

THE NEGRO IN ILLINOIS POLITICS,

1865-1870:

A STUDY OF THE RACE ISSUE IN  
ILLINOIS DURING RECONSTRUCTION

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## ABSTRACT

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Freedman's rights dominated state politics in Illinois during the Reconstruction years of 1865-70. Illinois was a racist society, and both Democrats and Republicans manipulated racial attitudes to their political advantage. The Democrats, linking the Negro with the Republican party, appealed negatively to white racist attitudes. The Republicans, seeking political dominance through the support of the black vote, used the rhetoric of the "Bloody Shirt," the preservation of the Union's hard-won victory in the Civil War, and the need to punish the South. On the issue of black rights, therefore, the Republican party avoided confronting racial equality, and implicitly substituted the issue of political dominance.

By the close of the decade people tired of the black cause. Politicians, perceiving little political advantage in espousing the black cause, dropped the issue. The blacks in Illinois, nevertheless, emerged from the political maneuvering of this period with some political and civil rights they had not previously enjoyed.

## PREFACE

Little consideration has been given to race as a motivating political factor in the Northern states during Reconstruction. This study of the Negro in Illinois politics from 1865-1870 reviews race as a key issue in that state.

As an outgrowth of the war effort and a purely political desire to assure Republican party ascendancy, Republicans after the war supported certain civil rights for Negroes which resulted in the passage of the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments to the Constitution. In their efforts to champion these national party policies in their own state, Illinois Republicans dealt with and sometimes made use of a deep-seated racial prejudice, a prejudice that was particularly exploited against them by Illinois Democrats. Mindful of this prejudice, Republicans avoided direct appeals for black civil rights and instead justified their policies with "Bloody Shirt" rhetoric of the need to preserve the Union's hard-won victory in abolishing slavery and to punish the South.

The Democrats, the minority party in Illinois, appealed directly to white racism by linking the Republican party with the Negro. Although this tactic was generally inadequate against the Republican "Bloody Shirt" appeal in Illinois, popular prejudice against the question of Negro suffrage was the single most effective weapon in the Democratic campaign. As the advantages of the black vote became clear to Republicans, however, they advocated Negro suffrage, first in the South and then in the North. The question was resolved by the sweeping Republican victories in state and national elections of 1868, after which Negro suffrage was sealed by the Fifteenth Amendment.

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By the close of the decade people tired of the Negro issue, and politicians perceived little political advantage in espousing the black cause, and it ceased to be a factor in Illinois politics. Yet despite this the Negro in Illinois emerged from the political maneuverings of this period with some political and civil rights he had not enjoyed before.

#### DEDICATION

To my parents, Mr. and Mrs. R. A. Marshall,  
whose help and understanding  
made this thesis possible.

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## I. Background of Discrimination

Whites did not welcome blacks in Illinois prior to 1865. Although the 1860 black population of Illinois amounted to only 7,628, or 0.4% of the total population, whites did all they could to keep that number even lower. For these few blacks, pre-Civil War civil rights were almost nonexistent. A number of "Black Laws", some enacted as late as 1853, specifically prohibited the immigration of Negroes into the state.<sup>1</sup> Many runaway slaves caught in Illinois were returned to their Southern owners. V. Jacques Voegeli, in his excellent book on the Negro in the Midwest, found that in 1861 "Negroes were made so unwelcome in Cairo [Illinois] that one fugitive surrendered himself there to be returned to the South. The Democratic Cairo Gazette proudly quoted him as saying that four days free in Cairo were worse than four years in bondage."<sup>2</sup> Blacks had no legal status--they could not vote, serve on juries or hold political office. Socially, blacks were often segregated--Negroes were prohibited from attending white schools and from intermarrying with whites, and they were expected to attend their own churches.<sup>3</sup>

Illinois had a long Democratic tradition of declared racial anti-pathy. Norman D. Harris, who studied Negro servitude prior to the Civil War, pointed out that from Springfield (in the center of the state) southward, the population was "largely Southern in blood and sympathies.

1. Charles A. Church, History of the Republican Party in Illinois, 1854-1912 (Rockford: Wilson Brothers Co., 1912), pp. 98-99.

2. V. Jacques Voegeli, Free But Not Equal: The Midwest and the Negro During the Civil War (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967), p. 9. See other examples in Arthur C. Cole, The Era of the Civil War, 1848-1870 (Chicago: A. C. McClurg, 1919), p. 335.

3. Norman D. Harris, The History of Negro Servitude in Illinois and of Slavery Agitation in that State, 1719-1864 (New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969), p. 226. See also Voegeli, Free But Not Equal, p. 2, and Cole, The Era of the Civil War, pp. 336-337.



To them the idea of negro equality was most obnoxious and all plans for preventing an influx of blacks were most popular. The very presence of the colored people was irritating."<sup>4</sup> Voegeli pointed out that whites also feared that the "release of southern slaves would bring a horde of Negroes...to reduce wages, drive native laboring men from their jobs, and associate with the lower class of whites."<sup>5</sup> For these reasons Illinois enacted a series of "Black Laws" restricting black rights that culminated with an 1853 law specifically prohibiting the immigration of free Negroes into the state.

The author of this law, Democratic representative in the Illinois General Assembly John A. Logan, later became a Union general and a prominent Republican Congressman. Logan was from the southernmost area of Illinois, which was heavily Democratic. In 1853 he received praise from his constituents for his authorship of a "Black Law." One constituent, for example, assured Logan that his work would "reflect credit and distinction," particularly in "Egypt" (i.e., the Cairo area).<sup>6</sup> But racism was not confined to the Democratic party in Illinois. As Voegeli pointed out, "most Republicans of every rank" shared a racist position.<sup>7</sup>

The beginning of the Civil War did little to alter white attitudes in Illinois toward the Negro. For those who opposed slavery, the status of free blacks remained the major stumbling block to emancipation. Whites could not and would not believe that blacks were capable of competing freely with whites for a living. In 1862 John M. Palmer, a future Governor

4. Harris, The History of Negro Servitude, p. 241.

5. Voegeli, Free But Not Equal, p. 5. See also Harris, The History of Negro Servitude, pp. 240-241.

6. W. K. Parrish to John A. Logan, Jan. 16, 1853, John A. Logan Papers (Manuscript Division, Library of Congress). See also Cole, The Era of the Civil War, p. 336, and James P. Jones, "Black Jack:" John A. Logan and Southern Illinois in the Civil War (Tallahassee: Florida State University Press, 1967), pp. 15-17.

7. Voegeli, Free But Not Equal, p. 4.

of Illinois, referred to this prejudice in a letter to Senator Lyman Trumbull, and predicted that because of it the Negro would be little better off free than he had been as a slave. He called the Negro

a race which the sentiments of our people doom to a condition of social and political inferiority beyond the reach of all efforts for their elevation.... The legal claims of the Master may be annihilated but the Negro chained down by the accumulated prejudices of centuries will continue as before, while in contact with the whites a race of bondmen. 8

Another constituent also admitted to Senator Trumbull that anti-black prejudice existed and complained that the Democrats, taking advantage of it, called Republicans "Negro equalitists," "amalgamists," and "black republicans."<sup>9</sup> Both letters further mentioned schemes for the colonization of blacks as a means of removing the Negro from Illinois altogether.

Another important indicator of white sentiment towards blacks occurred in August of 1862, when the people of Illinois voted on a new state constitution. A key article, voted upon separately, would have allowed Negroes into the state and given them the vote, but white voters overwhelmingly rejected the article by over 100,000 votes, at a five-to-one margin.<sup>10</sup> Other evidence of white opposition to black immigration came in the summer of 1862, when Union troops operating in the Mississippi Valley routed hundreds of Negro refugees into southern Illinois at Cairo. When Secretary of War Stanton, in violation of Illinois law, authorized

8. John M. Palmer to Lyman Trumbull, Dec. 11, 1862, Lyman Trumbull Papers (Manuscript Division, Library of Congress). See also Voegeli, Free But Not Equal, p. 64.

9. W. W. Might to Lyman Trumbull, July 7, 1862, Trumbull MSS, L.C.

10. John L. Conger and William E. Hull, History of Illinois River Valley (Chicago: S. J. Clarke Co., 1932), p. 416. See also Voegeli, Free But Not Equal, p. 27.



the dispersal of these refugees throughout the state, such an outcry arose from the populace that several leading state Republicans appealed to Lincoln to stop the influx of Negroes. Voegeli pointed out that "Stanton, presumably with Lincoln's approval...acted on October 13, by forbidding further shipments of blacks out of Cairo."<sup>11</sup>

Many whites even rejected attempts to improve the Negroes' lot. After the Emancipation Proclamation, a Miss Curtis from Indiana tried to set up a school for blacks in Shawneetown, Illinois, but white women ostracized her until after a few months she gave up the work in disgust.<sup>12</sup> Norman D. Harris noted that many whites simply "believed that it would be impossible to educate the negroes, and unwise by reason of their color and their capacities to allow them a share in the government with the white people."<sup>13</sup>

There was little acceptance or even tolerance of blacks in Illinois prior to 1865. Legislation and practice restricted Negro rights--even their immigration into the state. Most whites felt the Negro had no place in a free society of whites. The idealism surrounding the abolition of slavery ran counter to some of this feeling, however, and in the first year after the Civil War it was to lead to some startling legislation.

11. Voegeli, Free But Not Equal, pp. 60-61.

12. David W. Lusk, Politics and Politicians of Illinois, 1809-1887 (Springfield: H. W. Rokker, 1887), p. 350.

13. Harris, The History of Negro Servitude, p. 241.

## II. 1865--A Change in Policy?

In 1865 support for the Republican party, the war effort, and the abolition of slavery manifested itself in Illinois with the repeal of the "Black Laws," the prompt ratification of the Thirteenth Amendment, and the victory of the Republican party in state and local elections. Despite this, however, the white population of Illinois remained prejudiced against blacks and considered them racially inferior and unable to properly exercise the political and civil rights enjoyed by whites.

