the Declaration of Independence that "all men are created equal." Calhoun held this statement to be an utter falsification, because the Bible stated that only two people, a man and a woman, had ever been created. Since that time, the rest of mankind had been born into the world. Calhoun also noted that the first two individuals created by God were not equal to one another.⁵² Calhoun did not stop here but analyzed the proposition still further.

Calhoun contended that the proposition was borrowed from such English writers as Locke and Sydney. However, Calhoun stressed, they expressed the proposition much differently.⁵³ "According to their expression, 'all men in the state of nature were free and equal.'" ⁵⁴ However, Calhoun analyzed the nature of man and logically proved that man has never been completely free and apart from the remainder of society.

Calhoun started with the assumption of man living in a hypothetical state of isolation. In this kind of a state, each individual would be exempt from the control of the

⁵²Current, John C. Calhoun, p. 48. See, also, John C. Calhoun, The Works of John C. Calhoun, ed. Richard K. Cralle, IV (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1888), 508.

⁵³Spain, The Political Theory of John C. Calhoun, p. 86. See, also, Ibid., p. 509.

⁵⁴Current, John C. Calhoun, p. 48. See, also, Ibid., p. 509.

other, and he would be free and possess equal rights. In essence, he would control his own destiny. However, Calhoun asserted, such is not the case, for man is social by nature. Not only this, man needs society to develop his intellectual capabilities and to preserve his very existence.⁵⁵

Such being the case, the state is a purely hypothetical one; and when we say all men are free and equal in it, we announce a mere hypothetical truism; that is, a truism resting on a mere supposed state that cannot exist, and of course one of little or no practical value.⁵⁶

Having established the relationship of man to society and government, Calhoun logically proceeded to elaborate upon the human traits which seemed to necessitate the existence of government. In addition, Calhoun furnished the criteria for defining a good or bad government.

It follows, from all that has been said, that the more perfectly a government combines power and liberty,-- that is, the greater its power and the more enlarged and secure the liberty of individuals, the more perfectly it fulfills the ends for which government is ordained.⁵⁸

This assumption revealed the fine line which Calhoun carefully drew between what he considered to be an appropriate

⁵⁵Spain, The Political Theory of John C. Calhoun, p. 86.

⁵⁶John C. Calhoun, The Works of John C. Calhoun, ed. Richard K. Crallé, IV (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1888), 509.

⁵⁷Current, John C. Calhoun, p. 49.

⁵⁸John C. Calhoun, The Works of John C. Calhoun, ed. Richard K. Crallé, I (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1888), 59.

balance of liberty and governmental powers. In the task of reconciling liberty with the powers of government, Calhoun devised his own theory of government based on the principle of "concurrent majority."⁵⁹

Calhoun formulated the principle of "concurrent majority" to supplement the normal checks and balances of a constitutional government. Calhoun realized that the same element of human nature which made government indispensable was also the corrupting factor in the implementation of government. Abuse of authority which led to subversion of liberty, Calhoun contended, was the greatest danger which could be expected from government.

If there be a political proposition universally true--one which springs directly from the nature of man, and is independent of circumstances--it is that irresponsible power is inconsistent with liberty, and must corrupt those who exercise it.⁶⁰

The only way this kind of oppression could be averted, Calhoun asserted, was to apply a "CONSTITUTION" to "GOVERNMENT."⁶¹

Calhoun emphasized, however, that oppression would

⁵⁹Current, John C. Calhoun, p. 49.

⁶⁰Spain, The Political Theory of John C. Calhoun, pp. 105-106. See, also, John C. Calhoun, The Works of John C. Calhoun, ed. Richard K. Cralle, VI (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1888), 29.

⁶¹Current, John C. Calhoun, p. 50. See, also, John C. Calhoun, The Works of John C. Calhoun, ed. Richard K. Cralle, I (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1888), 7.

not be terminated by mere paper guarantees, for government operated upon a basis of antagonistic relationships. Those who execute government and those who are subject to government can only resist one another with power.⁶² Thus, Calhoun made the need for a negative power readily apparent.

The first step in creating a democratic government, Calhoun stated, was the establishment of the right of suffrage.⁶³ This measure by itself, however, was inefficient. Party organizations threatened the voter's control of government. This was why Calhoun feared elections by the party ballot. Calhoun was particularly disturbed by the fact that parties displayed a blatant lack of principles in the way that they sought control of government offices, scrambled wildly after votes, and greedily distributed patronage.⁶⁴ Thus, Calhoun caustically commented that "the sum total" of the right of suffrage, "when most successful, is, to make those elected, the true and faithful representatives of those who elected them, . . ."⁶⁵

Calhoun added, however, that if a community consisted

⁶²Ibid., p. 50.

⁶³Spain, The Political Theory of John C. Calhoun, pp. 106-107. See, also, John C. Calhoun, The Works of John C. Calhoun, ed. Richard K. Crallie, I (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1888), 12.

⁶⁴Ibid., pp. 108 and 110.

⁶⁵Calhoun, The Works of John C. Calhoun, I, p. 14.

of like interests which were identically affected by the policies of government, the right of suffrage would be sufficient. Calhoun asserted, though, that this was not the case, for communities consisted of conflicting interests which continually sought to gain control of government. If there was not any one dominant interest, the interest groups most similar in desires would unite to gain control of government.⁶⁶ Therefore, the establishment of a "numerical majority" would only result in the exploitation of the remaining minority.⁶⁷

The only way this could be prevented, Calhoun asserted, was by establishing another negative power.

There is but one certain mode in which this result can be secured; and that is, by the adoption of some restriction or limitation, which shall so effectually prevent any one interest, or combination of interests, from obtaining the exclusive control of the government, . . . There is . . . but one mode in which this can be effected; and that is by taking the sense of each interest or portion of the community, which may be unequally and injuriously affected by the action of the government, separately, through its own majority . . . ; and to require the consent of each interest, either to put or to keep the government in action. This, too, can be accomplished only in one way, . . . by dividing and distributing the powers of government, give to each division or interest, through its appropriate organ,

⁶⁶Current, John C. Calhoun, pp. 50-51. See, also, John C. Calhoun, The Works of John C. Calhoun, ed. Richard K. Cralle, I (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1888), 14-16.

⁶⁷Spain, The Political Theory of John C. Calhoun, p. 116.

either a concurrent voice in making and executing the laws, or a veto on their execution.⁶⁸

Thus, Calhoun conceived of two ways for the people to voice their opinion, and both of them were indispensable to the functioning of a constitutional government.⁶⁹ One, however, only consulted the "numerical majorities" in each political community and considered each community to consist of identical interests, while the other consulted the voices of the minoritized interests. The latter mode which registered the sense of the minority interests, Calhoun called the "concurrent" or the "constitutional majority."⁷⁰

Calhoun further contended, however, that a constitutional government would not work successfully without the principle of "concurrent majority."

It is this negative power--the power of preventing or arresting the action of the government, be it called by what term it may, veto, interposition, nullification, check, or balance of power which in fact forms the constitution.

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But as there can be no constitution without the negative power, and no negative power without the concurrent majority, it follows necessarily that, where the

⁶⁸Current, John C. Calhoun, pp. 51-52. See, also, John C. Calhoun, The Works of John C. Calhoun, ed. Richard K. Cralle, I (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1888), 24-25.

⁶⁹Ibid., p. 52.

⁷⁰Spain, The Political Theory of John C. Calhoun, p. 129. See, also, John C. Calhoun, The Works of John C. Calhoun, ed. Richard K. Cralle, I (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1888), 28.

numerical majority has the sole control of the government, there can be no constitution, as constitution implies limitation or restriction--and, of course, is inconsistent with the idea of sole or exclusive power. And hence the numerical, unmixed with the concurrent, majority necessarily forms, in all cases, absolute government.⁷¹

Government of the "numerical majority" may be dictatorial, and when the principle of the "concurrent majority" is overlooked, an absolute tyranny is the result.⁷² Calhoun thought this was especially true in the United States since the conflict between interests was economic and sectional in nature. This contention reflected the Aristotelian belief that wealth commands political power.⁷³ Thus, Calhoun early recognized that the representatives of separate geographical interests could unite for selfish ends regardless of party lines.⁷⁴

This is why Calhoun contended that government by the "numerical majority" was inferior to government by the "concurrent majority." "In a government of the concurrent majority, the ruling principle was compromise,"⁷⁵ whereas

⁷¹Calhoun, A Disquisition on Government, p. 28. See, also, Richard N. Current, John C. Calhoun (New York: Washington Square Press, 1966), p. 53.

⁷²Ibid., p. 29. See, also, Ibid., p. 53.

⁷³Spain, The Political Theory of John C. Calhoun, pp. 133-134.

⁷⁴Ibid., p. 148.

⁷⁵Ibid., p. 151.

force was the ruling principle in absolute governments.⁷⁶

Compromise, Calhoun believed, would prevent the diverse elements of society from encroaching on each other's prosperity, thereby avoiding either despotism on one hand or by preventing the suspension of government on the other.⁷⁷

Calhoun argued that this form of government would promote stability, security, liberty, self-reliance, higher morals, patriotism, harmony, and even unanimity. Thus, protection and preservation of the community, the ends for which government was created, would be achieved.⁷⁸ Calhoun's theory of government, however, was not readily accepted, for many feared that this type of government could only lead to anarchy. Calhoun countered by saying that his critics did not fear anarchy; rather, they feared that they would not be able to achieve their own selfish ends under a government of the "concurrent majority."⁷⁹

If a crisis were to arise, Calhoun believed that necessity would force the various interests to compromise, since experience furnished examples of this truth. To verify

⁷⁶Current, John C. Calhoun, p. 53.

⁷⁷Calhoun, A Disquisition on Government, p. 30. See, also, Richard N. Current, John C. Calhoun (New York: Washington Square Press, 1966), p. 53.

⁷⁸Spain, The Political Theory of John C. Calhoun, pp. 152-153.

⁷⁹Ibid., p. 154.

this statement, Calhoun elaborated upon the system of trial by jury. Twelve individuals, indiscriminately selected, he asserted, must reach a consensus. As impractical as this may seem, Calhoun insisted that it was the best system yet devised by man. The success of the jury system, Calhoun stressed, was due to the obligation to reach a unanimous verdict. "This necessity acts as the predisposing cause of concurrence in some common opinion, and with such efficacy that a jury rarely fails to find a verdict."⁸⁰

Calhoun searched the history of western civilization to find examples of the implementation of the principle of "concurrent majority" in the government of countries.⁸¹ He thought he found an excellent example in the government of his own state, South Carolina. Its government was structured like that in the rest of the states; however, the South Carolinian constitution differed from the other states in that it contained a peculiar principle which affected the distribution of power within the state.⁸²

"The upper country had no representation in the government, and no political existence as a constituent portion of the State, until a period near the commencement

⁸⁰Calhoun, A Disquisition on Government, p. 50.

⁸¹Spain, The Political Theory of John C. Calhoun, p. 135.

⁸²Calhoun, The Works of John C. Calhoun, I, pp. 400-401.

of the revolution."⁸³ However, discontent eventually effected a compromise in 1807 in which the low-country of South Carolina maintained a preponderance in the Senate, while the House of Representatives was remodeled to give the up-country a commanding voice in that body. Thus, a sectional equilibrium was established in the legislature. Also, since the governor, judges, and other important state officials were appointed by the legislature, an equilibrium was established throughout the government. As a result, the government of the state of South Carolina was converted into a government of the "concurrent majority."⁸⁴ Better examples, however, were to be found in the governments of Rome and Great Britain.

Calhoun admired ancient Rome and Great Britain for their magnificent application of the "concurrent majority."⁸⁵ Their respective constitutions originated from concessions to the people. Through these concessions, the people acquired the right of participation in government.

For example, Calhoun agreed with Polybius, the ancient Greek historian,⁸⁶ in stressing that the right to

⁸³Ibid., p. 402.

⁸⁴Ibid., pp. 402-405.

⁸⁵Current, John C. Calhoun, p. 56.