Actually a change in policy toward the Negro had been building throughout the war. As the abolition of slavery became a war aim, whites in Illinois began to see the contradiction between their attacks on the South for their treatment of the Negro and their own policies restricting blacks. This war spirit worked to break down some of the resistance to Negroes. For example, Illinois became one of the first advocates of black soldiers.<sup>14</sup>

Opposition to the discriminatory immigration policy developed in late 1864. Whites in the northern and western parts of Illinois, areas of sparse Negro population and of strong Republican sentiment, began calling for the repeal of the "Black Laws," and declaring that "the safety of the white race lies in doing justice to blacks, for God had declared against their oppressors."<sup>15</sup> Illinois Republican Congressman Elihu Washburne received a similar appeal for black rights in December of that year, in a letter from a constituent.<sup>16</sup> Richard Yates, the Republican Governor of Illinois, also received a letter calling for repeal of the "Black Laws" that suggested that the freed Negro would be a better citizen than the

14. Cole, The Era of the Civil War, p. 336.

15. Voegeli, Free But Not Equal, p. 163.

16. John Mentelius to Elihu Washburne, Dec. 29, 1864, Elihu B. Washburne Papers (Manuscript Division, Library of Congress).



Southern white "rebel."<sup>17</sup>

Most of Illinois' blacks lived in the southern and central parts of the state, where the heavily Democratic white population, largely from the South, opposed changing the state law against Negro immigration. Their opposition, voiced in the Democratic press, grew more and more vehement as time for voting repeal of the "Black Laws" grew near. The Chicago Times, the state's leading Democratic paper, charged that the repeal would result in "allowing Negroes almost absolute political equality with the whites," such as allowing blacks to "testify and serve on juries against the white race."<sup>18</sup> Such an appeal to racial prejudice was the typical Democratic tactic against the Repeal Movement. In response to such arguments Governor Richard Yates, in a speech on January 4, 1865, denounced the "Black Laws" as unconstitutional and inhumane, and yet he carefully emphasized that Negroes would not flock into Illinois if it were to remove restrictions on their immigration.<sup>19</sup> Apparently he was well aware of the fear among whites of an influx of Negroes.

The Democratic appeals failed and the Illinois General Assembly voted the repeal of the "Black Laws." The Senate voted thirteen to ten in favor of repeal, and the House approved it by forty-nine to thirty.<sup>20</sup> The vote reflected a geographic division of opinion in the state: the majority of senators and representatives voting for repeal came from the Republican

17. J. G. Andrews to Richard Yates, Jan. 3, 1865, Richard Yates Papers (Manuscript Division, Illinois State Historical Library).

18. Chicago Times, Jan. 20, 1865, p. 4.

19. Illinois State Journal, Jan. 8, 1865, p. 1. See also Voegeli, Free But Not Equal, p. 176.

20. Journal of the Senate of the 24th General Assembly of the State of Illinois (Springfield: Baker & Phillips, 1865), pp. 260-262. See also Journal of the House of Representatives of the 24th General Assembly of the State of Illinois (Springfield: Baker & Phillips, 1865), p. 551-552. See also Lusk, Politics and Politicians, pp. 167-168.

northern half of the state, which was more heavily populated than the Democratic southern part.<sup>21</sup> The major reason for the repeal, however, was the slavery issue. Governor Yates' January 3, 1865 speech revealed a consensus of the evil of slavery when he said, "The laws [i.e., the "Black Laws"] are now almost a dead letter, for it is only now and then, indeed a rare case, that a man can be found who is barbarian enough to insist upon the application of penalties imposed by these laws."<sup>22</sup> While this statement was an exaggeration, especially for southern Illinois, it did reflect the increasingly popular opinion, as the war continued, that to return runaway slaves to the rebellious South was wrong. This association of the war effort with aiding Negroes to flee the South is even more evident in a letter from W. H. Gray of Carlyle, Illinois, to Illinois Republican Senator Lyman Trumbull in January 1865:

You have no doubt learned of the great change which has taken place in public sentiment in this part of the state. We are all Radicals and I find that new converts are as Radical as I am and all Union men are agreed that the Union can never be restored until slavery is wiped out. 23

With such rhetoric it became obvious that the "Black Laws" were inconsistent with the abolition of slavery. On February 7, 1865, the Governor officially approved the removal of the "Black Laws" from Illinois statute books.

The major issue of 1865, however, was slavery. The majority of people in Illinois felt that its abolition was necessary for a conclusion to the war. For them and the rest of the nation this sentiment took the form of

21. Cole, The Era of the Civil War, p. 330.

22. Illinois State Journal, Jan. 8, 1865, p. 1.

23. W. H. Gray to Lyman Trumbull, Jan. 4, 1865, Trumbull MSS, L. C.



the proposed Constitutional amendment abolishing slavery. Taking place at the same time as the debate on the repeal of Illinois "Black Laws," the Constitutional amendment debate represented an issue more clearly related to the war effort. This amendment was supported, for example, in the same letter quoted above by Mr. Gray to Senator Trumbull. After the amendment received President Lincoln's approval, Trumbull telegraphed Illinois' newly-elected Republican Governor, Richard J. Oglesby, to urge immediate approval in the state legislature. Governor Oglesby called for an end to the "civil discord" caused by slavery in his message to the General Assembly urging passage of the amendment:

...so that we can, by any act of our state, destroy this pestilent cause of civil discord, disruption, and dissolution--the source of so much unhappiness and misery to the people of the whole nation. 24

The General Assembly ratified the amendment that same day. Thus on February 1, 1865, Illinois became the first state in the Union to ratify the Thirteenth Amendment.

The popularity of the amendment appeared in the considerable bipartisan support for ratification. Several leading Democrats supported ratification and five out of ten Democrats in the Illinois Senate spoke and voted with the majority.<sup>25</sup> Several letters to Congressman Elihu Washburne from persons across the state also indicated that the passage was well-received in Illinois.<sup>26</sup> The Republican press in Illinois praised the ratification. It also favorably reported the eventual ratification and condemned the

24. Church, History of the Republican Party, p. 98.

25. Journal of the Senate, pp. 313-315. See also Chicago Times, Jan. 30, 1865, p. 2, and the Chicago Evening Journal, Jan. 24, 1865, p. 1.

26. W. B. Dodge to Elihu B. Washburne, Feb. 3, 1865, Talcott to Elihu B. Washburne, Feb. 4, 1865, and E. H. Eyerman to Elihu B. Washburne, Feb. 7, 1865, Washburne MSS, L.C.

rejection by each new state. Letters to the editor in various newspapers also supported the Amendment.<sup>27</sup>

Despite the popularity of the Thirteenth Amendment in Illinois, however, doubts and fears existed over its long-range consequences. The major fear, noted earlier, was that the newly-freed slaves would move North, and the 1860 and 1870 Illinois census figures bear out that possibility.<sup>28</sup> The Democratic Chicago Times reasoned that emancipation would not help the Negroes, because blacks could not vote in the South and that, in order to escape discrimination, they would have to emigrate North. The Times predicted "doom" for blacks if this occurred, implying that they would be unable to compete with whites.<sup>29</sup>

Some Democrats, however, knew the reverse to be true. Dr. John F. Snyder, a Democrat who had earlier served in the Confederate army as a physician, lived in Virginia, Illinois in 1865 and kept up a large correspondence with other Democrats. Several of these men had been displaced from the South, and one admitted he had left the South because of the competition from the newly-freed blacks, who could work for less.<sup>30</sup> Such an admission reveals that even among Democrats, the more probable fear was that the black man would be all too competitive in the labor market, and not that he would become a helpless charity case. One man stated clearly

27. Bureau County Republican, Feb. 9, 1865, p. 2. See also Illinois State Journal, Feb. 22, 1865, p. 4, and Cole, The Era of the Civil War, p. 336.

28. During the decade the white population of the state doubled, while the Negro population more than tripled (from 7,628 to 28,762) despite the fact that Negro immigration into the state did not start until 1865.

Carl G. Hodges et al., Illinois Negro History Makers (Chicago: Illinois Emancipation Centennial Commission, 1964), pp. 59-64. See also George W. Smith, A History of Southern Illinois (Chicago: Lewis Publishing Co., 1912), p. 357, and Cole, The Era of the Civil War, pp. 335-336, and Jones, "Black Jack", p. 17.

29. Chicago Times, March 27, 1865, p. 2.

30. T. J. Banded to John F. Snyder, July 9, 1865, John F. Snyder Papers (Manuscript Division, Illinois State Historical Library).



that he feared the Republicans would make blacks "the equal of white men and the superior of Southern whites."<sup>31</sup>

Most Democrats nevertheless offered various "solutions" to the problem, all using black inferiority for their justification. The Chicago Times called for colonization of blacks away from "the superiority of the Saxon:"

They [Negroes] cannot remain in the South as freedmen, for they will be obliged to compete with free white labor, and this has always ended in the triumph of the former. Let them have a country somewhere west of the Mississippi in a southern latitude. In such a place their inferiority would not be placed in competition with the superiority of the Saxon; their presence would be removed from white civilization, and they could there develop all the enterprise, ability and other qualities in their possession, to their highest extent,...which, we hear, would not be overly high. 32

One constituent suggested to the Republican Governor, Richard Yates, that Mexico might be a suitable place for colonization, which he believed the best solution for both races.<sup>33</sup> Variations on the colonization idea continued through the summer of 1865. All the plans stressed Negro inferiority. One Chicago Times article supporting a colonization plan stated: "It is the only method which will preserve the Negro from early pauperism and later annihilation, and it is the only plan that will put an end to the force and unprofitable negro agitations in American politics."<sup>34</sup> Another article simply stated that the Negro lacked the capacity for civilization, and that

31. J. W. Wilson to John F. Snyder, Feb. 7, 1865 and Jan. 24, 1865, Snyder MSS, I.S.H.L.

32. Chicago Times, Feb. 3, 1865, p. 2.

33. George R. Clark to Richard Yates, Feb. 23, 1865, Yates MSS, I.S.H.L.

34. Chicago Times, June 9, 1865, p. 2.

in fact caused him to revert to backwardness and irresponsible pleasure seeking.<sup>35</sup>

Although repeal of the "Black Laws" and the ratification of the Thirteenth Amendment revealed a change in attitude among most people in Illinois concerning slavery, there appeared little change in white opinion of Negro rights and capabilities. Appeals for colonization in the Democratic press expressed racist opinions that members of that party popularly held. One Democrat in Illinois informed Dr. Snyder of his intention to move his family out of Missouri because the Republican-controlled legislature there was moving to make "the negro about equal with the white man."<sup>36</sup> Fear and uncertainty also existed about what the newly-freed blacks would do. One southern Democrat complained to Dr. Snyder that there were "just too many negroes" in the South, that the country was garrisoned by black troops, and that Negroes would turn on the whites if they did not receive suffrage and land.<sup>37</sup>

Republicans also did not argue too strongly for Negro rights in 1865, and quickly disclaimed any possible extension of these rights as a result of recent legislation. The Illinois State Journal, the major Republican newspaper in Springfield, the capital of Illinois, denied as a "disreputable Misrepresentation" that the repeal of the "Black Laws" gave the Negro jury rights.<sup>38</sup> In fact, Negro rights, except for the right to come into the state, remained virtually unchanged: blacks still could not vote, hold office, or serve on juries.

Even the right to an education was denied most blacks. Although some

35. Chicago Times, June 2, 1865, p. 4, and Aug. 10, 1865, p. 2.

36. John W. Wilson to John F. Snyder, Feb. 7, 1865, and Jan. 24, 1865, Snyder MSS, I. S. H. L.

37. T. J. Banden to John F. Snyder, July 9, 1865, Snyder MSS, I. S. H. L.

38. Illinois State Journal, Feb. 10, 1865, p. 2.



schools appeared for Negroes, they were strictly segregated. Most communities elected to refund, upon application, any school taxes to black taxpayers, rather than to provide separate schools.<sup>39</sup> Two short articles in a Peoria newspaper in September of 1865 indicate the lot which fell to black education. One article noted that the public schools had opened and were "unusually full for the first day of the term," while the other article merely noted that the "colored" school had failed to open because of "failure to produce a suitable room for that purpose."<sup>40</sup>

During the last months of 1865 the capabilities and rights of Negroes, especially their suffrage, received mixed attention from Democratic and Republican newspapers. In a press campaign that led up to state and local elections held that fall, Republican newspapers emphasized Negro advances in the South. One short article cited the amount of black-owned real estate in New Orleans--\$15,000,000--and the number of endowments of black churches in Savannah.<sup>41</sup> Occasionally a Republican paper reprinted some leading Republican's speech calling for Negro rights in the South (e. g., Wendell Phillips' appeal for black suffrage).<sup>42</sup> The majority of Republican papers, however, remained quiet on Negro rights and abilities, apparently in tacit acquiescence to the public's general apathy and prejudice. After all, it had been only three years since the 1862 State Constitutional question on Negro rights had overwhelmingly (by over a five to one margin) rejected Negro suffrage in Illinois.<sup>43</sup> This attitude was revealed in a

39. Cole, The Era of the Civil War, p. 337.

40. Peoria National Democrat, Sept. 12, 1865, p. 4.

41. Illinois State Journal, Feb. 15, 1865, p. 4.

42. Bureau County Republican, Feb. 9, 1865, p. 1.

43. Cole, The Era of the Civil War, p. 271.

Republican newspaper article:

The Democratic papers of Missouri, and a few in other places, are agitating the question of negro suffrage... It might be discreet, to say the least, to let that question alone till the people are ready to discuss it. The Democratic party, so far as we know, has not gained much in the long run by its continual worry about negro slavery, soldiery, and suffrage. 44

The Democratic press blatantly appealed to racial prejudice and linked the Negro with the Republican party. A favorite issue, for example, was interracial marriage. Two articles in the Chicago Times and the Peoria National Democrat denounced interracial marriages as "sordid" and "repugnant." The Times article stated that public sentiment did "not sustain the negro-equality, amalgamation doctrines so assiduously taught by Greely, Beecher, Tilton, and others."<sup>45</sup> That the cases of miscegenation these articles cited did not even occur in Illinois suggests that such "amalgamation" rarely occurred in Illinois. The main issue of the Democrats' racist appeal, however, was Negro suffrage. The Democratic press predicted a "black" future for racial integration if the Republicans succeeded in securing the vote for blacks:

They [Negroes] have taken our time, our first-born, and our money freely...We see no hope, and the future of the country is as black as the subject of this article...After enfranchisement, will come a demand for social equality, and after that the millenium, as understood by Tilton, abolitionists, niggers and miscegenationists. 46

Democratic newspaper editors as well as Republicans obviously also remembered the rejection of Negro rights in 1862, when Negro suffrage in the proposed

44. Bureau County Republican, Apr. 6, 1865, p. 2.

45. Chicago Times, Aug. 12, 1865, p. 2. See also Peoria National Democrat, Sept. 30, 1865, p. 2.

46. Ibid., July 7, 1865, p. 2.



state constitution received the most opposition.<sup>47</sup> By 1865, the Democratic press discovered Negro suffrage as their strongest weapon in the political campaign, and they set out to link the Republicans with it. First they made it clear that Democrats opposed black suffrage. The Chicago Times, for example, stated that "the negro is an inferior animal...no more qualified to wield the ballot than so many mules."<sup>48</sup> The Democrats also accused the Republicans of supporting black suffrage simply to remain in power. This charge contained some truth, because the Democrats controlled the white vote in the South, and Republicans needed the black vote there. The Times article charged the Republican party with using suffrage as a desperate scheme to obtain votes. It likened the issue to "the attempt of a drowning man to save himself by clutching at straws." It predicted race conflict, with defeat and "antagonism" for the blacks, if they received the vote.<sup>49</sup> Perhaps the charge Democrats thought their strongest, and one that would hurt the Republicans the most, was that Negro suffrage would mean political and social equality between blacks and whites. A typical Democratic appeal to this fear appeared in the Peoria National Democrat:

There is no dodging the issue, negro suffrage is now the only dividing line between the two great parties. Let no man be deceived. He who is in favor of permitting a common ignorant contraband negro, who doesn't even know the name of a single letter in the alphabet... should vote the so-called Union ticket. In short, he who is in favor of breaking the lines heretofore existing between the races and saying all men, it makes no difference of what color or country should meet upon a common equality and common footing, should vote the so-called Union ticket--for the success of that party will bring all these things about. 50

47. Cole, The Era of the Civil War, p. 271.

48. Chicago Times, June 9, 1865, p. 2.

49. Ibid., Aug. 4, 1865, p. 2.

50. Peoria National Democrat, Sept. 23, 1865, p. 1.

The Republican press, on the other hand, played down the issue of Negro suffrage in Illinois, perhaps because it realized that the vote remained a liability among whites. Illinois Republicans relegated Negro suffrage to Reconstruction in the South and associated it with the Radicals in Washington, rather than make it a plank in their election platform in Illinois. In 1865, although an occasional article appeared in favor of Negro suffrage in the South, Republican newspapers in Illinois for the most part remained silent on the issue. In the first post-war campaign, a Democratic Peoria newspaper charged that the candidates on the Republican ticket never denied the repeated allegation that they favored giving the right to vote to the Negroes. Apparently suffrage was a challenge that Republicans refused to meet at that time.<sup>51</sup>

Evidence exists, however, that by late 1865 Republicans began to see the political advantage of black suffrage. In a letter to Senator Fessenden of Maine, Horace White, who later became editor of the Republican Chicago Tribune, wrote that Representatives in Congress from the South based their support on a population that included disenfranchised blacks. That gave Southern voters an unfair advantage in Congress. White suggested a Constitutional amendment, to base representation upon voters, not on population. However, he concluded that prejudice precluded Negro suffrage.<sup>52</sup>

Closely associated with the Negro rights issue was Reconstruction of the South. Each party claimed the martyred President Lincoln in support of their own reconstruction policies. The Republicans used Lincoln's

51. Peoria National Democrat, Nov. 7, 1865, p. 2.

52. Horace White to W. P. Fessenden, Oct. 9, 1865, Horace White Papers (Manuscript Division, Illinois State Historical Library).



memory to endorse Negro rights by "predicting" that had he lived, Lincoln would have enfranchised blacks in restoring civil governments to the South.<sup>53</sup> The Democrats, on the other hand, used Lincoln to strengthen their opposition to Negro rights and to support President Andrew Johnson's lenient reconstruction program. They declared that Lincoln had never intended to force even a qualified Negro suffrage on the South, and that the reconstruction policy he had in mind was indeed the one Johnson was carrying forward.<sup>54</sup>

From descriptions and charges in letters from Union men in the South, Republicans in Illinois began to see the South as still in rebellion, and in need of control, particularly in regard to the newly-freed blacks, by a more stringent reconstruction policy than Johnson's. The ex-Governor and then newly-elected Senator, Richard Yates, received several letters from Republicans in the South declaring that no "loyal" men existed in the South, and that these "unrepentant" rebels intended to regain political control of the South through the ballot box.<sup>55</sup> One constituent letter to Congressman Elihu Washburne expressed the fear that "the President's 'reconstruction' policy, if carried out, will leave the freedmen in a worse condition than slavery. I hope, and believe that the Republican element in Congress is strong enough to keep out the rebels."<sup>56</sup> In several letters to Richard Yates, J. A. Butler wrote from Arkansas that Negroes would be slaughtered, and that the "traitors" were using Negro suffrage to play upon prejudice against blacks, which he admitted existed.

53. Illinois State Journal, July 7, 1865, p. 2.

54. Chicago Times, Aug. 29, 1865, p. 2.

55. John Lockwood to Richard Yates, June 7, 1865, Charles Fox to R. Yates, July 21, 1865, J. P. Robb to R. Yates, Nov. 22, 1865, William P. Carroll to R. Yates, Dec. 1, 1865, Yates MSS, L.C.

56. C. G. Cotting to Elihu Washburne, Dec. 24, 1865, Washburne MSS, I.S.H.L.

The only hope for the Negro, he wrote, was suffrage and the protection of the Union army of occupation. Butler furthermore maintained that "rebel" Congressmen should not be allowed seats in Congress.<sup>57</sup>

Despite the link between reconstruction and Negro suffrage in the South, Republicans in Illinois for the most part avoided the suffrage issue. One letter to Senator Trumbull from a constituent suggested delaying Republican support for black suffrage until some future day, and then advised a gradual process with limited goals.<sup>58</sup> Senator Yates received one letter from a friend suggesting, in deference to Northern prejudice, a "limited negro suffrage" in the South, until "the people become more enlightened."<sup>59</sup> Thus while Republicans in Illinois desired to prevent losing the victory the Northern armies had won in the South through a lenient reconstruction policy, they also remained extremely mindful of racial prejudice in their own state.