⁸⁶Spain, The Political Theory of John C. Calhoun, p. 136.

participation in government expanded as a result of the conflict between the two Roman social classes, the Patricians and the Plebeians. Originally the Plebeians were so oppressed by the Patricians, that deep hatred was engendered which was accompanied by factions, violence, and corruption which, in turn, weakened the government. Eventually, a formal compact, allowing the Plebeians two tribunes to protect their order, was ratified. The number of tribunes, however, was later expanded to ten,⁸⁷ and their election by centuries (the 193 electoral divisions of the Roman people)⁸⁸ later changed to election by tribes. By this mode, Calhoun asserted, the Plebeians, outnumbering the Patricians, secured a decided majority in government.⁸⁹ This was not so, however, because the comitia centuriata consisted of divisions apportioned in such a way that the votes of the Patricians counted more than the Plebeians'.⁹⁰

Thus, with the passage of time, Calhoun asserted, the Plebeians had access to all government offices. In addition, they obtained a veto over all governmental action

⁸⁷Current, John C. Calhoun, p. 56.

⁸⁸William Morris (ed.), The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1970).

⁸⁹Calhoun, The Works of John C. Calhoun, I, p. 94.

⁹⁰"Roman History," Compton's Pictured Encyclopedia (30th ed.), XII, 182.

without eradicating the Patricians' role in government. "By this arrangement, the government was placed under the concurrent and joint voice of the two orders, . . ."91

In Britain, the feudal monarchy from the days of the Norman Conquest had become a refined constitutional monarchy. The role of the three estates, the king, the House of Lords, and the House of Commons, was modified to the extent that the king's absolute powers were diminished as the power of parliament grew.

Therefore, there was necessarily a strong, continuous tendency toward conflict between the crown and parliament. If not counteracted, it could only have ended in violence and eventual revolution. However, the House of Lords prevented this by intervening in the role of "the conservative power of the government," for it opposed the ascendancy of the other two estates.⁹² Therefore, as Calhoun stated, an equilibrium was established among the three estates.

Though Calhoun believed that the government of the United States was intended to function in like manner,⁹³ he illustrated that it did not.

There must be at all times . . . a majority of the several States, and of their people, estimated in federal numbers, on the side of the delegated powers of the

⁹¹Calhoun, The Works of John C. Calhoun, I, pp. 94-95.

⁹²Ibid., pp. 99-103.

⁹³Current, John C. Calhoun, pp. 57-58.

government of the United States. Its real authority, therefore, instead of being limited to the delegated powers alone, must, habitually, consist of these, united with the reserved powers of the joint majority of the States, and of their population, estimated in federal numbers. Their united strength must necessarily give to the government of the United States, a power vastly greater than that of all the co-ordinate governments of the States on the side of the party in opposition.⁹⁴

Essentially, Calhoun believed that the foregoing was due to the failure of Americans to appreciate and understand the spirit and the letter of their Constitution and the evolution of political parties. In this manner, the majority party could obtain control of both the central and the state governments.⁹⁵

Calhoun thought that as long as governments exist, parties would struggle to gain complete ascendancy over every department of government. The struggles, Calhoun asserted, would be the result of pursuing patronage. Thus, unless otherwise prohibited, oppression and abuse of power would always be the result.

Also, Calhoun declared, the press itself cannot guard against the abuse of power any more than the voters can, for it does not represent the opinion of the entire community. More often than not, the press merely represents the strongest interests within the community. In fact, Calhoun stated, the

⁹⁴Calhoun, The Works of John C. Calhoun, I, pp. 229-230.

⁹⁵Current, John C. Calhoun, p. 59.

press is often used as an instrument of party warfare.⁹⁶

Thus, by the end of his life, Calhoun saw that a change in the Constitution, the proposal of the dual presidency, was necessary. This idea Calhoun obtained from the distinguished constitutional governments of antiquity, those of Rome and Sparta.⁹⁷

Nevertheless, throughout his career as a states' rights advocate, Calhoun believed that the principle of the "concurrent majority" was already written into the Constitution by the founding fathers. The procedure for implementing the principle, Calhoun stressed, was the application of nullification.⁹⁸

As previously stated, Calhoun studied the writings of his states' rights predecessors to formulate his own concepts of government. States' rights, however, traced even further back than his immediate predecessors, for the first example was evidenced in 1774 when the colonies became involved in the Revolutionary War against the imperial oppression of Great Britain. However, even here, the rivalries between the states, which Calhoun's critics feared would be the result of government by the "concurrent

⁹⁶Calhoun, The Works of John C. Calhoun, I, pp. 75-77.

⁹⁷Ibid., pp. 393-395. See, also, Richard N. Current, John C. Calhoun (New York: Washington Square Press, 1966), pp. 59-60.

⁹⁸Current, John C. Calhoun, p. 60.

majority," impeded the establishment of government under the Articles of Confederation. As Current stated, the second article revealed the reason why: "Each state retains its sovereignty, freedom and independence, and every Power, Jurisdiction and right, which is not by this confederation expressly delegated to the United States, in Congress assembled."⁹⁹

Due to the inefficacy of this type of government, however, Alexander Hamilton and other nationalistic-minded individuals replaced the Articles of Confederation with a composite federal-nationalist constitution at the Philadelphia Constitutional Convention of 1787-1788. This form of government, however, contained important compromises affecting nationalism and states' rights. One of these compromises was the promise by the nationalists to add certain amendments to the newly proposed constitution upon its ratification by at least nine of the separate state conventions. Of the ten amendments added, the tenth restricted the powers of the central government the most. "The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, not prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people." This last amendment, however, only added to the ambiguity of what the Constitution actually meant and

⁹⁹Ibid., pp. 37-38.

said.¹⁰⁰

Two groups, the Federalists and Antifederalists or Democratic Republicans, believed that the Constitution should be interpreted by "loose" and "strict" construction respectively. In the 1790's, these two parties originated because the Federalists wanted to exploit the "implied powers" in the Constitution, and the Republicans believed that such powers were exclusively reserved to the states.

With the passage by the Federalists of the Alien and Sedition Acts in 1798, two leading Republicans, Jefferson and Madison, momentarily decided that it was the duty of the state legislatures to declare such unconstitutional acts null and void. This opinion was expressed by them in the Virginia and Kentucky Resolutions.¹⁰¹

During Jefferson's first term in the presidency when the Louisiana Purchase was negotiated in 1803, the states' rights principle in the Virginia and Kentucky Resolutions was violated. As a result, a few extreme Federalists, the Essex Junto, attempted to bring about the secession of New England.¹⁰² This manifestation of states' rights was the result of denouncing the unconstitutional Louisiana Purchase

¹⁰⁰Ibid., pp. 38-39.

¹⁰¹Ibid., pp. 39-40.

¹⁰²Ibid., p. 41.

and Jefferson's embargo. Foremost among the Federalists to declare that "The Government of the United States" was "a delegated, limited Government" was Daniel Webster. Although not a member of the Essex Junto, Webster in later years vehemently criticized Calhoun and his followers for saying exactly what he had said upon this occasion.

Later, during the presidency of James Madison, states' rights advocates gained the ascendancy in New England. The cause of the change was the highly unpopular War of 1812. The result of this strong states' rightists surge was the Hartford Convention of 1814-1815. In this convention, the radical Federalists demanded changes in the Constitution and threatened that if these demands were ignored, they would withdraw New England from the Union.¹⁰³

Therefore, it is readily apparent that Calhoun was not the first individual to espouse the cause of states' rights. Already there was the Jeffersonian school of strict constructionists of the Constitution with its ostensible leaders such as John Randolph of Roanoke. Then, there were Calhoun's contemporaries such as Webster who had proposed states' rights when Calhoun was still advocating nationalism. Therefore, many examples of states' rights were already extant, and Calhoun received much of his schooling in it

¹⁰³Ibid., p. 42.

from his contemporaries and current events.¹⁰⁴

All of Calhoun's concepts of states' rights, however, were solidly grounded on state sovereignty. The idea that sovereignty could be divided between the federal and state governments, he felt, was absurd.¹⁰⁵ "Sovereignty, to him, was simply the highest law-making power within . . . a community."¹⁰⁶

"How sovereignty itself--the supreme power--can be divided," he wrote in his Discourse, "how the people of the several states can be partly sovereign, and partly not sovereign--partly supreme, and partly not supreme, it is impossible to conceive. Sovereignty is an entire thing;--to divide, is to destroy it."¹⁰⁷

In conjunction with the previous statement, Calhoun asserted that sovereignty remained unimpaired in the people of the several states and did not belong to the people of the United States as a whole. As he had stated many times before, if the separate, sovereign states had intended to create a sovereign Union, "they would have so expressly stipulated in the federal Constitution."¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁴Ibid., pp. 42-43.

¹⁰⁵Ibid., pp. 60-62.

¹⁰⁶Spain, The Political Theory of John C. Calhoun, pp. 172-173.

¹⁰⁷Ibid., p. 173. See, also, John C. Calhoun, The Works of John C. Calhoun, ed. Richard K. Cralle, II (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1888), 146.

¹⁰⁸Ibid., p. 178. See, also, John C. Calhoun, The Works of John C. Calhoun, ed. Richard K. Cralle, II (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1888), 281-282.

If the people of the United States were not sovereign as a political whole, then the federal government was not sovereign, for the federal government was viewed by Calhoun as a representative government. As Calhoun stated, the term "representative" implies some superior "body or individual represented."

Thus commenced the division between the constitution-making and the law-making powers;-- . . . which ordains and establishes the fundamental laws;--which creates, organizes and invests government with its authority, and subjects it to restrictions;--and the power that passes acts to carry into execution, the powers thus delegated to government. The one, emanating from the people, as forming a sovereign community,--creates the government; --the other, as a representative appointed to execute its powers, enacts laws to regulate and control the conduct of the people, regarded as individuals.¹⁰⁹

In absolute terminology, then, "there was no United States. There were only the States United."¹¹⁰ The federal government, Calhoun contended, was appointed to attend to the interests in which all the states were jointly concerned. Beyond this domain, the federal government did not have any powers.¹¹¹

If the federal government desired more power, Calhoun

¹⁰⁹Calhoun, The Works of John C. Calhoun, I, pp. 190-192. See, also, Richard N. Current, John C. Calhoun (New York: Washington Square Press, 1966), pp. 63-64.

¹¹⁰Ibid., pp. 111-127. See, also, Ibid., p. 66.

¹¹¹John C. Calhoun, The Works of John C. Calhoun, ed. Richard K. Cralle, VI (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1888), 73. See, also, Ibid., p. 67.

asserted, it could obtain that power through a constitutional amendment. However, if a state still disapproved, it could nullify the amendment which allowed the central government the expansion in power.¹¹²

Further still, if a nullifying state did not wish to acquiesce to the demands of a "numerical majority" of the other states, then it possessed still another opportunity for asserting its sovereignty. As a member of a constitutional compact, a state possessed the right to secede.¹¹³ Therefore, in keeping with Calhoun's theory, nullification could possibly lead to secession. This action, however, would be a state's last resort in expressing the sovereignty of its "concurrent majority" over the "numerical majority" of the other states assembled in the federal government.¹¹⁴ Essentially, however, Calhoun's motivation for bringing the government back to its original principles rotated around the unsolved slavery question.

¹¹²Current, John C. Calhoun, p. 69.

¹¹³Calhoun, The Works of John C. Calhoun, I, p. 301. See, also, Richard N. Current, John C. Calhoun (New York: Washington Square Press, 1966), p. 73.

¹¹⁴Current, John C. Calhoun, p. 76.

¹¹⁵von Holst, John C. Calhoun, p. 187.

Chapter 3

THE UNSOLVED PROBLEMS

Calhoun's attempt to resolve the slavery issue was stated in his resolutions of December 27, 1837. In these resolutions, Calhoun attempted to secure the safety of the South by asserting that the Union was formed upon the basis of state sovereignty. If this were so, Calhoun maintained, the other states did not possess the right to interfere with the domestic institutions of the rest. Indeed, Calhoun asserted, it was the duty of the federal government to exercise its powers in the defense of the stability of domestic institutions. Therefore, all attacks upon slavery were "a manifest breach" of the Constitution. Thus, Calhoun stated that neither the government nor the citizens of any other state had the right to interfere with the existence of slavery anywhere.¹

Very much to the dismay of Calhoun and the South, however, the Northern states used their own version of Calhoun's theory of nullification.

It is not only through Congress, but also through the legislation of the Northern States, and the acts of their public functionaries, that we have been assailed. It is

¹Hermann Eduard von Holst, John C. Calhoun (New York: Houghton, Mifflin, and Company, 1899), pp. 189 and 192-194.

well known, that one of the strong objections which the South had to entering into a more intimate union with the North, was the danger to which we would be thereby exposed in reference to our slaves. To guard against it, and to reconcile us to the constitution, the Northern States entered into a solemn guaranty, to deliver up fugitive slaves on the demand of their owners. Instead of complying with this solemn stipulation, by passing laws to carry it into execution, and making it the duty of their public functionaries and citizens to co-operate in seizing and delivering them up, as they were in duty bound to do, there is scarcely a single Northern State that has not passed laws, which, in effect, have annulled the stipulation. They, indeed, have practically expunged it from the constitution.²

Such acts prompted Calhoun to zealously defend the system of slavery.