In 1865 Illinois Republicans won a complete victory in the local elections. The Democratic press attributed its defeat to a poor Democratic turn-out at the polls.<sup>60</sup> But the key to the Republican victory lay in the voters' general acceptance of the Republican appeal as the "party that won the war." The victory did not reflect an endorsement of Negro rights, either in the South or in Illinois, because the Republicans did not push that issue in the campaign. But the war spirit still was strong, and there was a desire to see its goals carried out by the "party of Lincoln." D. L. Phillips, in a letter to Richard Yates, urged the Republican party to stay together

57. J. A. Butler to Richard Yates, Nov. 17, 18, and 30, 1865, Yates MSS, I. S. H. L.

58. J. L. Cawf to Lyman Trumbull, Dec. 12, 1865, Trumbull MSS, L.C.

59. Charles Fox to Richard Yates, July 19, 1865, Yates MSS, I. S. H. L.

60. Chicago Times, Nov. 8, 1865, p. 2. See also Peoria National Democrat, Nov. 8, 1865, p. 4, and Nov. 9, 1865, p. 1.



despite differences with President Johnson over Reconstruction, because so many Union men had been killed in a "horrid ghastly war, all in the cause of freedom and humanity."<sup>61</sup> The Republicans were still riding the wave of the Union victory and the abolition of slavery. Perhaps a more tacit reason for the Republican victory was a voter rejection of the Democratic inflammatory appeals to racial prejudice. Democratic charges that Republican policies would lead to social equality with the Negro were probably too absurd for whites at that time to take seriously.

By the end of 1865, certain facts illustrated that on a small scale, at least, blacks had received some degree of social acceptance among whites. For example, blacks appeared along with whites at fairs and public meetings in the state.<sup>62</sup> The Chicago Ladies Loyal League accepted black women, and a few colleges admitted Negro students.<sup>63</sup> Several of the letters quoted above revealed a true concern for the rights of Negroes.<sup>64</sup>

By the end of 1865 a great change in popular opinion appears to have taken place. The repeal of the discriminatory "Black Laws" and the ratification of the Thirteenth Amendment were clearly legislative gains for the Negro. But these gains were small, however, and racial prejudice remained strong among the whites of Illinois. Both political parties recognized this racism and used it in their campaigns in 1865. This was to become a familiar tactic in future campaigns. War feelings still ran high and the desire to see its goals carried out overshadowed all other issues that year. This concern for the war was to be a factor also

61. D. L. Phillips to Richard Yates, Dec. 26, 1865, Yates MSS, I.S.H.L.

62. Voegeli, Free But Not Equal, p. 166.

63. Ibid., and Cole, The Era of the Civil War, p. 336.

64. John Mentelius to Elihu Washburne, Dec. 29, 1864, Washburne MSS, L.C. Horace White to W. P. Fessenden, Oct. 9, 1865, White MSS, I.S.H.L. D. L. Phillips to Richard Yates, Dec. 26, 1865, Yates MSS, I.S.H.L.



in the approaching debates over Reconstruction, which broke into the open in 1866.

### III. The Debate Over Reconstruction

In 1866 Republicans in Illinois experienced a growing frustration with the Reconstruction policy pursued by Andrew Johnson as Union men in the South reported a continuing "rebellion" and that the freedmen there were in danger of slipping back into slavery. In response to this Senator Lyman Trumbull presented two bills to Congress designed to protect the freedman from de facto slavery. President Johnson's vetoes of these bills brought the simmering discontent of his party to a boil of open opposition. In the debates over Reconstruction that followed, the Democrats supported the President's vetoes and appealed to racial prejudice. Republicans, ever mindful of this prejudice, avoided advocating Negro suffrage outright, and instead espoused a carefully limited Civil Rights Bill and a compromised Fourteenth Amendment. Their use of the "Bloody Shirt" as a campaign tactic brought them victory in the local, state, and Congressional elections at the end of the year.

From the time Andrew Johnson became President in April, 1865, until Congress met the following December, he had a free hand in carrying out his own reconstruction policy. After several months, however, it became clear that his policy was not stringent enough to suit most Republicans. He obviously had no wish to punish or to crush the South, and his lenient system of restoring citizenship to the "rebels" resulted in putting many prominent ex-Confederates back into positions of leadership--an odious situation for Republicans. Johnson's record as a "war Democrat" made his actions even more suspect to them.

At first Illinois Republicans showed mixed emotions over the nominal head of their party. Early in 1866 Senator Yates received a letter from a

Republican in Illinois expressing the hope that President Johnson would not be too lenient, and urging Yates and the Congress not to break with the President, but to "try to keep him straight."<sup>65</sup> But criticism of Johnson and of Reconstruction mounted. Letters written to Illinois Senators Lyman Trumbull and Richard Yates in early 1866 reveal a concern for carrying out a more stringent plan of reconstruction in the South, and for preventing the resurgence of slavery. One constituent declared "Our people as well as those of the west are Radical on reconstruction."<sup>66</sup> Another constituent said that "sentiment of the masses is in favor of pretty stringent measures towards the rebels," and that he favored "ample protection to the freedmen."<sup>67</sup> Richard Yates received letters expressing concern for the effectiveness of the Freedmen's Bureau, and supporting universal suffrage as a means of keeping the freedman from de facto slavery.<sup>68</sup> As early as August 1865 Union men in the South had charged that the South still opposed the Union, and that it intended "under the guise of Vagrant laws to restore all of slavery but its name."<sup>69</sup> The Republican press, reporting on the Southern states, called their Black Codes "hostile" legislation, designed solely to be used "against the freedmen."<sup>70</sup>

Senator Trumbull concluded, therefore, that more legislation was necessary to insure the end of slavery and in January he presented two bills in Congress to protect the freedmen of the South. The first, the

65. George C. Eisenmayer to Richard Yates, Jan. 28, 1866, Yates MSS, I.S.H.L.

66. James Miller to Lyman Trumbull, Jan. 18, 1866, Trumbull MSS, L.C.

67. I. G. Wilson to Lyman Trumbull, Jan. 21, 1866, Trumbull MSS, L.C.

68. J. H. Maybom to Richard Yates, Jan. 3, 1866, Milton Bartley to Richard Yates, Jan. 25, 1866, Yates MSS, I.S.H.L.

69. C. E. Lippincott to Lyman Trumbull, Aug. 29, 1865, R. King Cutler to Lyman Trumbull, Aug. 29, 1865, A. P. Field to Lyman Trumbull, May 19, 1866, Trumbull MSS, L.C.

70. Illinois State Journal, Feb. 1, 1866, p. 2.



Freedmen's Bureau Bill, provided the freedmen their rights guaranteed under the Thirteenth Amendment. It extended the life of the Freedmen's Bureau, established during the war to protect freedmen's civil rights, and it specifically "voided the 'Black Codes' and gave the bureau powers to provide military and judicial protection to freedmen in cases when their civil rights were violated."<sup>71</sup> Trumbull intended to protect the freedmen's rights as free men, and he argued before Congress that the bill was "designed to aid these helpless, ignorant, and unprotected people until they can take care of themselves."<sup>72</sup>

Closely associated with the Freedmen's Bureau Bill, the Civil Rights Bill that Senator Trumbull also submitted to Congress gave the freedman citizenship and "confirmed the right of all citizens of every race and color to own and sell personal property and to the equal protection of laws."<sup>73</sup> The bill, aimed primarily at protecting Negro rights in the South, also provided that the Federal courts had jurisdiction over the civil rights cases of freedmen--because the letters from the South to Trumbull had indicated that Southern whites refused to give blacks justice.

Senator Trumbull did not advocate black rights per se or call for Negro suffrage. Denying those intentions and carefully defining his concept of civil rights before Congress, Trumbull advocated the right of freedmen

to make and enforce contracts, to sue and be sued,  
and to give evidence, to inherit, purchase, sell,  
lease, hold, and convey real and personal property,  
and to full and equal benefit to all laws and  
proceedings for the security of person and property. 74

71. Mark M. Krug, Lyman Trumbull, Conservative Radical (New York: A. S. Barne & Co., 1965), p. 237.

72. Congressional Globe, 39th Congress, 1st Session (Jan. 19, 1866), p. 319.

73. Krug, Lyman Trumbull, p. 240.

74. Congressional Globe, 39th Congress, 1st Session (Jan. 29, 1866), p. 476.

He carefully denied that the bill would apply to any other rights:

The bill [Civil Rights Bill] is applicable exclusively to civil rights. It does not propose to regulate the political rights of individuals; it has nothing to do with the rights of suffrage, or any other political right; but is simply intended to carry out a constitutional provision, and guarantee to every person of every color the same civil rights. That is all there is to it. 75

Republicans in Illinois generally accepted and praised Senator Trumbull's two bills. Several important Republican leaders in the state, such as Governor Oglesby and Lieutenant Governor "Deacon" Bross, announced their support for the bills, and rallies throughout the state supported Trumbull.<sup>76</sup> Republican newspapers backed his bills as "the best protection to the freedman possible."<sup>77</sup> Trumbull also received letters of praise and support from constituents.<sup>78</sup> One of these men wrote him attacking the "rebels," in particular the slaveholding class, stating that they would subject blacks to "slavery in fact" if not in name, once they regained control.<sup>79</sup> Senator Yates also received letters from constituents supporting Trumbull's Freedmen's Bureau Bill.<sup>80</sup>

Democrats, however, generally opposed Trumbull's bills. Congressman Samuel S. Marshall, a Democrat from Illinois' 11th District, gave an inflammatory speech full of sarcasm and racial prejudice that expanded the bill's interpretation of "civil rights" to include jury duty and

75. Congressional Globe, 39th Congress, 1st Session (Feb. 2, 1866), p. 599. See also Chicago Times, Feb. 6, 1866, p. 2.

76. Krug, Lyman Trumbull, p. 242.

77. Illinois State Journal, Feb. 6, 1866, p. 1.

78. John R. Woods to Lyman Trumbull, Apr. 12, 1866, Trumbull MSS, L. C.

79. A. Kildull to Lyman Trumbull, May 5, 1866, Trumbull MSS, L.C.

80. L. Rank to Richard Yates, Mar. 26, 1866, Yates MSS, I.S.H.L.



intermarriage:

I suppose the right to sit upon juries is a civil right. Now, if on account of any local law or prejudice they [Negroes] are denied any civil rights accorded to white men, these military tribunals and these agents of the Government are to be foisted upon the country for the purpose of taking charge of and protecting these people. I suppose the right to marry a white woman is a civil right which belongs to white men of Illinois; it is denied to the black men there. And if any judge undertakes to punish him for attempting to exercise that civil right, your military judges are to interfere. 81