Calhoun justified slavery with the Aristotelian assertion that human inequality was both necessary and desirable for society to progress. Also, he stated that the "peculiar institution" economically and politically benefited both the North and the South. Furthermore, the slave was provided with the necessities of life and was therefore more contented than the free Negroes or the wage-earning whites in the North.³

The alluring idea that democracy was only possible in a society that recognized inequality led to Calhoun's

²John C. Calhoun, The Works of John C. Calhoun, ed. Richard K. Crallé, IV (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1888), 528. See, also, John C. Calhoun, The Works of John C. Calhoun, ed. Richard K. Crallé, VI (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1888), 292.

³Richard N. Current, John C. Calhoun (New York: Washington Square Press, 1966), p. 77.

acceptance of the idea of inequality being necessary to progress.⁴ Although Calhoun thought that the ideal of democracy was very noble, he believed that it had been "misunderstood and misapplied" in America.⁵

This betrayal of democracy he laid at the door of the Jeffersonians. They had accepted too carelessly the romantic dogmas of the French school, and had come to believe that democracy was synonymous with political equalitarianism.

Calhoun believed that it was this false idea which had led to mob control of democracy.⁶ To assert that men were "created free and equal" was to deny social and biological evidence. The Greeks, Calhoun contended, knew this well, for the Greek civilization had been based upon the concept of inequality. Indeed, Calhoun maintained, the only true foundation of democracy was good will, and it could be effected only through compromise. "From this it follows that in a society composed of high and low, capable and weak, worthy and unworthy--as every historical society has been composed--a universal democracy is impractical."⁷ The larger body of "social incompetents will suffer one of two fates:"

⁴Vernon L. Parrington, The Romantic Revolution in America, 1800-1860, Vol. II, Main Currents in American Thought (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, Inc., 1927 and 1954), p. 74.

⁵Ibid., p. 73.

⁶Ibid., p. 73.

⁷Ibid., p. 74.

they will be exploited by the capable minority under the guise of free labor, or they will be accepted as the wards of society and protected by the free citizens--they must inevitably become either wage slaves or bond slaves, in either case incapable of maintaining the rights of free members of the commonwealth.⁸

In a democracy, however, the virtuous and capable, being those who possess high levels of social morals, intelligence, patriotism, and experience and proficiency in the art of self-government, improve society by accepting the incompetents as their wards. This, Calhoun exclaimed, was the basis upon which the Greek civilization had been founded.

It was the persuasive ideal of a Greek democracy in the plantation states that lay back of Calhoun's defense of slavery--a defense that thrusts into sharp relief the change of southern attitude in the decade of the thirties.⁹

Regardless of all the persuasive arguments that Calhoun could muster in favor of slavery, however, he did not think that white and black could peaceably live together under any other relationship. This belief was perhaps the most favorable proslavery argument that Calhoun could proffer. If slaves were emancipated, they would not become true free-men, Calhoun contended, for they were naturally inferior and therefore would merely become the economic slaves of the whole community.¹⁰

⁸Ibid., p. 74.

⁹Ibid., pp. 74-75.

¹⁰Current, John C. Calhoun, p. 77.

"To Calhoun, as to most Southerners, slavery was the warp fabric of plantation society; the woof would fall apart without it."¹¹ The warp and woof were the two-century old relations that existed between the blacks and whites. The institutions of Southern society, Calhoun asserted, had both grown and strengthened with the institution of slavery. Thus, the welfare and posterity of the South, Calhoun stated, made it imperative that the destruction of slavery be prevented.

It is our anxious desire to protect and preserve this relation by the joint action of this Government and the confederated States of the Union; but if, instead of closing the door--if, instead of denying all jurisdiction and all interference in this question, the doors of Congress are to be thrown open; and if we are to be exposed here, in the heart of the Union, to endless attacks on our rights, our character, and our institutions; . . . and, finally, if this is to be our fixed and permanent condition, as members of this Confederacy, we will then be compelled to turn our eyes on ourselves. Come what will, should it cost every drop of blood, and every cent of property, we must defend ourselves; and if compelled, we would stand justified by all laws, human and divine.¹²

Calhoun, though justifiably alarmed for the welfare of the South, also expressed grave concern for the destiny of the nation.

"If I feel alarm, it is not for ourselves, but the

¹¹August O. Spain, The Political Theory of John C. Calhoun (New York: Bookman Associates, 1951), p. 226.

¹²John C. Calhoun, The Works of John C. Calhoun, ed. Richard K. Crallie, II (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1888), 488-489.

Union, and the institutions of the country--to which I have ever been devotedly attached, however calumniated and slandered."¹³ Few individuals had attempted and advised greater sacrifices to maintain the institutions of the United States than Calhoun had. He also contended that no one was more anxious than he to pass these institutions on to the succeeding generation. However, he also carefully stipulated that governmental institutions should be continued only as long as they maintained the liberty and the protection of states' rights.¹⁴

In conjunction with the previous assertion, Calhoun elaborated upon the nature of the individual's liberty within the state. Liberty, Calhoun stated, should be expansive enough to give each individual sufficient latitude to secure his interests and security. In this manner, the progress of society would receive its greatest impetus. Such freedom, however, should not weaken government to the extent that it could not fulfill its primary objective, the protection of society against all dangers.

The effort of this would be, insecurity; and, of insecurity,--to weaken the impulse of individuals to better their condition, and thereby retard progress and improvement. On the other hand, to extend the powers of the government, so as to contract the sphere.

¹³Ibid., p. 489.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 489.

assigned to liberty, would have the same effect, by disabling individuals in their efforts to better their condition.

Herein is to be found the principle which assigns to power and liberty their proper spheres, and reconciles each to the other under all circumstances. For, if power be necessary to secure to liberty the fruits of its exertions, liberty, in turn, repays power with interest, by increased population, wealth, and other advantages, which progress and improvement bestow on the community. By thus assigning to each its appropriate sphere, all conflicts between them cease; and each is made to co-operate with and assist the other, in fulfilling the great ends for which government is ordained.¹⁵

Calhoun further asserted, however, that the limits of the powers of government and of liberty varied when applied to different communities. Once again, he contended that the expansion of the powers of government and the contraction of liberty, or vice versa, were contingent upon the conditions of the community. Calhoun believed that the government must be allotted a sufficiently large sphere of power to protect the community against external dangers and internal violence and anarchy. "The residuum belongs to liberty. More cannot be safely or rightly allotted to it."¹⁶ Therefore, Calhoun believed that an individual should have an appropriate balance of security and freedom.

With the previous thoughts in mind, Calhoun asked for

¹⁵John C. Calhoun, The Works of John C. Calhoun, ed. Richard K. Cralle, I (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1888), 52-53.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 53.

neither sympathy nor compassion for the South, for he asserted that it could take care of itself. He stated that it was the Union which was endangered, not the South, and, therefore, it was the Union which demanded the care of all.¹⁷

Calhoun and his fellow advocates of slavery, however, reiterated the idea that slavery was intrinsically valuable to the progress of society because of "the inferiority of the Negro race."¹⁸

It is a remarkable fact in this connection, that in the whole history of man, as far as my information extends, there is no instance whatever of any civilized colored race, of any shade, being found equal to the establishment and maintenance of free government, although by far the largest proportion of the human family is composed of them; and even in the savage state, we rarely find them any where with such governments, except it be our noble savages; for noble I will call them for their many high qualities. They, for the most part, had free institutions, but such institutions are much more easily sustained among a savage than a civilized people. Are we to overlook this great fact? Are we to associate with ourselves, as equals, companions, and fellow-citizens, the Indians and mixed races of Mexico? I would consider such association as degrading to ourselves, and fatal to our institutions.¹⁹

According to Winthrop D. Jordan, the previous thoughts expounded by Calhoun only depict the stereotype that the American white man held for the inferior races. David

¹⁷Calhoun, The Works of John C. Calhoun, II, p. 489.

¹⁸Spain, The Political Theory of John C. Calhoun, p. 227.

¹⁹Calhoun, The Works of John C. Calhoun, IV, p. 411.

Hume, a Scottish philosopher, probably stated the matter more blatantly than anyone. "Hume was convinced that the peoples near the poles and in the tropics were essentially inferior to those in the temperate zones, . . . "20

I am apt to suspect the negroes, and in general all the other species of men (for there are four or five different kinds) to be naturally inferior to the whites. There never was a civilized nation of any other complexion than white, nor even any individual eminent either in action or speculation. No ingenious manufactures amongst them, no arts, no sciences.²¹

Additionally, many Americans including Thomas Jefferson feared interracial mixtures, because a darkened nation would illustrate that animal sex was controlling the destiny of America. If this were so, the great experiment to establish social and personal restraints in civilization would be a failure. "A blackened prosterity would mean that the basest of energies had guided the direction of the American experiment and that civilized man had turned beast in the forest."²²

Further evidence of the inferiority of the blacks, Calhoun believed, was furnished by the degraded conditions

²⁰Winthrop D. Jordan, White Over Black (Baltimore: Penguin Books Inc., 1969), p. 253.

²¹Ibid., p. 253. "From a footnote added in the 1753-54 edition of his essay 'Of National Characters,' first published in 1748." See, also, "David Hume, Essays: Moral, Political, and Literary, eds. T. H. Grose, 2 vols. (London, 1875), 1, 252."

²²Ibid., pp. 490 and 543.

existing among the Negroes in the North. However, Calhoun stated, these conditions were the inevitable results of the Negroes' natural laziness and shiftlessness. In this type of environment, poverty and crime were typical.²³

Calhoun concluded, then, that abolitionism was a dangerous disease which threatened the very institution which sheltered the Negro, and it was equally deleterious in the means by which it attempted to accomplish its ends. Calhoun conceded that the abolitionists did not pretend that the federal government had the power constitutionally to emancipate the South's slaves, but they, with an increasing number of Northern sympathizers, did contend that Congress could abolish slavery in the District of Columbia and prohibit it from spreading to the territories. Calhoun believed that if the federal government were to employ such measures as these, complete emancipation would surely result, and this would be the beginning of the social and economic decline of the South.

Little, in truth, would be left to be done after we have been excluded from all the territories, including those to be hereafter acquired; after slavery is abolished in this District and in the numerous places dispersed all over the South, where Congress has the exclusive right of legislation, and after the other measures proposed are consummated. Every outpost and barrier would be carried, and nothing would be left but to finish the work of abolition at pleasure in the States

²³Spain, The Political Theory of John C. Calhoun, p. 228.

themselves. This District, and all places over which Congress has exclusive power of legislation, would be asylums for fugitive slaves, where, as soon as they placed their feet, they would become, according to the doctrines of our Northern assailants, free, unless there should be some positive enactments to prevent it.²⁴

"Under such a state of things," Calhoun stated, emancipation and the abolition of slavery would logically result from the exclusion of slavery from the territories. Such an act, Calhoun stated, would only depress the Southern whites. As a result of Northern actions, feelings inconsistent with the continuance of the existing relationship between the two races would arise.²⁶ If emancipation did not follow this, it would only be a matter of time before the final act would transpire in the various states, and it would occur because of a lack of constitutional power to constitute resistance to the desires of the North which were aimed at annihilating the "peculiar institution."

Calhoun reasoned that many in the North believed that slavery was both wrong and sinful. If this be the case, one would possess only a superficial knowledge of human nature if he thought:

²⁴John C. Calhoun, The Works of John C. Calhoun, ed. Richard K. Crallé, VI (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1888), 307. See, also, Richard N. Current, John C. Calhoun (New York: Washington Square Press, 1966), pp. 79-80.

²⁵Ibid., p. 307. See, also, Ibid., p. 80.