The Democratic press opposed Trumbull's bills on constitutional as well as racial grounds. The Chicago Times considered the bills unconstitutional because Congress had no authority to pass bills on rights "reserved to the states."<sup>82</sup> Another Democratic paper denounced the Civil Rights Bill not only on constitutional grounds but on the Negro suffrage issue, which it sought to link to the bill:

Senator Trumbull has engineered through the Senate a bill, which if it becomes a law...strikes at the doctrine of the rights of States to define the qualification of their own voters, and fastens upon all the States...negro suffrage. 83

The Republican quandary over Johnson ended abruptly on February 19, 1866, with his veto of the Freedmen's Bureau Bill, and his veto on March 27th of the Civil Rights Bill, acts that "widened the breach and unified the Republican opposition."<sup>84</sup> The editor of the Republican Illinois State Journal wrote "we are sorry to say that President Johnson seems determined

81. Congressional Globe, 39th Congress, 1st Session, (Feb. 3, 1866) p. 629.

82. Chicago Times, Feb. 6, 1866, p. 2.

83. Peoria National Democrat, Feb. 7, 1866, p. 1.

84. Cole, The Era of the Civil War, p. 395.



to betray his party, and henceforth make his political bed with those who are not true and reliable friends of the Government."<sup>85</sup> Illinois Republican Congressman Shelby Cullom voiced Illinois Congressional reaction in a speech to Congress declaring that Andrew Johnson's reconstruction policies remained an experiment, and the southern state governments only temporary, while Congress retained the power to reconstruct the rebellious states. Concerning the newly-elected Southern Congressional representatives, Cullom declared: "If the people of the rebellious States are still disloyal, there is no provision of the Constitution entitling them to representation in the Congress of the United States."<sup>86</sup>

The vetoes provoked a flood of letters from constituents to Senators Richard Yates and Lyman Trumbull and to Governor Oglesby, denouncing the President and urging Congress to take action against the rebellious South.<sup>87</sup> One man wrote Senator Trumbull that the "rebel traitors" were determined to take over the South, and he called Andrew Johnson "the most fooled man in the world."<sup>88</sup> Yates' secretary, John Strong, received similar letters urging Congress to oppose Andrew Johnson.<sup>89</sup> Johnson's vetoes so incensed Governor Oglesby that he started an active campaign to persuade other Republican governors in the west to unite with him in opposition to Johnson and his reconstruction policy.<sup>90</sup>

85. Illinois State Journal, Feb. 24, 1866, p. 2.

86. Congressional Globe, 39th Congress, 1st Session, (Feb. 19, 1866), p. 9.

87. A. B. Moore to Richard Yates, Feb. 28, 1866, B. D. Walsh to Yates, Feb. 22, 1866, J. A. W. Buck to Yates, Feb. 25, 1866, Paul Emerson to Yates, Feb. 27, 1866. U. S. Thomas to Yates, Mar. 11, 1866, Levi North to Yates, Mar. 12, 1866, Yates MSS, I.S.H.L. T. Richmond to Lyman Trumbull, May 12, 1866, F. R. Payne to Trumbull, Apr. 23, 1866, Trumbull MSS, L.C. John Bryant to Richard Oglesby, Feb. 27, 1866, Richard Oglesby Papers (Manuscript Division, Illinois State Historical Library).

88. James Speed to Lyman Trumbull, Aug. 6, 1866, Trumbull MSS, I.S.H.L.

89. I. M. Snyder to John Strong, Feb. 27, 1866, J. Y. Cory to Strong, June 15, 1866, H. W. Hunt to Strong, Dec. 14, 1866, John D. Strong Papers (Manuscript Division, Illinois State Historical Library).

90. William P. Stone to Richard Oglesby, Aug. 19, 1866, Richard Oglesby to John Wentworth, May 2, 1866, Oglesby MSS, I.S.H.L.

On the other hand, Democrats generally approved President Johnson's Reconstruction policy. As early as May, 1865, the Chicago Times had endorsed Johnson's Presidential Reconstruction as a "complete and entire repudiation of the radical doctrine of state suicide," and in March 1866, it praised his vetoes.<sup>91</sup> John Strong, Yates' secretary, received word from a friend in Springfield that Democrats rejoiced over the Presidential veto and called a meeting to endorse the President.<sup>92</sup> The Times and other Democratic papers in Illinois played up President Johnson's racial comments, such as in his opposition to Negro suffrage, as supportive of their own policies.<sup>93</sup> Dr. Snyder of Illinois received a letter from a Democrat in Iowa that supported Johnson and approved his rejection of the Radicals.<sup>94</sup>

Thus began the great debate over Reconstruction in Illinois politics. The sides were drawn, the Republicans on one side, and the Democrats and President Johnson on the other. Illinois Republicans supported Congressional reconstruction policies and opposed Johnson's vetoes, but they carefully treated Reconstruction as a Southern issue. They presented the Civil Rights Act as an effort to end de facto slavery in the South and to create citizens sympathetic to the Union.<sup>95</sup> But Illinois Republicans hedged on questions about what the Civil Rights Bill would mean for Negroes in their own state. For example, the Republican press denied as "shameful misrepresentations and falsehoods," the following Democratic charge that social equality would result from the Civil Rights Act:

91. Chicago Times, May 12, 1865, p. 2, Mar. 28, 1866, p. 2.

92. I. M. Snyder to John Strong, Feb. 22, 1866, Strong MSS, I.S.H.L.

93. Peoria National Democrat, Sept. 4, 1865, p. 4, Feb. 2, 1866, p. 4, and Chicago Times, Feb. 9, 1866, p. 2.

94. S. Christy to John Snyder, Mar. 3, 1866, Snyder MSS, I.S.H.L.

95. Illinois State Journal, Apr. 5, 1866, p. 1.



...under the Civil Rights Act a negro was placed upon a political and social equality with the whites; that a negro had a perfect right to attend the same schools, occupy the best seats at concerts and churches, the right to vote and hold office, and indeed demand equal privileges in all the various walks of life. 96

Such social equality was still unheard of in Illinois and Negro rights were still very limited in the state. Republicans, however, were caught in a dilemma. By supporting the bills granting Negroes civil rights in the South, they became vulnerable to the accusations of their opponents and the fears of their constituents that these bills would also be applied to the North. In response they stressed the limitations of such bills. For example, the Illinois State Journal stated in its April 5, 1866, issue that the Civil Rights Bill would only require that:

all citizens, without regard to race, color or previous condition of servitude, shall be permitted to hold and sell property, to bring suits in order to protect themselves from wrong, injustice, and oppression, to give their testimony in the courts, and to be subject to the same punishment for the commission of crime. 97

The Republican's primary justification for Congressional Reconstruction was still the "defiant South." Lyman Trumbull continued to receive letters from Union supporters in the South telling how the "Confederates" still "despised" and mistreated Union men. One man declared that Johnson's policy had crushed all hopes of the Union men in Louisiana.<sup>98</sup> Congressman Elihu Washburne similarly received letters urging Congress not to trust the "unrepentant Rebels."<sup>99</sup> Governor Oglesby received word from the South that

96. Illinois State Journal, May 1, 1866, p. 1.

97. Ibid., Apr. 5, 1866, p. 1.

98. A.P. Field to Lyman Trumbull, May 19, 1866, Trumbull MSS, L.C.

99. Pearson to Elihu Washburne, Mar. 19, 1866, Washburne MSS, L.C.

without Union troops "loyal men" would not be able to live and work there.<sup>100</sup> According to Republicans, Congressional Reconstruction policies were meant to remedy this "treason". This "Bloody Shirt" tactic, an outgrowth of the war appeal used so successfully in the 1865 elections, was to be very effective in the elections of 1866 as well.

As the breach over Reconstruction widened between President Johnson and the Republicans, more of them began to see the necessity of Negro suffrage as a means of throwing more support to them in the South. This was perhaps stated to Senator Trumbull by a friend in Illinois: "The negro must have the ballot and the musket [i.e., Union troops] to maintain a republican government in the South."<sup>101</sup>

Senator Richard Yates had been an early advocate of black suffrage. In a speech to the Senate on February 19, 1866 on "Appointment of Representation," he had maintained that in the Thirteenth Amendment Congress had laid the groundwork for a bill that would give every race their civil and political rights, including the right of suffrage. Yates considered further amendments unnecessary to insure black rights, and believed that the Thirteenth Amendment gave the Republicans "carte blanche" to pursue a reconstruction policy in the South. Yates insisted that the Negro needed the ballot to prevent his re-enslavement:

What will protect them [Negroes]? The ballot.  
What alone will give us a peaceful and harmonious  
South? The ballot to all...there is no other  
salvation. 102

100. L. Wheaton to Richard Oglesby, Jan. 28, 1866, Oglesby MSS, I.S.H.L.  
101. Sam Slater to Lyman Trumbull, Mar. 7, 1866, Trumbull MSS, I.S.H.L.

102. Congressional Globe, 39th Congress, 1st Session (Feb. 19, 1866),  
Appendix, pp. 101-103.



But while Senator Yates may have seen the justice of universal suffrage, he clearly intended to use the black vote for the Republican party, as an 1867 letter to his private secretary revealed. In it he blamed the Republican defeat in elections in New York on lack of a "nigger" vote.<sup>103</sup>

Yates received several letters from constituents agreeing that blacks could use the ballot to protect themselves in the South, and insisting that the North had a responsibility to protect the freedmen as an outgrowth of the war effort to abolish slavery.<sup>104</sup> Some of these men coupled their support with a call for punishment of the "traitors" and "rebels" of the South.<sup>105</sup> A few regarded black rights as a just result of the concept of equality upon which the nation was founded.<sup>106</sup> One constituent pointed out the existence of prejudice against black suffrage, but another exhorted Yates that "now is the time to strike" to push Negro suffrage on the South--before she could prevent it.<sup>107</sup> Obviously people supported Yates' suffrage position for different reasons--a desire to punish the South, a responsibility to end slavery, or a carriage of justice--but the majority saw it as a Southern problem.