²⁶Ibid., p. 307. See, also, Ibid., p. 80.

that, after aiming at abolition, systematically, for so many years, and pursuing it with such unscrupulous disregard of law and Constitution, that the fanatics . . . would . . . permit any constitutional scruples or considerations of justice to arrest it.²⁷

To these may be added an aggression, though not yet commenced, long meditated and threatened: to prohibit what the abolitionists call the internal slave trade, meaning thereby the transfer of slaves from one State to another, from whatever motive done, or however effected. Their object would seem to be to render them worthless by crowding them together where they are, and thus hasten the work of emancipation.²⁸

There is reason for believing that it will soon follow those now in progress, unless, indeed, some decisive step should be taken in the mean time to arrest the whole.²⁹

Calhoun contended, however, that even if these conclusions should prove erroneous, the North would still have one certain way left in which to accomplish its object. The North could still monopolize all the territories and exclude the South from them. This in itself would give the North a number of states equivalent to three-fourths of all the states in the Union. Having gained such a majority, the North would be able to emancipate the slaves under the guise of an amendment to the Constitution.³⁰

²⁷Ibid., p. 307-308.

²⁸Ibid., p. 308. See, also, Richard N. Current, John C. Calhoun (New York: Washington Square Press, 1966), p. 80.

²⁹Ibid., p. 308.

³⁰Ibid., pp. 308-309. See, also, Richard N. Current, John C. Calhoun (New York: Washington Square Press, 1966), pp. 80-81.

Therefore, Calhoun contended, such legislative actions would make nullification an absolute necessity. If nullification failed, a state could evade such an amendment by withdrawing from the Union. The theory of nullification and secession, the alternative to the failure of nullification, Calhoun stated, originated from the Constitution. Indeed, the true intent of the Constitution was to protect the institution of slavery and guarantee its continued existence.³¹

"The South received . . . a pledge inserted in the . . . constitution of the United States, to deliver up fugitive slaves."³² Calhoun also stated that slavery was the only property which was recognized by the Constitution in reference to apportionment of direct taxes. He was referring to the three-fifths compromise which stipulated that sixty per cent of the slaves were to be considered in determining how many representatives each state would have in Congress and how much of a share of taxes it would have in support of the government.

Calhoun further suggested that these provisions were a "part of an 'understanding' between the constitutional

³¹Current, John C. Calhoun, p. 81.

³²Calhoun, The Works of John C. Calhoun, I, p. 389.

convention and the old Confederation Congress."³³

It is probable that there was an understanding among the parties, that it should be inserted in both instruments; --as the old Congress and the convention were then in session in the same place; and that it contributed much to induce the southern members of the former to agree to the ordinance. But be this as it may, both, in practice, have turned out equally worthless. Neither have, for many years, been respected.³⁴

Therefore, Calhoun reasserted, antislavery agitation was unconstitutional.³⁵

The Constitution, Calhoun stated, required that the federal government develop and maintain domestic policies favorable to slavery. So, by his logic, the United States government was intended to foster slavery.

In 1848, Calhoun proffered the theory of "trust powers," which stated that slavery could not be prevented from entering the territories.³⁶ If Congress did not have the right to bar slavery from the territories, then, no one could.³⁷ If this were not so:

The first half-dozen of squatters would become the sovereigns with full dominion and sovereignty over them; and the conquered people of New Mexico and California

³³Current, John C. Calhoun, pp. 81-82.

³⁴Calhoun, The Works of John C. Calhoun, I, p. 389. See, also, Richard N. Current, John C. Calhoun (New York: Washington Square Press, 1966), p. 82.

³⁵Current, John C. Calhoun, p. 82.

³⁶Ibid., p. 83.

³⁷Ibid., p. 85-86.

would become the sovereigns of the country as soon as they became the territories of the United States, vested with the full right of excluding even their conquerors. There is no escaping from the alternative, but by resorting to the greatest of all absurdities, that of a divided sovereignty--a sovereignty, a part of which would reside in the United States, and a part in the inhabitants of the territory. How can sovereignty--the ultimate and supreme power of a State--be divided? The exercise of the powers of sovereignty may be divided, but how can there be two supreme powers?

Thus, Calhoun's doctrines included the powers as well as the rights of the states. Also, the slave states' powers extended beyond their borders, and Congress had no legislative rights in the territories. This meant that Congress had to recognize the state laws that legalized the ownership of slaves. The states' powers also included the enforcement of the return of fugitive slaves and the right to extend slavery into the Republic of Texas. More than this, Calhoun believed that antislavery agitationists should respect slavery,³⁹ for it was far better than the vicious class struggles in the North. In Calhoun's eyes, the capitalistic exploitation of the proletariat or working class in the North was far worse than the system of slavery in the South.

Within the sphere of this vicious exploitative system lay the future of not only the relationship between the North and South but also the relationship between the two ever-growing antithetical classes of the North, the capitalists and the proletariat. If persecution of slavery

³⁹Current, John C. Calhoun, p. 86.

were allowed to continue, Calhoun was certain that the North would hasten its own demise. Being a spokesman for the planter aristocracy which was being continually reduced to a minority in the nation, Calhoun increasingly stressed the growing differences between the North and South. In addition to elaborating upon the sectional conflict, however, Calhoun also expounded upon the antagonism between labor and capital.⁴⁰ Calhoun recognized that the laborer's freedom to enter into contractual agreements "was of little worth in actual economic life; . . . economic fact was of much greater significance to the worker than legal right."⁴¹ Indeed, the exploitation of labor gave the dominant class the means for pursuing culture.⁴² The preceding statement was true of both slavery and the capitalist system of exploitation. The major difference, however, was that slavery led to "the pursuit of the good life" instead of more money. Also, slavery necessarily meant a reduction in vagrancy and crime.⁴³ Though events compelled Calhoun to subordinate the capitalist versus proletariat theme to arguments concerning slavery and abolition, it was still a crucial part of his philosophy.

⁴⁰Ibid., pp. 86-87.

⁴¹Spain, The Political Theory of John C. Calhoun, pp. 232-233.

⁴²Ibid., p. 230.

⁴³Ibid., p. 230.

Other American thinkers prior to Calhoun, however, had thought of the possibility of class struggle, for they were familiar with the history of Greece and Rome. Calhoun, however, developed the idea even further.

As Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels stated later,⁴⁴ exploitation of the working class was eternal; "only its form could be modified."⁴⁵

Let those who are interested remember that labor is the only source of wealth, and how small a portion of it, in all old and civilized countries, even the best governed, is left to those by whose labor wealth is created.⁴⁶

Let them also reflect how little volition or agency the operatives in any country have in the question of its distribution--as little, with a few exceptions, as the African of the slaveholding States has in the distribution of the proceeds of his labor. Nor is it the less oppressive, that, in the one case, it is effected by the stern and powerful will of the Government, and in the other by the more feeble and flexible will of a master. If one be an evil, so is the other. The only difference is the amount and mode of the exaction and distribution, and the agency by which they are effected.⁴⁷

In contrast, Calhoun believed that the relationship between the two races in the South was a positive good. Indeed, he

⁴⁴Current, John C. Calhoun, p. 87.

⁴⁵Spain, The Political Theory of John C. Calhoun, p. 233.

⁴⁶John C. Calhoun, The Works of John C. Calhoun, ed. Richard K. Cralle, V (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1888), 208. See, also, Richard N. Current, John C. Calhoun (New York: Washington Square Press, 1966), pp. 87-88.

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 208.

felt himself called to speak upon the subject in which the integrity and interests of his constituents were concerned.⁴⁸

"I hold then, that there never has yet existed a wealthy and civilized society in which one portion of the community did not, in point of fact, live on the labor of the other."⁴⁹ Calhoun confidently stated that such a "broad and general assertion" was fully substantiated by history. In all past civilized societies, the nonproducing classes have used various means to deprive the laborer of his just share of the community wealth.⁵⁰

The devices are almost innumerable, from the brute force and gross superstition of ancient times, to the subtle and artful fiscal contrivances of modern. I might well challenge a comparison between them and the more direct, simple, and patriarchal mode by which the labor of the African race is, among us, commanded by the European. I may say with truth, that in few countries so much is left to the share of the laborer, and so little exacted from him, or where there is more kind attention paid to him in sickness or infirmities of age.⁵¹

Calhoun then boldly stated that slavery was the most stable basis for establishing democratic institutions. "It is useless to disguise the fact. There is and always has been in an advanced state of wealth and civilization, a conflict

⁴⁸Calhoun, The Works of John C. Calhoun, II, p. 631.

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 631. See, also, Richard N. Current, John C. Calhoun (New York: Washington Square Press, 1966), p. 88.

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 631. See, also, Ibid., p. 88.

⁵¹Ibid., p. 631.

between capital and labor."⁵²

Calhoun further stated that:

The condition of society in the South exempts us from the disorders and dangers resulting from this conflict; and which explains why it is that the political condition of the slaveholding States has been so much more stable and quiet than that of the North.⁵³

The advantages of slavery would become more manifest if it were not disturbed. In fact, Calhoun asserted, Southern society had just entered an era in which its institutions were to be tested.⁵⁴

Comparatively, the North suffered from two drawbacks, high wages and interest,⁵⁵ which contributed greatly to the instability of social and political institutions and were the devices by which the lower working classes were expropriated by the capitalists. Higher wages, Calhoun believed, would only give the capitalists more excuses to increase the costs of the necessities of life. However, Calhoun desired to have it understood that "No one is more averse to the reduction of wages than I am, or entertains a greater respect for the laboring portion of the community."⁵⁶

⁵²Ibid., p. 632. See, also, Richard N. Current, John C. Calhoun (New York: Washington Square Press, 1966), p. 90.

⁵³Ibid., p. 632.

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 632.

⁵⁵Calhoun, The Works of John C. Calhoun, IV, p. 196.

⁵⁶Ibid., p. 196.

Nothing could induce me to adopt a course of policy that would impair their comfort or prosperity. But when we speak of wages, a distinction must be made between the real and artificial; between that which enables the laborer to exchange the fruits of his industry for the greatest amount in money, and the mere nominal money amount, that is often the result of an inflated currency, which, instead of increasing wages in proportion to the price and means of the laborer, is one of the most effective means of defrauding him of his just dues. But it is a great mistake to suppose that low prices and high wages, estimated in money, are irreconcilable. Wages are but the residuum after deducting the profit of capital, the expense of production, including the exactions of the Government in the shape of taxes, which must certainly fall on production, however laid. The less that is paid for the use of capital, for the expense of production, and the exactions of the Government, the greater is the amount left for wages; and hence, by lessening these, prices may fall, and wages rise at the same time; and that is the combination which gives to labor its greatest reward, and places the prosperity of a country on the most durable basis.⁵⁷

From this, Calhoun hypothesized cogent and logical outcomes, which were to be later hailed by other writers of socialism and communism as the deadly social ills which lurked within the system of capitalism.

Calhoun prophesied that society would divide into two classes, the capitalists and the proletariat. He also stated that the majority of society would be expropriated until the propertyless would outnumber the propertied. As a result, the masses would be ultimately impoverished to a level of bare subsistence.⁵⁸

⁵⁷Ibid., p. 196.

⁵⁸Calhoun, The Works of John C. Calhoun, VI, pp. 25-26. See, also, Richard N. Current, John C. Calhoun (New York: Washington Square Press, 1966), p. 88.

Calhoun thought that all of this would be the result of governmental policies which favored the capitalists.⁵⁹ A government might use various financial means to favor a particular group and thus enable it to exploit the remainder of society. Calhoun thought that the most prominent of these devices was the protective tariff.

In the United States, the North had been enriched and the South impoverished by it. However, Calhoun contended that a time would come in which the tariff would divide the population into social classes rather than geographical sections. He also predicted that:

After we are exhausted, the contest will be between the capitalists and operatives; for into these two classes it must, ultimately, divide society. The issue of the struggle here must be the same as it has been in Europe. Under the operation of the system, wages must sink more rapidly than the prices of the necessities of life, till the operatives will be reduced to the lowest point,--when the portion of the products of their labor left to them, will be barely sufficient to preserve existence.⁶⁰

For the present, the pressure of the system is on our section.⁶¹

According to Calhoun, there would be still more for the North to endure. "In consequence of the exploitation and expropriation of the working class, . . . class conflict

⁵⁹Current, John C. Calhoun, p. 88.

⁶⁰Calhoun, The Works of John C. Calhoun, VI, p. 26. See, also, Richard N. Current, John C. Calhoun (New York: Washington Square Press, 1966), pp. 89-90.

⁶¹Ibid., p. 26.

inevitably would arise Finally, it would culminate in a revolutionary crisis."⁶² Calhoun frankly stated:

In this tendency to conflict in the North, between labor and capital, which is constantly on the increase, the weight of the South has and will ever be found on the conservative side; against the aggression of one or the other side, whichever may tend to disturb the equilibrium of our political system.⁶³

Again, Calhoun commented in his "Remarks on the Territories" on February 20, 1847 that:

Where wages command labor, . . . there necessarily takes place between labor and capital a conflict, which leads, in process of time, to disorder, anarchy and revolution, . . .⁶⁴

On this occasion, Calhoun was undoubtedly referring to the history of Greece and Rome, because aspiring leaders of the upper class often led the lower classes into revolutions.⁶⁵ Calhoun confidently declared that class revolutions would never happen in the South, because "the Southern plantation was simply an extension to the community of the family regime, communistic and benevolently paternal. 'The Southern

⁶²Current, John C. Calhoun, p. 90.

⁶³John C. Calhoun, The Works of John C. Calhoun, ed. Richard K. Cralle, III (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1888), 180.

⁶⁴Calhoun, The Works of John C. Calhoun, IV, pp. 360-361. See, also, Richard N. Current, John C. Calhoun (New York: Washington Square Press, 1966), p. 90.

⁶⁵Current, John C. Calhoun, p. 91.

States . . . are an aggregate . . . of communities, . . ."⁶⁶

Calhoun also anticipated later Marxist dogma concerning materialism when he stated that progress in material inventions and discoveries far surpass progress in the realm of political science in any one society. Thus, political and social changes that would be difficult to anticipate would also occur.⁶⁷ In essence, there would be no gradual social transitions, but rather there would be abrupt convulsive transitions in the progress of society.

According to Calhoun, one of the "erroneous opinions" which would cause such instability in the development of society would be "the belief in rule by the 'numerical majority,'" for it would be based upon the false contention that man had once existed as an individual completely apart from society. Such a conception, Calhoun professed, could only lead to the fallacious beliefs in natural liberty, equality, and rights. "This error was 'upheaving Europe' in 1848."⁶⁸ An unlimited democracy could only result in anarchy, chaos, and dictatorship or monarchy. Such a fate, including civil war, Calhoun feared, was destined for the

⁶⁶Spain, The Political Theory of John C. Calhoun, p. 239.

⁶⁷Current, John C. Calhoun, pp. 91-92.

⁶⁸Ibid., p. 92.

⁶⁹Ibid., p. 93.

United States.⁶⁹

Calhoun, however, considered his policies to be the alternative to the fate of civil war. Calhoun thought that if his policies were carried out, they would protect slavery against abolitionism, planter against capitalist, and both planter and capitalist against the proletariat. In essence, Calhoun attempted to rally the capitalist to the side of the planter in resistance to revolutionary changes in society. The sources of revolution, Calhoun contended, were abolitionism and socialism, for both philosophies were attacks upon property.⁷⁰ This is why Calhoun continued to appeal to the conservative interests in the North which consisted of bankers, merchants, and manufacturers.⁷¹ Indeed, Calhoun held the same opinion as Thomas R. Dew did when Dew stated that: "It may with truth be affirmed that the exclusive owners of property ever have been, ever will, and perhaps ever ought to be the virtual rulers of mankind."⁷²

Calhoun, however, did not intend to frighten Northern property owners, for he did not believe that his warnings could prevail upon them to yield to his

⁶⁹Ibid., p. 93.

⁷⁰Ibid., p. 93.

⁷¹Ibid., p. 99.

⁷²Spain, The Political Theory of John C. Calhoun, p. 232.

alternatives upon the political issues concerning slavery.⁷³ Nevertheless, he was deeply concerned, because the Wilmot Proviso, which stirred him on to greater efforts toward the end of his life, clearly manifested the North's contempt for property rights and constitutional guarantees.⁷⁴ Thus, Calhoun considered the Wilmot Proviso to be the epitomy of Northern policies in regard to the destruction of slavery. "'That any force of argument can change public opinion,' he wrote in 1831, 'I do not expect; but I feel assured that the coming confusion and danger, which I have long foreseen, will.'" ⁷⁵

Thus, Calhoun sincerely desired to prevent the destruction of both slavery and capitalism. His error was in not believing that labor and capital could achieve unity similar to the unity that he was creating in the South. If such a Northern unity had not been effected, slavery would not have been put in the precarious position that it was, for as Calhoun and Karl Marx believed, the latter individual being a prophet of the type of dogma which Calhoun sought to repress, slavery would necessarily be destroyed before capitalism. As a result, Calhoun strove to persuade Northern

⁷³Current, John C. Calhoun, p. 100.

⁷⁴Charles M. Wiltse, John C. Calhoun--Sectionalist, 1840-1850, Vol. III (New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1951), p. 424.

⁷⁵Current, John C. Calhoun, p. 100.

interests to align themselves with the planters for mutual protection.⁷⁶ Such, however, was never to transpire, for Calhoun's amazing prophecies were fulfilled.

⁷⁶Ibid., pp. 101-102.

Chapter 4

THE PROPHECIES OF CALHOUN; A LATER DAY PROPHET

Calhoun's fears of the approaching inevitable destruction of the Union were justified by his inability to effect an alliance of the Northern bankers and merchants with the Southern planters. Indeed, as Calhoun elaborated in a speech dated March 4, 1850, concerning the slavery question, which he delivered in the Senate: "I have, Senators, believed from the first that the agitation of the subject of slavery would, if not prevented by some timely and effective measure, end in disunion."¹ He also reiterated that he had unsuccessfully tried on all previous occasions to alert the two great political parties to the foreboding implications which would transpire if his opinions were ignored. As a result of their indifference, no measure had been adopted to forestall the antislavery agitation which had been permitted to grow until it had increased tensions to the point where the reality of the approach of disunion could no longer be denied or disguised. "You have thus had forced upon you the greatest

¹John C. Calhoun, The Works of John C. Calhoun, ed. Richard K. Cralle, IV (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1888), 542.

and the gravest question that can ever come under your consideration--How can the Union be preserved?"²

Calhoun contended that a satisfactory answer to this question would require an accurate understanding of the nature of the cause which was endangering the Union. This cause was the almost universal discontent of the Southern states over the ever-continued agitation of the slavery question and the many constitutional aggressions which the North had committed against the South. Calhoun, no doubt, was referring to the North's attempts to evade the fugitive slave law provision in the Constitution and the efforts to exclude slavery from the territories.

However, there was an even greater source of primary agitation than that stated above.

This is to be found in the fact that the equilibrium between the two sections, in the Government as it stood when the constitution was ratified and the Government put in action, has been destroyed. At that time there was nearly a perfect equilibrium between the two, which afforded ample means to each to protect itself against the aggression of the other; but, as it now stands, one section has the exclusive power of controlling the Government, which leaves the other without any adequate means of protecting itself against its encroachment and oppression.³

Calhoun attributed this imbalance of power to several

²Ibid., p. 542.

³Ibid., pp. 542-544.

facts. The first was that since the United States had declared its independence, 2,373,046 square miles of territory had been acquired, and if the North were successful in excluding the South from it, about three-fourths of the territory would be open to occupation by the North leaving the South but one-fourth. Such was the first, great cause which had destroyed the balance of government.⁴

The next cause of disequilibrium was the system of revenue and disbursements which the government had adopted. The government derived its revenue mainly from duties on imports from foreign countries with which the South traded. As a result of the reactions of the governments of these countries to United States protectionism, Calhoun stated, the resulting financial burden of supporting the Union fell mainly on the South, because foreign governments would seek retaliation by discriminating against the South's exported goods. In reality then, the South would be paying vastly more than her due share of the revenue to sustain the functions of the federal government. "Under the most moderate estimate, it would be sufficient to add greatly to the wealth of the North, and thus greatly increase her population by attracting emigration from all quarters to that section."⁵

⁴Ibid., p. 548.

⁵Ibid., pp. 548-549.

However, even though these two measures were destroying the equilibrium between the two sections, the action of the Northern-dominated government was leading to a radical change, for it had begun to exercise more powers than the Constitution warranted. This was why Calhoun feared consolidation of the federal government.

That the Government claims, and practically maintains the right to decide in the last resort, as to the extent of its powers, will scarcely be denied by any one conversant with the political history of the country. That it also claims the right to resort to force to maintain whatever power it claims, against all opposition, is equally certain. Now, I ask, what limitation can possibly be placed upon the powers of a government claiming and exercising such rights? And, if none can be, how can the separate governments of the States maintain and protect the powers reserved to them by the constitution--or the people of the several States maintain those which are reserved to them, and among others, the sovereign powers by which they ordained and established, not only their separate State Constitutions and Governments, but also the Constitution and Government of the United States?⁶

As a logical result, the individual states hold their rights and powers only at the pleasure and discretion of the central government.

Thus, Calhoun asserted, as a result of the combined aforementioned causes, the North practically had absolute control of the government. "A single section governed by the will of the numerical majority, has now, in fact, the

⁶Ibid., pp. 550-551.

control of the Government and the entire powers of the system."⁷

Therefore, if the North established "absolute control over the government," it was apparent "that on all questions" involving "a diversity of interests" between the two, the South's interests were to be sacrificed to the North's.⁸ As a result, Calhoun predicted, abolitionism, to which the future of the North belonged, and the ever-growing disequilibrium between the North and the South could be cited as the sources of a future civil war over conflicting interests.⁹ If such a war were to occur, Calhoun stated, the South would need to ally itself with England to survive.¹⁰ Though such an alliance with England was highly unlikely, Calhoun asserted that the South could not endure Northern discrimination much longer, because sectional differences were constantly growing. As Calhoun stated in his speech on the slavery question dated March 4, 1850, the two sections were totally opposite in their beliefs concerning the slavery issue.

⁷Ibid., p. 551.

⁸Ibid., pp. 551-552.

⁹Hermann Eduard von Holst, John C. Calhoun (New York: Houghton, Mifflin, and Company, 1899), pp. 282 and 291.

¹⁰Gerald M. Capers, John C. Calhoun--Opportunist (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1960), p. 71.

I refer to the relation between the two races in the Southern section, which constitutes a vital portion of her social organization. Every portion of the North entertains views and feelings more or less hostile to it. Those most opposed and hostile, regard it as a sin, and consider themselves under the most sacred obligation to use every effort to destroy it. Indeed, to the extent that they conceive they have power, they regard themselves as implicated in the sin, and responsible for not suppressing it by the use of all and every means. Those less opposed and hostile, regard it as a crime--an offence against humanity, as they call it; and, although not so fanatical, feel themselves bound to use all efforts to effect the same object; while those who are least opposed and hostile, regard it as a blot and a stain on the character of what they call the Nation, and feel themselves accordingly bound to give it no countenance or support. On the contrary, the Southern section regards the relation as one which cannot be destroyed without subjecting the two races to the greatest calamity, and the section to poverty, desolation, and wretchedness; and accordingly they feel bound, by every consideration of interest and safety, to defend it.¹¹

This Northern hostility towards Southern society, Calhoun stressed, had remained dormant until the increasing power of the central government under the preponderance of the North had allowed the source of agitation to grow. Many in the North, Calhoun contended, believed that the central government had the power to do almost anything. "This was sufficient of itself to put the most fanatical portion of the North in action, for the

¹¹Calhoun, The Works of John C. Calhoun, IV, p. 552.

purpose of destroying the existing relation between the two races in the South."¹²

The preceding attitude was exemplified by the first organized movement of abolitionists, which began in 1835. Calhoun stated that this Northern sentiment thoroughly aroused the South. Meetings which were held everywhere in the North called for the adoption of resolutions by Congress to end slavery throughout the Union.¹³ "This was the commencement of the agitation, which has ever since continued, and which, as is now acknowledged, has endangered the Union itself."

As for myself, I believed at that early period, if the party who got up the petitions should succeed in getting Congress to take jurisdiction, that agitation would follow, and that it would in the end, if not arrested, destroy the Union. I then so expressed myself in debate, and called upon both parties to take grounds against assuming jurisdiction; but in vain. Had my voice been heeded, and had Congress refused to take jurisdiction, by the united votes of all parties, the agitation which followed would have been prevented, and the fanatical zeal that gives impulse to the agitation, and which has brought us to our present perilous condition, would have become extinguished, from the want of fuel to feed the flame. That was the time for the North to have shown her devotion to the Union; but, unfortunately, both of the great parties of that section were so intent on obtaining or retaining party ascendancy, that all other considerations were overlooked or forgotten.

¹²Ibid., pp. 552-553.

¹³Ibid., pp. 552-553.