In 1866, however, the majority of people of Illinois still opposed Negro suffrage. In early January of that year one of Senator Trumbull's constituents indicated the existence of a great diversity of opinion over the "vexed question" of universal suffrage.<sup>108</sup> Jason Marsh wrote Trumbull, "We can't get away from the fact that to all intents and purposes, most of

103. Richard Yates to John Strong, Nov. 6, 1867, Strong MSS, I.S.H.L.

104. W. J. Hollister to Richard Yates, Mar. 22, 1866, James Miller to Yates, Mar. 23, 1866, V. A. Bogue to Yates, Mar. 23, 1866, B. B. Schofield to Yates, Mar. 24, 1866, R. P. Abel to Yates, Mar. 26, 1866, Yates MSS, I.S.H.L.

105. R. P. Abel to Richard Yates, Mar. 26, 1866, D. B. Bush to Yates, Mar. 26, 1866, Yates MSS, I.S.H.L.

106. L. S. Pennington to Richard Yates, June 9, 1866, Yates MSS, I.S.H.L.

107. A. J. Joselyn to Lyman Trumbull, Mar. 12, 1866, Levi North to Richard Yates, Mar. 12, 1866, Yates MSS, I.S.H.L.

108. William Ross to Lyman Trumbull, Jan. 18, 1866, Trumbull MSS, L.C.

our northern people do deny the right of suffrage to the negro race.... I therefore believe...the inevitable result of supporting negro suffrage would be to throw the government into the hands of the opposition." Because of this, Marsh declared that, despite his own acceptance of Negro suffrage, he was amenable to some alternative plan less controversial.<sup>109</sup> Charles H. Ray, editor for the Chicago Tribune, and one of the early advocates of Negro rights, advised Senator Trumbull that it was not wise to push Negro suffrage even on the South because of racist reactions among his constituents in Illinois. He warned that "the masses give way to prejudice uncontrolled; and to dislike, I will not say hate, a negro is just as natural as to distinguish black from white."<sup>110</sup> Still another constituent stated flatly that Illinois "cannot be carried for Negro suffrage... Saxon pride prejudices present unsurmountable barriers."<sup>111</sup> Republican newspapers also hesitated on the suffrage issue. The Republican Illinois State Journal admitted the lack of consensus on the issue:

In reference to the matter of negro suffrage, we have no settled party policy. Everyone has and publishes his own particular theory.... We think the vast majority, are for leaving the entire question of the suffrage to be settled and regulated by the people of the several states respectively. 112

Obviously advocacy of Negro suffrage was not politically safe in Illinois, but because their limited interpretation of the Civil Rights Bill did not include Negro suffrage as a civil right, some Illinois

109. Jason Marsh to Lyman Trumbull, Jan. 18, 1866, Trumbull MSS, L.C.

110. C. H. Ray to Lyman Trumbull, Feb. 7, 1866, Trumbull MSS, L.C.

See also Voegeli, Free But Not Equal, p. 7.

111. G. J. Bergen to Lyman Trumbull, Apr. 23, 1866, Trumbull MSS, L.C.

112. Illinois State Journal, Feb. 12, 1866, p. 2.



Republicans maintained that a Constitutional amendment was necessary to guarantee black civil rights, including the right to vote, in the South. A former Republican Senator to the Illinois General Assembly wrote Lyman Trumbull that "the [Negro] must have the ballot guaranteed by Constitutional amendment" and that he was convinced that the freedmen would "not abuse the confidence" that right would give them.<sup>113</sup> The early calls for such a Constitutional amendment, however, emphasized that the Negro would have to earn the right to suffrage:

...if the colored people grow in their condition of general and equal freedom as rapidly as we believe they will, it will not be long before the obstinate prejudices which now exist as to their enfranchisement will be softened and removed. 114

The Republican Illinois State Journal linked the proposed amendment with the war issue, slavery:

let that amendment be submitted, and let its ratification be the last knell of slavery, and the prelude to a universal recognition of the inseparable relation of freedom and political rights in the American Republic. 115

Yet despite the desire to strengthen their position in the South and in Congress, and to guarantee black civil rights in the South, the Republicans generally shunned taking the final step of incorporating Negro suffrage into a Constitutional amendment. Amidst the various calls for black enfranchisement, they remained extremely mindful of popular opposition to the idea, even for the South. Senator Lyman Trumbull received letters

113. Senator North to Lyman Trumbull, Apr. 23, 1866, Trumbull MSS, L.C.

114. Illinois State Journal, Feb. 15, 1866, p. 2.

115. Ibid., Feb. 16, 1866, p. 2.

from home warning of the unpopularity of the Negro suffrage issue, and advising him to avoid it, if possible.<sup>116</sup> As a result the Republicans took the route of least resistance and, instead of Negro suffrage, they inserted into the Fourteenth Amendment a clause to reduce Congressional apportionment in those areas (i.e., the South) where citizens were denied the vote. As has been seen in Horace White's 1865 letter, many Republicans felt that representation for the South was unfairly inflated by non-voting blacks.<sup>117</sup> By reducing Southern representation in Congress, Republicans would be able to increase their relative strength there without committing themselves to the touchy issue of Negro suffrage. Joseph James, in his book, The Framing of the Fourteenth Amendment, writes that this changed bases of representation was meant to remove, without resorting to Negro suffrage, the danger of Democratic dominance in the South.<sup>118</sup> Thus Republicans, out of political expediency, made a faltering advance toward Negro suffrage by punishing black disenfranchisement. In supporting the proposed amendment, the Chicago Tribune and the Illinois State Journal stressed the importance of the representation provision, and took the position that it would "equalize" representation in Congress:

Those who believe that one Northern voter should equal one Southern voter will cast their ballots for the Amendments...but those who contend that each Southerner shall count two, by stealing the vote of the negro, and adding it to his own, will oppose the amendment. 119

116. Jason Marsh to Lyman Trumbull, Jan. 8, 1866, William Ross to Trumbull, July 7, 1866, Trumbull MSS, L.C.

117. Illinois State Journal, Jan. 18, 1866, p. 1.

118. Joseph B. James, The Framing of the Fourteenth Amendment (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1965), p. 33. See also Eric L. McKittrick, Andrew Johnson and Reconstruction (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), pp. 326-364.

119. Chicago Tribune, June 1, 1866, p. 1. Illinois State Journal, Jan. 18, 1866, p. 1. See also James, The Framing of the Fourteenth Amendment, p. 159.



The Republican press also accused the Democrats of opposition to the proposed amendment on other war-related issues, such as the Confederate war debt. The Illinois State Journal charged "Copperheads" with opposing the amendment because it would repudiate the rebel debt, and thus render their investments in rebel bonds worthless.<sup>120</sup>

In 1866 the conflict between Illinois Republicans and Democrats over the Constitutional amendment, Reconstruction policies, and Negro rights, came to a head in local, state and Congressional elections. The Democrats, who referred to themselves as the "Conservatives" because the word "Democrat" was associated with "Copperhead" in the public mind, continued their emphasis on racial prejudice as a political tactic, and stressed the Negro suffrage issue. In opposing the proposed amendment, they claimed it would lead to Negro suffrage.<sup>121</sup> Democrats also opposed it because they realized that it would decrease Democratic voters in the South. The Democratic Chicago Times tried to show the inconsistency of the Republican position in championing suffrage only for the Southern Negro, and not for other racial groups:

There is as much manhood in a Chinaman as there is in a freed negro, and a good deal more in an Indian than in either. And yet, who ever heard Cheevers, Garrisons, Greeleys, Sumners, and Phillipses say a word in favor of the suffrage for anything except the southern negro? 122

Besides the suffrage issue, the Democratic press labeled the Republicans "the party of high tariffs."<sup>123</sup> One Democratic paper even used political

120. Illinois State Journal, June 27, 1866, p. 1.

121. Peoria National Democrat, Nov. 6, 1866, p. 1.

122. Chicago Times, Mar. 5, 1866, p. 2.

123. Peoria National Democrat, Nov. 6, 1866, p. 1.

cartoons to emphasize its charge that a vote for the Republicans would "make the Rich Man richer" and "make the Poor Man poorer," and to denounce the "precedence" of Negro voting.<sup>124</sup> Appealing to the ex-soldier's vote, the Democrats also objected to the passage of the Freedmen's Bureau Act and other Republican Congressional appropriations aimed primarily at blacks, and stressed the failure of the Soldiers' Bounty Bill and other legislation for the benefit of ex-soldiers.<sup>125</sup>

Republicans countered the Democratic charges in the 1866 elections with an appeal to the "Bloody Shirt" and waged a campaign calling upon the memory of the Civil War and appealing for the preservation of the Union victory and the punishment of traitors. Republican newspapers played up the violence in the South to support their charge that the South was still "in rebellion." The Chicago Tribune stressed these charges just before the election in November:

Every Republican voter who fails to vote today, strengthens the hands of Andrew Johnson and encourages the rebels of the South to persist in their treason and their intolerance toward Union men.... All those who approve of the wholesale massacre of Union men at New Orleans, on the 20th of July, by the friends of Andrew Johnson and with his approval, will vote the Copperhead ticket today. Those who are in favor of protecting the Union men of the South against the murderous violence of their rebel persecutors, will vote to sustain Congress. 126

The Republicans linked President Johnson and his reconstruction policies to the Democratic party, and attempted to expose their inconsistencies. For example, one Republican newspaper linked Andrew Johnson to the

124. Peoria National Democrat, Nov. 6, 1866, p. 1.

125. Ibid., July 22, 1866, p. 1, Aug. 22, 1866, p. 1.

126. Chicago Tribune, Nov. 6, 1866, p. 2.



Democrats, and then quoted Johnson to suggest he approved black suffrage.<sup>127</sup> The Republican newspapers also denied Democratic charges that Republicans favored more bounty for black ex-soldiers than for white.<sup>128</sup>

The Republican "Bloody Shirt" campaign proved more effective than the Democratic appeals to racial prejudice. In the 1866 Illinois elections the Republicans, in a major victory, captured eleven of fourteen Congressional seats and gained a two-thirds majority in both houses of the Illinois General Assembly.<sup>129</sup> At first some of the Democratic newspapers blamed the defeat on their own "listlessness" and on a poor turn-out.<sup>130</sup>

A remarkable turnabout occurred, however, on November 12, 1866, when the leading Democratic newspaper in the state, the Chicago Times, ran an article entitled "Shall the Democratic Party Die or Live?", that called for an acceptance of Negro suffrage. The article supported "Qualified negro suffrage...and by this we mean Impartial Suffrage, or suffrage dependent upon the intelligence of the man, irrespective of color."<sup>131</sup> The article argued the inevitability of Negro suffrage, and maintained that, since the Democratic party seemed powerless to stop it, it should cease to oppose it officially so that "the Negro Question will have been disposed of, and the occupation of the Northern Radical Party will be gone forever."<sup>132</sup> Herein lay the real reason for the Times' change of heart concerning the Negro. Racial prejudice was not dead; rather, a change in political tactics was necessary which made acceptance of "qualified" Negro suffrage expedient.