All that followed, Calhoun insisted, were but natural consequences.¹⁴

Before 1819, Calhoun asserted, the South had few reasons to complain. He feared, however, that the events of 1819 only marked the beginning of a series of disasters which would be fatal to the country and its institutions. With the year of 1819 came the bitter debate over the question of admitting Missouri into the Union with slavery and further examples of the sentiment of disunion. The hostile attitudes of the North were first expressed in regard to the portion of the Constitution which stated that fugitive slaves were to be returned to their masters. This section of the Constitution had been so successfully evaded that Calhoun insisted it could be regarded as having been practically erased from the Constitution. "When we take into consideration the importance and clearness of this provision, the evasion by which it has been set aside may fairly be regarded as one of the most fatal blows ever received by the South and the Union."¹⁵

To illustrate his viewpoint, Calhoun cited a few remarks from a Judge Baldwin's charge to the jury in the

¹⁴Ibid., pp. 554-555.

¹⁵John C. Calhoun, The Works of John C. Calhoun, ed. Richard K. Cralle, VI (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1888), 292-293.

case of Johnson vs. Tompkins and others.

'If there are any rights of property which can be enforced, if one citizen have any rights of property which are inviolable under the protection of the supreme law of the State, and the Union, they are those which have been set at nought by some of these defendants. As the owner of property, which he had a perfect right to possess, protect, and take away--as a citizen of a sister State, entitled to all the privileges and immunities of citizens of any other States--Mr. Johnson stands before you on ground which cannot be taken from under him--it is the same ground on which the Government itself is based. If the defendants can be justified, we have no longer law or government. Thus you see, that the foundations of the Government are laid, and rest on the rights of property in slaves. The whole structure must fall by disturbing the corner-stone.'¹⁶

Therefore, when the territory of Missouri applied for admission into the Union in the latter part of 1819, the debate that followed did much to alienate the two sections and endanger the existing political institutions. Eventually, however, a compromise, as Calhoun sardonically referred to it, was agreed to on the terms that the North accept the provisions of the Ordinance of 1787 in regard to the admission of Missouri or any other territories which were acquired from France under the treaty of Louisiana. Calhoun, it may be noticed, was not pleased, for he almost prophetically commented that: "It was forced through Congress by the almost united votes of the

¹⁶Ibid., pp. 294-295.

North, against a minority consisting almost entirely of members from the Southern States."¹⁷

Calhoun dryly recorded that: "Such was the termination of this, the first conflict, under the Constitution, between the two sections, in reference to slavery in connection with the territories." He further pessimistically stated that many hailed it as the solution to future similar conflicts, but others, he also noticed, took the opposite, foreboding view that this event was but the beginning to a series of events which would tear the Union apart.

For many years after the Missouri question, Calhoun asserted, the spread of slavery in the territories "ceased to agitate the country." The effort to annex Texas, however, clearly demonstrated that violence could erupt again with compounded animosity at some future date.¹⁸ One of the questions in Calhoun's mind on this occasion was whether or not the United States government would intercede on behalf of the constitutional guarantees of domestic tranquility to the South if the British design to abolish slavery in both Texas and the rest of the United States were implemented. If not, Calhoun was

¹⁷Ibid., pp. 299-300.

¹⁸Ibid., pp. 300-301.

certain that the action contemplated by Great Britian would lead to insurrections in all of the Southern states bordering Texas.¹⁹

Calhoun, however, did not fail to utilize the situation to additionally comment about the hostility that the nonslaveholding section held for slavery.

A word as to our motives. If we are opposed to the course of policy which the non-slaveholding States have announced that they are determined to pursue in reference to slavery, and the interpretation of the constitution on which they are prepared to rest that determination--our opposition rests on the ground that they will be ruinous to us, if not effectually resisted. We know what we are about; we foresee what is coming, and move with no other purpose but to protect our portion of the Union from the greatest or calamities--not insurrection, but something worse. I see the end, if the process is to go unresisted; it is to expel in time the white population of the Southern States, and to leave the blacks in possession.²⁰

Indeed, Calhoun thought, if the government were not to take preventive measures, nothing would be able to restrain the antislavery agitation from obtaining the abolition of slavery throughout the South.²¹

More controversy was yet to come, for the war with Mexico soon occurred, and with it the territories of

¹⁹Calhoun, The Works of John C. Calhoun, IV, pp. 359-360.

²⁰Ibid., p. 360.

²¹Ibid., p. 556.

New Mexico and upper California were obtained in addition to the portion of Oregon gained by treaty with England.

"The near prospect of so great an addition rekindled the excitement between North and South in reference to slavery in its connection with the territories, which has become . . . more universal and intense than ever."

The resulting debates, Calhoun claimed, only widened the difference between the North and South and caused them to become more hostile in their conflicts.²²

Is it, then, not certain, that if something is not done to arrest it, the South will be forced to choose between abolition and secession? Indeed, as events are now moving, it will not require the South to secede, in order to dissolve the Union. Agitation will of itself effect it, of which its past history furnished abundant proof²³

Indeed, as Calhoun predicted with amazing exactness when he made his last appearance in the Senate on March 13, 1850, the Union could not be saved if the South were to be preserved.

The Union is doomed to dissolution, there is no mistaking the signs. I am satisfied in my judgment even were the questions which now agitate Congress settled to the satisfaction and the concurrence of the Southern States, it would not avert, or materially delay, the catastrophe. I fix its probable occurrence within twelve years or three Presidential terms. You and others of your age, will

²²Calhoun, The Works of John C. Calhoun, VI, p. 301.

²³Calhoun, The Works of John C. Calhoun, IV, p. 556.

probably live to see it; I shall not. The mode by which it will be is not so clear; it may be brought about in a manner that none now foresee. But the probability is it will explode in a Presidential election.²⁴

Calhoun averred, however, that it would be a mistake to contend that the Union could be rent asunder by a single blow. There were too many powerful cords which bound the states together into a union. "Disunion must be the work of time. It is only through a long process, and successively, that the cords can be snapped, until the whole fabric falls asunder." Calhoun fearfully noticed though that agitation of the slavery question had already snapped some and weakened others. These cords were either spiritual, political, or social.

The spiritual cord, Calhoun maintained, had already almost completely snapped, for three of the four great Protestant denominations in the United States had been torn by dissension. The political cord, which consisted of the ties that held the two great political parties together, however, had met with worse fate than the spiritual one, for agitation had already broken it. Calhoun was also quick to add that: "Nor is there one of the remaining cords which has not been greatly weakened."

If the agitation goes on, the same force, acting with increased intensity . . . will

²⁴Capers, John C. Calhoun--Opportunist, p. 252.

finally snap every cord, when nothing will be left to hold the States together except force. But, surely, that can, with no propriety of language, be called a Union, when the only means by which the weaker is held connected with the stronger protion is force.²⁵ It may, indeed, keep them connected; but the connection will partake much more of the character of subjugation, on the part of the weaker to the stronger, than the union of free, independent, and sovereign States, in one confederation, as they stood in the early stages of the Government, and which only is worthy of the sacred name of Union.²⁵

Therefore, according to Calhoun, the Union could only be saved in one way. The North must refrain from further violations of the Constitution if they wished for the Union to endure.²⁶

However, in his Discourse on the Constitution and Government of the United States, Calhoun states in specific words that the mere abstinence from aggressions would not be sufficient to restore the equilibrium in government.

Alienation is succeeding to attachment, and hostile feelings to alienation; and these, in turn, will be followed by revolution, or a disruption of the Union, unless timely prevented. But this cannot be done by restoring the government to its federal character:--however necessary that may be as a first step. What has been done cannot be undone. The equilibrium between the two sections has been permanently destroyed Against this, the restoration of the federal character of the

²⁵Calhoun, The Works of John C. Calhoun, IV, pp. 557-559.

²⁶Ibid., pp. 559-560.

government can furnish no remedy. So long as it continues, there can be no safety for the weaker section. It places in the hands of the stronger and hostile section, the power to crush her and her institutions; and leaves her no alternative, but to resist, or sink down into a colonial condition.

Thus, disruption of the Union, Calhoun avowed, was the only logical outcome of the combined efforts of the abolitionists and advocates of exclusion.²⁷

Calhoun was certain, however, that the zealous humanitarians who espoused abolition would not be content with the mere exclusion of the South from the newly acquired territories, for he lucidly depicted their ultimate goals which were to expedite the end of the South he knew.

Under such a state of things the probability is, that emancipation would soon follow, without any final act to abolish slavery. The depressing effects of such measures on the white race at the South, and the hope they would create in the black of a speedy emancipation, would produce a state of feeling inconsistent with the much longer continuance of the existing relations between the two.

He was certain that if federal emancipation did not immediately follow, it would only be a matter of time before it could be effected due to the lack of proper constitutional safeguards and the unity of the North against the "peculiar institution."²⁸

²⁷John C. Calhoun, The Works of John C. Calhoun, ed. Richard K. Crallie, I (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1888), 390-391.

²⁸Calhoun, The Works of John C. Calhoun, VI, p. 307.

Ironically, the grave social ills which the North disparaged in the system of slavery became the very fulfillments of Calhoun's prophecies. Calhoun warned that slavery was the only system in which two races as different as the white and the black could peacefully coexist. If the patriarchal master-slave relationship were destroyed, Calhoun asserted, the South would have to endure unparalleled consequences of wretchedness, misery, and desolation. The foregoing would necessarily be the result of social displacement of both master and slave, which would result in familial and sectional financial losses. The only logical and possible mental state which could be an outgrowth of such misfortunes would be one of absolute despair and misery.

If emancipation were to be effected, it would be the result of Northern dominance in the federal government. This, then, would clearly violate the will of the South, for emancipation could only result in the prostration of the Southern whites. As a result, the bitterest of feelings between the North and South would arise. The blacks in the South, however, would display opposite attitudes toward their Northern benefactors. "Owing their emancipation to them, they would regard them as friends, guardians, and patrons, and hence, accordingly, all their sympathy

in them." As a result, Calhoun added, the North would favor the blacks.²⁹

Under the influence of such feelings, and impelled by fanaticism and love of power, they would not stop at emancipation. Another step would be taken--to raise them to a political and social equality with their former owners, by giving them the right of voting and holding public offices under the Federal Government. We see the first step toward it in the bill already alluded to--to vest the free blacks and slaves with the right to vote on the question of emancipation in this District. But when once raised to an equality, they would become the fast political associates of the North, acting and voting with them on all questions, and by this political union between them, holding the white race at the South in complete subjection. The blacks, and the profligate whites that might unite with them, would become the principal recipients of federal offices and patronage, and would, in consequence, be raised above the whites of the South in the political and social scale. We would, in a word, change conditions with them--a degradation greater than has ever yet fallen to the lot of a free and enlightened people, and one from which we could not escape, should emancipation take place (which it certainly will if not prevented), but by fleeing the homes of ourselves and ancestors, and by abandoning our country to our former slaves, to become the permanent abode of disorder, anarchy, poverty, misery, and wretchedness.³⁰

This clearly evinces that Calhoun thoroughly believed that the Negro was incapable of building a highly cultured civilization. As a result, he saw that the

²⁹ Ibid., pp. 309-310. See, also, Richard N. Current, John C. Calhoun (New York: Washington Square Press, 1966), pp. 77-78.

³⁰ Ibid., pp. 310-311. See, also, Ibid., pp. 78-79.

South could only suffer further decline. "Thus, in 1849, Calhoun prophesied accurately . . . what was to befall the South in less than twenty years."³¹ In this manner, Calhoun displayed insight concerning the immediate and remote future of the South. However, Calhoun did not live to see either prophecy fulfilled.

Nevertheless, Calhoun demonstrated a rather unusual comprehension of the problems which were to continually divide the Caucasoid and Negroid races. The difficulty between the two, he stated, was attributable to their diversity. The line was so sharply etched between the two races and so socially ingrained through education that it would have been impossible for them to peacefully coexist under any other relationship than the one based upon slavery. "Social and political equality between them is impossible. No power on earth can overcome the difficulty. The causes lie too deep in the principles of our nature to be surmounted."

Without the attainment of such equality, Calhoun warned, only the form of slavery itself would be changed. The Negro would become the slave of the community which cared less for his welfare than did his present masters. Calhoun also asserted that such a move would destroy the

³¹Richard N. Current, John C. Calhoun (New York: Washington Square Press, 1966), p. 79.

security and independence of the whites within the South. Thus, the Negro would have to depend upon the other states for maintenance of his welfare. In so doing, the Negro would become the ally and dependent of the other states. By this action, the North could "control the destiny of the rest of the Union."³² "Such is the danger to which the movements of the Abolitionists expose the country."³³

For this reason, Calhoun denounced both abolitionism and socialism. Both of them, he contended, ignored the rights to property and could possibly lead to mob control of government. Indeed, both philosophies originated with "the idea that men are born free and equal."³⁴ In caustic reference to the class exploitation which existed in the North, Calhoun sardonically asserted on many occasions that the doctrine of natural rights was not manifest even in the social system of the section which espoused the doctrine most strongly.

Calhoun, however, reiterated the seriousness of the sectional conflict by prophesying that after the South was exhausted from its conflict with the North, a

³²John C. Calhoun, The Works of John C. Calhoun, ed. Richard K. Cralle, V (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1888), 204-205.

³³Ibid., p. 207.

³⁴Current, John C. Calhoun, p. 93.

continuous war between the capitalists and proletariat would ensue. As a result, he contended, society would be divided into two major classes. "The issue of the struggle here must be the same as it has been in Europe." Under this kind of system, wages would diminish faster than the prices of the necessities of life. Eventually, the proletariat's net wages would barely be enough to insure continued existence.³⁵

Consequently, Calhoun avowed, exploitation of the working class can only lead to class conflict, and if conditions worsen, it can result in revolution.³⁶ In a speech on February 6, 1837, Calhoun stated that conflict between capital and labor has always existed in an advanced, wealthy civilization.³⁷ Additionally, in another speech dated January 12, 1838, Calhoun stated that: " . . . this tendency to conflict in the North, between labor and capital. . . . is constantly on the

³⁵Calhoun, The Works of John C. Calhoun, VI, p. 26. See, also, Richard N. Current, John C. Calhoun (New York: Washington Square Press, 1966), pp. 89-90.

³⁶Current, John C. Calhoun, p. 90.

³⁷John C. Calhoun, The Works of John C. Calhoun, ed. Richard K. Cralle, II (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1888), 632. See, also, Richard N. Current, John C. Calhoun (New York: Washington Square Press, 1966), p. 90.

increase. . . ."38 Thus, he felt compelled to state on February 23, 1847 that: "Where wages command labor, as in the non-slaveholding States, there necessarily takes place between labor and capital a conflict, which leads, in process of time, to disorder, anarchy, and revolution. . . ."39

For, as the community becomes populous, wealthy, refined, and highly civilized, the difference between the rich and the poor will become more strongly marked; and the number of the ignorant and dependent greater in proportion to the rest of the community. With the increase of this difference, the tendency to conflict between them will become stronger; and, as the poor and dependent become more numerous in proportion, there will be, in governments of the numerical majority, no want of leaders among the wealthy and ambitious, to excite and direct them in their efforts to obtain the control.⁴⁰

Thus, Calhoun foresaw a number of deadly social ills within the system of capitalism which other writers of socialism and communism were to write about later. In the system of capitalism, Calhoun prophesied, society would consist of two hostile classes which would conflict

³⁸John C. Calhoun, The Works of John C. Calhoun, ed. Richard K. Crallé, III (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1888), 180. See, also, Ibid., p. 90.

³⁹Calhoun, The Works of John C. Calhoun, IV, pp. 360-361. See, also, Ibid., p. 90.

⁴⁰Calhoun, The Works of John C. Calhoun, I, p. 46. See, also, Ibid., pp. 90-91.

with one another until the lower class would be property-less and impoverished.⁴¹

All this Calhoun sought to avoid by aspiring to lead the conservative interests "of the North and South against the universal forces of revolt", abolitionism and socialism.⁴² Calhoun somberly stated:

The sober and considerate portions of citizens of the non-slaveholding States, who have a deep stake in the existing institutions of the country, would have little forecast not to see that the assaults which are now directed against the institutions of the Southern States may be very easily directed against those which uphold their own property and security. A very slight modification of the arguments used against the institutions which sustain the property and security of the South would make them equally effectual against the institutions of the North, including banking, in which so vast an amount of its property and capital is invested. It would be well for those interested to reflect whether there now exists, or ever has existed, a wealthy and civilized community in which one portion did not live on the labor of another. . . .⁴³

Calhoun felt that if the masses were not restrained by constitutional checks at the polls, they would overwhelmingly take control of government. "This danger the Calhoun system would forestall."⁴⁴ For this reason and

⁴¹Calhoun, The Works of John C. Calhoun, VI, pp. 25-26.

⁴²Current, John C. Calhoun, p. 93.

⁴³Calhoun, The Works of John C. Calhoun, V, p. 207. See, also, Richard N. Current, John C. Calhoun (New York: Washington Square Press, 1966), pp. 93-94.

⁴⁴Current, John C. Calhoun, pp. 98-99.

others, Calhoun pleaded, the planters and the capitalists had a common interest in stopping antislavery propaganda.⁴⁵

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 94.

Chapter 5

THE ACCURACY OF CALHOUN'S PROPHECIES

Though the alliance between the capitalists and planters that Calhoun desired never materialized, his prophecies concerning the painful alternatives did. If Calhoun had lived, he would have witnessed the destruction and degradation of the section to which he had devoted all of his energies.

If there ever was a statesman who judged the consequences of events correctly, it was he. Without slavery there would have been no insistence upon state sovereignty; without state sovereignty there would in the end have been no slavery; general and sudden emancipation meant the destruction of the whole edifice of Southern society. There may have been a time in the history of the South when gradual emancipation would have been possible; but it was never possible unless it was supported by public opinion, and such support became absolutely out of the question as soon as any considerable number of men outside of the South organized a movement to accomplish unconditional abolition. Such a movement was the waving of a torch in a powder-magazine and compelled every slaveholder and every dweller in the slave country to stand for the protection of his property and his life.¹

¹Gaillard Hunt, John C. Calhoun (Philadelphia: George W. Jacobs and Company, 1907), p. 319.

Once again, one is compelled to consider that Calhoun and his associates were forced to react in the particular way that they did. Calhoun was unwillingly compelled to support slavery and necessarily defend state sovereignty, the bulwark of slavery, for slavery was the foundation of Southern society. The doom of slavery meant the doom of the South. As it was, the South pursued its destiny without Calhoun's guidance.²

Thus, Gaillard Hunt took the view that man is an organism who is subject to the destiny which fate has dealt him in his environment. This premise is validated by the following statement:

If he (Calhoun) had lived, he might have led them into a different path from that they followed; but they would have reached the same end, for it was beyond the power of man to stay the hand of fate which fell so heavily upon them.³

Therefore, even though Calhoun was indeed the most influential political leader in the South, his expertise in leadership would have in no way altered the inevitable destiny of the South. " . . . he was so far in advance of his times with regard to the slavery question, that his prophetic warnings could not possibly be of any use to

²Ibid., pp. 319-320.

³Ibid., p. 320

the country."⁴ This was evidenced by Calhoun's earlier failures in his attempts to unite the South against the encroachments of the North⁵ and in seeking cessation of the agitation of the slavery question.⁶

Calhoun's prophecies, however, "were always attentively listened to, here with patriotic anger, there with scorn and disdain, and by some with an involuntary shudder; but nobody really brought them home to his understanding. . . ." "Therefore," Holst stated, "they were too soon forgotten, to be transmitted as a portentous bequest to the generation which was to work out their fulfillment in wading through an ocean of blood."⁷

Calhoun inadvertently and erringly, however, helped precipitate the very slaughter that he was trying to prevent.

The more unanswerably he proved the irrepressible character of the conflict between slavery and liberty, and the more violently he pushed it to its climax, so much the more closely he shut his eyes to the fact that slavery and the Union could not be saved, and so much the more loudly he cried that this could

⁴Hermann Eduard von Holst, John C. Calhoun (New York: Houghton, Mifflin, and Company, 1899), p. 141.

⁵Richard N. Current, John C. Calhoun (New York: Washington Square Press, 1966), p. 16.

⁶John C. Calhoun, The Works of John C. Calhoun, ed. Richard K. Cralle, IV (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1888), 542.

⁷von Holst, John C. Calhoun, p. 141.

and would be done. He was only too successful in the consolidation of the South, and the effect of that upon the Northern politicians probably surpassed his own expectations.⁸

Indeed, the measures that Calhoun took resulted in the breaking up of the Union,⁹ for they helped to reverse the chronological order of his predictions concerning whether or not a revolution resulting from class conflict would precede the destruction of slavery.

Calhoun had supposed that a conflict between the worker and capitalist would precede the conflict between the planter and the capitalist. This, however, did not happen, because Calhoun's all too successful efforts to consolidate the South resulted in the Civil War.¹⁰

Nevertheless, whether right or wrong, Calhoun and most Southern men believed in the justification of their actions. Calhoun, however, did believe in continuing the Union, for he believed that the welfare and progress of the human race depended upon it. But if the South must die--his South, the only South he had ever known or could imagine--then his duty and his wish were to save it, and if necessary to sacrifice the Union in order to save it."¹¹

⁸Ibid., p. 299.

⁹Ibid., p. 299.

¹⁰Current, John C. Calhoun, p. 101.

¹¹Hunt, John C. Calhoun, p. 321.

Calhoun failed, however, for "the true monuments to Calhoun, . . . were the wasted farms, the broken railroads, the ruined shops, and the gaunt chimneys scattered over the Confederacy."¹²

Nevertheless, "neither Calhoun's nor any other system can provide adequate safeguards against man's persecution of his fellows."¹³ Calhoun correctly thought that his principle of the "concurrent majority" would have strengthened democracy, but he was wrong in thinking that it could be a cure to Northern oppression. His idea to give the economic groups a veto over federal legislation might have protected the farmer from the industrial laborer and the laborer from the manufacturer, but it could not have protected the Negro from lynchings. It might have gone further toward erasing class lines, but it could not have dissolved racial and religious prejudices.¹⁴

However, Calhoun's philosophy of government still has considerable impact upon contemporary government, for various minority groups have resorted to "pressure

¹²Gerald M. Capers, John C. Calhoun--Opportunist (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1960), p. 254.

¹³Margaret L. Coit, John C. Calhoun--American Portrait (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1950), p. 531.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 531.

groups" to protect their "interests." "The philosophy underlying Calhoun's proposals has also become a dominant, if extralegal, force in our great political parties and within the government itself."¹⁵ Margaret L. Coit states that "flexible platforms," "available candidates," Cabinet posts, "special interest agencies," and "mutual courtesy" in the halls of Congress were only further adaptations of Calhoun's philosophy of government. These types of measures are intended "to prevent the enactment of laws damaging to the 'interests' of a regional or economic group."¹⁶

All this Calhoun would have codified and enacted into law, and as Herbert Agar has pointed out, 'A modern adaptation of Calhoun's plan, giving to the major economic interests . . . the concurring power . . . might go far towards removing both class and economic distinctions.' Meanwhile, we put up with the unrestricted, extralegal 'rule' of group interests 'until we are prepared to give interest groups a positive voice in lawmaking.'¹⁷

Indeed, as Coit has stated, "a statesman's value is relative," for his contributions are subject to the

¹⁵Ibid., p. 531.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 531. "For a further elaboration on the operation of the concurrent majority system today, see John Fisher's interesting article, 'Unwritten Rules of American Politics,' in Harper's Magazine, November, 1948."

¹⁷Ibid., p. 531.

passage of time. Judging Calhoun "by later times, and his meaning for them," however, "Calhoun stands in the first rank of men America has produced. For as thinker and prophet, he was more important for later times than for his own."¹⁸

Coit further asserts that in his day, Calhoun knew full well what he was pitting himself against. She also states that he knew he would fail in his efforts and that his name would become infamous. This did not matter to him, however, for he only cared for the section that he loved and for the basic fundamentals and principles behind free government.

For him there was only the duty to point out the truth as he saw it. Truth, he knew, was more important than success, and he was content to do his duty 'without looking further.' He knew, as his successor Jefferson Davis, knew, that the principle for which he contended was 'bound to reassert itself, although it may be at another time and in another form.' Sustained by the tenets of that Calvinistic faith which had enveloped him from boyhood, he faced the gathering darkness, unafraid.¹⁹

Calhoun's relevance for the future did not end here, however, for he anticipated Marx's philosophy of history when he elaborated upon the inevitability of social exploitation in both the North and South.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 531.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 532.