127. Illinois State Journal, Aug. 1, 1866, p. 1. Bureau County Republican, Oct. 11, 1866, p. 2.

128. Illinois State Journal, Oct. 4, 1866, p. 1.

129. Cole, The Era of the Civil War, p. 403. See also Church, History of the Republican Party, p. 100. Evarts B. Greene, Some Aspects of Politics in the Middle West, 1860-72 (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1912), p. 71.

130. Peoria National Democrat, Nov. 8, 1866, p. 1.

131. Chicago Times, Nov. 12, 1866, p. 4.

132. Ibid., (emphasis mine).

The Democrats had lost the last two elections, 1865 and 1866, and in both campaigns they had used the same tactics. In its 1866 article, the Times simply conceded the failure of these tactics and the need for a change. The Times recognized that no matter what the Democrats or the people of Illinois thought of blacks, the appeal to racial prejudice could not compete with the Republican "Bloody Shirt" tactics. The Times also observed that the Constitutional amendment would be ratified inevitably despite Democratic opposition.

Despite some support from a few Democratic newspapers in the northern part of the state, the Democratic press overwhelmingly opposed the Times' new position. The Peoria National Democrat, for example, maintained that "the Times has cut itself loose from the Democratic party."<sup>133</sup> The Peoria paper explained that Democrats did not oppose Negro suffrage because of "personal spite against the negro," but rather because it "would be deleterious to the country, and subversive of the best interest of the people."<sup>134</sup> Another article in the Peoria National Democrat opposed even "qualified" Negro suffrage as a matter of principle, even if it meant defeat:

It seems to us, that it is sheer nonsense, as a measure of policy, to attempt to out strip the radical revolutionists in their extreme doctrines. If we are not prepared to give votes to negroes whether they be intelligent or ignorant, irrespective of any qualification, we may as well abandon the idea that we can get before them in this scramble for the popular favor. They will go far, very far, beyond what the Democratic party can consent to.... Negro suffrage may prevail. It may please Providence thus to afflict us by allowing fanaticism to triumph. But let Democrats fight it to the bitter end. 135

133. Peoria National Democrat, Nov. 14, 1866, p. 1.

134. Ibid.

135. Ibid., Nov. 18, 1866, p. 1.



In other articles, the Peoria National Democrat charged, in typical Democratic tradition, that, no matter how restricted by qualifications, Negro suffrage would lead "inevitably" to social equality between the races and "reduce our system of government to a mongrel concern like Central America."<sup>136</sup> The majority of outcries against the Times came, understandably, from the heavily Democratic southern part of Illinois. For example, one Chicago Times subscriber from Eldorado, Illinois cancelled his subscription and claimed that he and most of his friends opposed the Times' new position on Negro suffrage, declaring that "there is not fifty men that indorses negro suffrage on any pretense whatever, and also there is not 100 men that will take your paper...if you would send it to them for nothing."<sup>137</sup> For the rest of 1866, however, the Times continued to endorse "qualified" Negro suffrage. The Times tried to explain and to defend its position as a matter of political necessity. It never endorsed Negro social equality and never ceased its racial slurs and criticism of Congressional "obsession" with "niggers", declaring that "[we] purpose getting rid of the negro question."<sup>138</sup> Yet no matter what the Times said, Democratic opposition to its position on Negro suffrage continued. By the end of 1866 the Illinois Democratic press split over the issue, with the majority of Democratic newspapers loyal to the party policy of opposition to Negro suffrage. One Democrat probably summed up the feeling of his party when he declared "The country has gone to hell," and predicted that the Republican "scoundrels" would try to enfranchise the "niggers."<sup>139</sup>

136. Peoria National Democrat, Nov. 17, 1866, p. 2. See also Nov. 16, 1866, p. 2, and Dec. 16, 1866, p. 1.

137. Chicago Times, Dec. 10, 1866, p. 3.

138. Ibid., Nov. 27, 1866, p. 2. See also p. 3.

139. William H. Snyder to John Snyder, Jan. 3, 1867, Snyder MSS, I.S.H.L.

Illinois Republicans interpreted the result of the 1866 elections as a clear mandate for Republican reconstruction policy. Illinois Congressman Elihu Washburne received several letters from constituents urging Congress to continue its efforts to reconstruct the South. One constituent from Morrison, Illinois, assured Washburne that the people back home supported Congress and opposed President Johnson and the "Rebels:"

I assure you that the people are more Radical than even Congress.... I am quite sure that the Republicans of this country desire that congress shall kick Johnson's Rebel States governments out of existence forthwith, and then put them on an anti slavery and anti rebel foundation and nothing short will satisfy the people. 140

Another constituent wrote Congressman Washburne that it was better to have "loyal black" voters than "disloyal white" voters.<sup>141</sup> Still another declared that "universal suffrage" was "good" for the South.<sup>142</sup> Republicans obviously considered Negro suffrage a club to keep the South in submission, and, as a result of their victory at the polls, felt emboldened to support it more openly.

The increased debates over Reconstruction in 1866 resulted in an open split between President Johnson and the Republican party. Republican desire to protect the freedman and to punish the South, and at the same time to shore up their political power there, resulted in legislation which advanced Negro rights. This legislation stopped just short of Negro suffrage, however, which, because of racial prejudice, became the touchstone of debate over Reconstruction in Illinois. By stressing the need to

140. A. C. Jackson to Elihu Washburne, Dec. 11, 1866, Washburne MSS, I.S.H.L.

141. Matt Talcott to Elihu Washburne, Dec. 18, 1866, Washburne MSS, I.S.H.L.

142. J. T. Atkinson to Elihu Washburne, Nov. 11, 1866, Washburne, MSS, I.S.H.L.



control a rebellious South, Republicans defeated the Democrats in state elections of 1866, and emerged with what they considered a clear mandate to pursue their Reconstruction policies, including Negro suffrage.

#### IV. Backlash

Confident after their success at the polls in 1866, Illinois Republicans in 1867 ratified the Fourteenth Amendment and came out openly for impartial Negro suffrage for their own state as well as for the South. In doing this their tone changed from one of careful hedging to one of espousal of Negro suffrage as an idea whose hour had come. They continued to oppose President Johnson, and some even called for his impeachment, but the majority of Republicans considered this a radical and unnecessary move. Instead, they continued their "Bloody Shirt" appeals in anticipation of the Presidential election of 1868. Thus Republicans were shocked by their defeat in the local elections of 1867. The Democrats regarded their victory as a vindication of their appeal to racial prejudice and a popular repudiation of Republican reconstruction policies, particularly the Negro suffrage issue.

One of the first orders of business for the Illinois General Assembly in 1867 was the proposed Fourteenth Amendment. The popular debate over the amendment had run its course the year before, and Illinois Republicans generally supported the amendment as the first step to an alternative to Johnson's lenient reconstruction. Confident after their success in the 1866 elections, Illinois Republicans pressed for ratification of the amendment. Governor Richard Oglesby, urging prompt ratification, reminded the Assembly of the great war effort and appealed to the idealism of the rights of man and the "universal justice" found in the Constitution:

While in some sense it may be supposed the necessity for this amendment grew out of the late rebellion, and that it was framed with direct reference to the state of facts resulting from the war, it is candidly submitted that



there is not a principle asserted, a right declared, or a duty defined by it, that might not, with great propriety, have been engraved upon the Constitution, without any reference to the war. 143

On January 10th the Illinois Senate ratified the Amendment by a strict partisan vote, 17 to 8. On January 15th, after some Democratic filibustering, the Illinois House likewise voted ratification, 60 to 25. During the ratification debates Republicans in the Assembly used the same moralistic appeals to the Constitution that Governor Oglesby had employed. Republican state representative William P. Pierce, however, undoubtedly expressed the real motivation when he declared in the House that action was needed "to supplant those anti-republican governments [in the South] ;" the Fourteenth Amendment was designed to insure Republican rule in the South.<sup>144</sup>

The rejection of the Fourteenth Amendment by the ex-Confederate states made it apparent, however, that other, more drastic steps were necessary. Furthermore, northern Republicans increasingly realized the advantages the black vote would give them in controlling the South. In March 1867, therefore, Congress enacted the first of a series of Reconstruction Acts, requiring the "rebel" states--as a prerequisite for readmission into the Union--to ratify the Fourteenth Amendment and to rewrite their state constitutions to include Negro suffrage.

The hypocrisy of forcing the South to grant Negro suffrage was not

143. Reports Made to the General Assembly of Illinois at its 25th Session (Springfield: Baker, Bailbache & Co., 1867), p. 29. See also Chicago Times, Jan. 8, 1867, p. 3.

144. Journal of the Senate of the 25th General Assembly of the State of Illinois, p. 76, and Journal of the House of Representatives of the 25th General Assembly of the State of Illinois (Springfield: Baker, Bailbache & Co., 1867), pp. 154-155. See also Illinois State Journal, Jan. 10, 1867, p. 1, and Chicago Journal, Jan. 9, 1867, p. 1, and Church, History of the Republican Party, pp. 100-101.

lost on the people of Illinois, however, so long as that right was denied blacks in their own state. Republicans were compelled to answer this with calls for suffrage in Illinois as well as in the South. According to a leading Republican newspaper, the Illinois State Journal, they believed they had a mandate to do this:

If there was one thing more than another decided by the people of Illinois at the last election, it was in favor of impartial suffrage, not merely as a matter of state policy but of national justice. This issue was directly involved in the Constitutional Amendment, and the sixty thousand majority which was cast for the Republican party, expressed the popular sentiment that the existing unjust political discriminations against race and color should be abolished. 144

In another article on impartial suffrage the Illinois State Journal noted that "In Illinois, were it not for the provision in our Constitution, the Legislature would at once adopt it without legislation. With an amended Constitution it will be assumed beyond all doubt."<sup>145</sup> Another major Republican newspaper, The Chicago Tribune, favorably reported that several petitions had been made to the Illinois General Assembly in January 1867 to amend or rewrite the state constitution for the purpose of striking out "all discrimination against color and race in the matter of political privileges."<sup>146</sup> These petitions included the recommendation for impartial suffrage. Senator Richard Yates, an advocate of Negro suffrage as early as 1866, continued to call for it in 1867. The Illinois State Journal reported that in a speech to the Senate Yates had declared himself

144. Illinois State Journal, Jan. 12, 1867, p. 1.

145. Ibid., Feb. 8, 1867, p. 1.

146. Chicago Tribune, Jan. 17, 1867, p. 2. See also Illinois State Journal, Jan. 12, 1867, p. 1, and Journal of the Senate, p. 106.