Further, subsequent history seems to have borne out Calhoun's judgment as to the incompatibility of whites and blacks; two races of different color and culture living side by side would not mingle on a plane of equality. His argument, . . . that the Negro was inferior by nature does not receive scientific sanction today, although, given the particular environment, general inferiority of the Negro seems well established by experience. His prophecy that abolition of slavery would not alter the status of the Negro as a class, but merely change the form of his economic vassalage, has generally come to pass. To the modern complaint that Calhoun's mistake was not in refusing equal status to the Negro, but in denying him the right to be considered as a human being, Calhoun's reply would be that political and civil rights are not the "natural" inheritance of men and are only bestowed by the judgment of the community, and that the Negro slaves did have legal rights more substantial in actual effect than the nominal liberty of the laborer in other regions.²⁰

Thus, it would seem that Calhoun's assertion, that mental or physical equality cannot be achieved through legislation regardless of attitudes, is quite true, for no two individuals are born with identical qualities or capacities.

²⁰August O. Spain, The Political Theory of John C. Calhoun (New York: Bookman Associates, 1951), p. 257.

Chapter 6

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Calhoun, indeed, was a unique combination of politician, statesman, and prophet, for his political efforts, his philosophies of government, and his foreboding of imminent disaster readily attest to the fact. As events were to decree, however, Calhoun's political career and his philosophies of government were doomed to failure while his prophecies of destruction ran their course to fulfillment. Calhoun's attitude which was molded by the environment of the section in which he was reared, however, predisposed him into helplessly contributing to the success of that which he sought so vainly to forestall. It was in the midst of these despairing attempts, however, that Calhoun displayed his intellect concerning the philosophies of government which he logically erected in efforts to avert the destruction of the South and perhaps of the Union.

As Calhoun adjusted his political philosophies to meet impending political dangers, however, his goals of being a successful politician and avoiding disaster became more elusive, for his critics began to accuse him of opportunism. As Capers stated, Calhoun's opponents contended that the political change from nationalism to

states' rightism was the sole result of Calhoun's inability to become president. Calhoun saw his position as not one of vacillation, however, but one of necessity, for it was the Northern politicians and abolitionists who were encroaching upon the constitutional rights of the South.

The shifts in Calhoun's political philosophies were evidenced in his political career which consisted of transitions from nationalism, to states' rightism, and then to sectionalism. Though the changes in Calhoun's political philosophies were outgrowths of the situations in which he was embroiled, his attempts to implement these philosophies helped to bring forth the disasters that he envisioned.

Calhoun, however, did not limit himself to the study of merely one or two systems of political philosophy for he perused the writings of states' rights advocates such as Jefferson, Madison, Taylor, Tucker, and Cooper. He also studied John Locke, the English philosopher, who has influenced the Jeffersonians.

Additionally, Calhoun studied Demosthenes, Cicero, Polybius, Machiavelli, Algernon Sydney, Thomas Hobbes, and Adam Smith. Aristotle and Edmund Burke, however, were his favorites and were cited most often. From these diverse philosophies, however, Calhoun only chose what suited him.

He took ideas for nullification from Jefferson and Madison but rejected their ideas of human equality and

natural rights. From Locke and the English economists, he incorporated "the labor theory of value" which stated that men had a right to the property earned by their labor. From Hobbes, Calhoun strongly promulgated the notion of self-interest as being the main political motive of men. Calhoun, however, rejected Locke's and Hobbes' view of government as originating in a contract among men who previously lived in a state of complete individuality. His strong sense of social hierarchy was obtained from Aristotle and Burke. Calhoun, therefore, found it hard to believe that man could ever exist without society and government to keep him in order.

Calhoun found the reason for the existence of government in human nature. Man has always lived in society and has always required government, for even though he is interested in others, he is more interested in himself. Government, therefore, is necessary to restrain individuals from conflict.

Government, however, Calhoun averred, must not be too restrictive, for it must allow for the development of the intellectual and moral faculties of individuals comprising society. Therefore, there must be an appropriate balance of liberty and security to procure the safety and progress of society. He also believed that if a mass of people were not experienced in the art of self-government,

they did not deserve the social reward of liberty.

Calhoun also believed that equality did not mean equal degrees of freedom, for in his eyes, the social structure of the United States and liberty itself would lead to inequality as a result of individuals' differing degrees of desire and ability for bettering their respective conditions. Thus, he considered inequality to be the mainspring of progress. If this inequality were removed, the march of progress would be delayed or impeded.

These assumptions concerning the relationship of man to society and government provided the foundation for the logical political structure that Calhoun erected. Since he believed that human traits made government necessary, he devised his own version of government with its principle of the "concurrent majority" and procedure for nullification in an effort to reconcile the balance of power and liberty.

The constitutional safeguard of the "concurrent majority" regarded special and individual interests as well as the number of citizens. The principle of "concurrent majority" also considered the community or nation to consist of differing and conflicting interests and took the sense of each interest and the united sense of all. Calhoun called the people who participated in this kind of constitutional check on the government the "concurrent" or

"constitutional majority." Calhoun no doubt was anticipating the existence of interest or pressure groups. These groups, however, would have possessed an active voice in government through the means of a vote or veto.

Calhoun further contended that it was this "concurrent" or "constitutional majority" which was absolutely necessary for the successful working of a constitutional government. Government of the "numerical majority" may be just as tyrannical as that of any dictator or king, and when the distinction between the "numerical" and "concurrent majority" is overlooked, a democratic government tends readily to degenerate into an absolute dictatorship.

Under this principle, Calhoun believed that the various interests would be compelled to unite only in measures which would promote the prosperity of all, thereby avoiding either despotism on one hand or by preventing the suspension of the action of government on the other. Calhoun, however, only deluded himself when he stated that the very requirements of unanimity would make all groups more forbearing and would strengthen and preserve the government without resort to force. It would seem, then, that either Calhoun considered only the theoretical application of democratic government, which the American colonies had experimented with under the Articles of Confederation, or he displayed profound historical ignorance of the

problems of practical application of government under the Articles of Confederation, because the administration of government under the Articles of Confederation caused political and economic impotency due to the lack of consensus among the thirteen states.

Calhoun, however, believed that governing a country by "concurrent majority" was feasible. To prove this, he searched history for examples, and he thought he found them in the constitution and government of his own state, South Carolina, and the government of ancient Rome and Great Britain.

Calhoun likewise believed that our federal system was originally intended to operate with suitable provision for the negative power. This he substantiated by citing the division of powers between the states and the federal government and the separation of powers among the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government.

Calhoun, however, believed that the federal government did not work in actual practice as it was intended to do, for as long as governments exist, the struggle for control of government as the means of directing its actions and dispensing honors and emoluments will be an object of desire which in governments of "numerical majorities" will always result in party struggles. Thus, oppression and abuse of power results, for the majority party will

struggle to obtain supreme control over every department of government. Indeed, very recent political crises have lucidly illustrated the truth of Calhoun's statement concerning the failure of constitutional separation of powers and of the attempts of any one party's struggle to gain absolute control of government, either overt or covert. Therefore, the problems which Calhoun sought to resolve are still present.

Nevertheless, Calhoun thought that the principle of the "concurrent majority," which he believed to be embodied in the Constitution itself, would prevent such corruption. He thought that all he had to do was point out the principle and procedure for putting it into action, and that procedure was nullification.

Calhoun, however, was not the first to espouse the cause of states' rights. This cause had been promulgated during colonial times when hostility to the imperial British government brought the colonies together in 1774; when Jefferson resisted the attempts of the Federalists to exploit the "implied powers" of the Constitution; when the Essex Junto resisted Jefferson's interpretation of the Constitution; and when John Randolph of Roanoke organized a faction within Jefferson's own party in resistance to Jefferson's desertion to his formerly avowed principles. Oddly enough, foremost among the Federalists

against Jefferson to declare that the government of the United States was a delegated, limited government was Daniel Webster, who in later years vehemently criticized Calhoun and his followers for doing exactly what he had attempted to do upon the occasion when he criticized Jefferson's embargo policies.

Therefore, when Calhoun took up the states' rights cause in 1828, there were already many examples of states' rights to follow. One is therefore compelled to wonder why the legality or constitutionality of Calhoun's version of states' rights was any different than those before it.

In essence, the vacillating espousal of states' rights by the Republicans and Federalists before Calhoun's time illustrates that states' rights was always supported by the party out of power, while the party in power always interpreted the Constitution to its own advantage. With few exceptions, this adage and principle has been true of political factions throughout United States history and in recent crises. Thus, one is left to conclude for himself what is really ethically, legally, and constitutionally right, for it is apparent that constitutional hypocrites abound. Logical results of such historical reasoning clearly indicate that government in the United States has often consisted of opportunism rather than constitutionalism.

Calhoun, however, based his ideas of states' rights upon grounds which he considered to be more stable, state sovereignty. The idea that sovereignty could be divided between the federal and state governments he felt to be absurd, for sovereignty is a supreme power which cannot exist divided.

Calhoun also thought it equally ridiculous to believe that sovereignty had ever belonged to the people of the United States as a whole. To substantiate this, he referred to the tenth amendment in the Bill of Rights. Therefore, sovereignty remained unsundered and unimpaired in the people of the individual states. The United States evolved from thirteen independent colonies which became thirteen independent states when the sovereignty of the British crown was terminated.

If the people of the United States were not sovereign as a political whole, then the federal government could not possibly be sovereign, for the federal government was merely a representative government. Calhoun argued that the people of each state, acting in their sovereign capacity, established the Constitution and delegated certain powers to the federal government, which were not specifically delegated to the respective state governments. No nationwide political community ratified the Constitution, and the Constitution created no nationwide political

community. Strictly speaking, there was no United States. There were only the "States United." Calhoun obtained the justification for this assertion from the meaning of the wording in the second article of the Articles of Confederation. Calhoun, then, viewed the federal government as a government emanating from a compact between sovereigns. The federal government was appointed to superintend and administer the interests in which all were jointly concerned. Beyond this sphere, the federal government was to have no more power than if it did not exist.

Calhoun contended, however, that the action of the Northern-dominated government was leading to a radical change in the system, for it was concentrating all of the powers in the hands of the federal government. As a logical result, the individual states were holding their rights and powers at the pleasure of the central government, over which the North had acquired a potential ascendancy. Indeed, as one can deduce from federal court decisions, legislative acts, and policies throughout the history of the United States, the federal government has repeatedly encroached upon the jurisdiction of the state governments through interpretations of the Constitution.

More than this, however, Calhoun accurately prophesied the wretchedness and political expropriation which the South was to suffer as a result of the actions of a

Northern-dominated federal government. Thus, Calhoun, in 1849, accurately prophesied what was to befall the South in less than twenty years.

Calhoun prophesied just as accurately, too, in his contention that after the South was exhausted from its conflict with the North, the contest would then be between the capitalists and proletariat in the North. Under the operation of the system of capitalism, wages would sink to the extent that the worker would barely be able to afford the necessities of life. Indeed, in view of current economic problems with depressions, repressions, deflation, inflation, devaluation, and taxation, one must concede that Calhoun did possess foresight in the matters of class conflict which could possibly lead to uprisings and even revolutions. As he stated time and again, conflict between labor and capital has always existed in an advanced, wealthy civilization, and in process of time, it could lead to disorder, anarchy, and revolution. Thus, Calhoun foresaw a number of deadly social ills within the system of capitalism which other writers of socialism and communism were to write about later.

Calhoun's prophecies are still tragically real in yet another area of society today. Subsequent history seems to have substantiated Calhoun's judgment concerning the incompatibility of whites and blacks, for these two

racess of different color and culture have not been able to thoroughly mingle on a plane of equality. His argument, however, that the Negro was inferior by nature does not receive scientific sanction today, but given a particular environment, general difference in natural ability of the Negro does seem to be established by experience. Also, his prophecy stating that abolition of slavery would merely change the form of the Negro's economic vassalage came to pass in the following century.

Calhoun's political philosophies, therefore, have much relevance for the present since much of his prophecies are true estimations of social problems. Judged as a thinker and prophet by his relevance for the social conditions of later times, Calhoun's prophecies became even more important. Indeed, if the neo-Calhounites such as Coit are correct in their assertions, and if Calhoun speaks for the democratic-minded minorities of today, then he is more important for our times than he was his. However, he must necessarily have a rather different significance now than he did for his own time.

Casting all moral judgments aside concerning the exploitation of another race, Calhoun rightly believed that his plan of the "concurrent majority" would have strengthened the democratic processes of government. He was wrong, however, in thinking it was a panacea. Calhoun,

however, thought that his cause was the protection of the rights of minorities which were grounded constitutionally in the Bill of Rights. Considering the circumstances under which the Constitution was ratified by the first thirteen states of the Union and the wording of the last amendment in the Bill of Rights, perhaps Calhoun was right after all.

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