"unalterably for universal suffrage--not merely in the South, but in Illinois, and throughout the North."<sup>147</sup> Other articles appeared in the Republican press endorsing Negro suffrage. The Chicago Journal declared that Illinois was ready for impartial suffrage:

This state is fully prepared, we believe, for impartial suffrage. Not only does the prevailing public sentiment of Illinois demand protection for the black man at the South, but it is ready to accord him the same legal or political privileges here as are demanded for him there. 148

The Illinois State Journal publicly informed the Register, a Democratic Springfield paper, that it was in favor of Negroes voting in Illinois, and that furthermore it had favored it long ago.<sup>149</sup> All this was a far cry from the careful denials and equivocations that had characterized Republican articles on Negro suffrage in 1866.<sup>150</sup> But their new tone was the result of a political dilemma. To have continued to deny support for Negro suffrage while supporting legislation for it would probably have weakened their credibility. In either case they felt they had been given the nod by their electorate.

In calling for suffrage, however, Illinois Republicans did not mean to advocate social equality or social integration of the races. The Chicago Journal emphasized that the "natural separation" between the races would continue:

Suffrage, instead of tending to further break down the natural "wall of partition," would protect it. The one only object in giving the Negro a ballot is to enable him to protect himself in the equal enjoyment of his inalienable rights. 151

147. Illinois State Journal, Mar. 30, 1867, p. 1. See also Congressional Globe, 40th Congress, 1st Session, p. 165.

148. Chicago Journal, Jan. 22, 1867, p. 2. See also Illinois State Journal, Feb. 15, 1867, p. 2.

149. Illinois State Journal, Sept. 16, 1867, p. 1.

150. See footnotes 75, 96, 97, and 112.

151. Chicago Journal, Jan. 21, 1867, p. 2.

Illinois remained a racially segregated society, despite the gains in Negro rights. Miscegenation, for example, was an inflammatory topic, used to arouse racist "gut" reactions. The Democrats had used it to denounce Republican policies often.<sup>152</sup> In 1867, in response to Democratic racist charges against Republican policies, the Republican press charged southern whites with "miscegenation." Even the Illinois State Journal, one of the first Republican newspapers to call for Negro civil rights, used this tactic:

Heretofore the practice of miscegenation has existed there [in the South] between white men and colored females. The white ladies of the South, however, now begin to assert their privileges by becoming infatuated with the male negrose. Our Southern friends who have heretofore been so disgusted with Northern society, had better begin the reform at home. 153

Education was certainly a matter for discrimination. In 1867 black schools remained separate and inferior. The system of segregating schools in Illinois is revealed in a letter to Senator Trumbull referring to the National Theological Institute as a school designed to educate "colored preachers and teachers, and thus prepare them to become the Educators of their race."<sup>154</sup> The Superintendant of Public Instruction reported to the Illinois General Assembly in 1867 that, although approximately 6,000 black children of school age lived in the state, few black schools existed. The Superintendant suggested that the reason for this derived from too few black children concentrated in the same geographic area to justify the expense

152. See footnotes 45, 46, and 81.

153. Illinois State Journal, Mar. 26, 1867, p. 2. See also May 22, 1867, p. 2, and June 4, 1867, p. 2.

154. E. H. Gray to Lyman Trumbull, May 6, 1867, Trumbull MSS, L.C.



of setting up a school for them. The census figures, however, showing the majority of the black population concentrated in the southern part of Illinois, in urban areas, seemed to belie this excuse.<sup>155</sup> The Superintendent admitted that prejudice existed against blacks in the state, and he also revealed that the school taxes black taxpayers paid were "generally never returned."<sup>156</sup> Thus while some calls occurred in Illinois for extending to the Negro the political rights "to protect himself," racial prejudice ruled his everyday life. Indeed, some of his already-acknowledged rights, such as the right to an education, became severely circumscribed.

Illinois Democrats did not change their minds or hearts about black political rights. Most Democratic newspapers in the state continued their racist attacks against Negro suffrage. Democrats continued to link the blacks with the Republican party and to emphasize that "amalgamation" would result in the long run if blacks got the vote:

If black men are allowed to vote, they must be eligible to hold office; if they are eligible to office, they are the equals in all that law can control, to the white race; if they are equal to the white race, intermarriage is not to be prevented, and amalgamation and miscegenation follow. 157

The Democrats reinforced their belief in the inferiority of blacks with quotations from such "authorities" as naturalist Louis Agassiz, who pointed out the "differences" between races and concluded "The negro

155. Cole, The Era of the Civil War, p. 336, and Smith, A History of Southern Illinois, p. 337.

156. Reports Made to the General Assembly of Illinois at its 25th Session, pp. 28-29.

157. Peoria National Democrat, Mar. 12, 1867, p. 1. See also Jan. 9, 1867, p. 1.

is no more the white man's brother than the owl is the sister of the eagle, or the ass is the brother of the horse."<sup>158</sup> In 1867 Democratic papers bitterly denounced the Republicans for their open support of Negro suffrage, and accused them of not supporting it before the 1866 elections because of political expediency.<sup>159</sup> Also Democrats, appealing to the ethnic white, charged that the Republicans did not support the foreign vote because the black vote interested them more.<sup>160</sup>

The Democratic press also continued its attack on one Democratic newspaper, the Chicago Times, for its support of impartial suffrage. The Times was blamed for all the ills of the Democratic party in Chicago. One Democratic paper maintained that the Times' "advocacy of negro suffrage...has contributed in no small degree to the demoralization of Democracy in Chicago."<sup>161</sup> This article called for a new Democratic newspaper in Chicago. The Republican Chicago Journal also reported efforts to establish a competing Democratic paper in that city to oppose Negro suffrage.<sup>162</sup> Democratic pressure against the Times finally forced it to stop its editorials on the subject, and no reference to it appeared in their papers during the summer months of 1867. By the end of that year the Times "repudiated the heresy" and came out once again against Negro suffrage.<sup>163</sup>

Despite their differences, the Chicago Times joined other Democratic papers in castigating Republican reconstruction policies. A typical

158. Peoria National Democrat, Aug. 30, 1867, p. 1.

159. Ibid., Jan. 6, 1867, p. 1, and Jan. 25, 1867, p. 1. See also Chicago Times, Apr. 20, 1867, p. 4, and Sept. 24, 1867, p. 4.

160. Ibid., Mar. 12, 1867, p. 1, and Sept. 24, 1867, p. 2.

161. Ibid., Apr. 25, 1867, p. 1.

162. Chicago Journal, Jan. 16, 1867, p. 2.

163. Cole, The Era of the Civil War, pp. 417-418. See also Chicago Times, Apr. 5, 1867, p. 4.



letter from a subscriber to the Times showed that "blood is thicker than water" when it came to differences over Negro suffrage:

I had made up my mind not to read a paper that advocates negro suffrage; but, seeing that you still pitch into the radical disunion camp, I cannot help but admire your paper. Send it along. 164

The Times accused the Republicans (with a good deal of accuracy) of using Negro suffrage only as a political maneuver to gain control of the South:

The radicals have spared no exertions to keep the Southern states out of the Union until the blacks, under the law, exercise the privilege of suffrage. They have not, however, displayed the same interest or energy in securing negro suffrage in the northern states.... The emancipation of the negro was accomplished as a political coup only, in which the freedom of the negroes was accidental.... Their emancipation was never effected out of consideration for their welfare, but only because it was considered to be essential to the success of the northern cause. 165

The Peoria National Democrat, along with the Times, insisted that Republicans aimed their reconstruction policies at supporting blacks over whites.<sup>166</sup> It also charged that Republican policy represented a choice between "negro equality" and "confiscation," a reference to Republican schemes to take land from Southern planters and give it to the Freedman. They opposed both, but sarcastically claimed that "confiscation" was the preferable alternative.<sup>167</sup> In response to Republican charges about the "rebellious" South, the Peoria National Democrat maintained that the

164. Chicago Times, Jan. 1, 1867, p. 8. See also Jan..9, 1867, p. 3.

165. Ibid., Mar. 30, 1867, p. 1.

166. Peoria National Democrat, Aug. 2, 1867, p. 2, and Chicago Times, Feb. 9, 1867, p. 4.

167. Peoria National Democrat, June 18, 1867, p. 1.

real problem in the South arose from the collapse of the labor system, brought on by the Negroes' "wandering" and "free-and-easy" nature.<sup>168</sup> Two Illinois Democratic Congressmen, Albert G. Burr and Samuel S. Marshall, spoke vehemently against Congressional reconstruction, called it unconstitutional, and maintained that it overthrew "duly elected state governments" that Johnson's reconstruction had already established.<sup>169</sup>

The Republicans countered with their standard "Bloody Shirt" rhetoric. In early 1867 most people in Illinois were not ready to forgive or forget the war. This feeling is typified in a letter to Congressman Washburne urging Congress on with its reconstruction:

We hope there will be no backing down but a little added by way of seasoning. If half the rebels had been banished for life it would not have been half as much of a punishment as were always accorded to the defeated party during every rebellion of Europe. 170

Republicans widely believed that Johnson's Southern reconstruction governments were treasonous and still in rebellion. Republican Congressman John Logan said in a speech before Congress that it became the duty of the Republicans to re-establish a "loyal" government in the South:

The prime, sole, and supreme object of the Republican party is to re-establish this Government upon a sure foundation of loyalty, against which the frothy waves of treason may fret forever in vain. 171

The Republican press demanded that the South must "give up her heresies, and submit to the cardinal principles of republican government...or be

168. Peoria National Democrat, Apr. 27, 1867, p. 1.

169. Congressional Globe, 40th Congress, 1st Session, (Mar. 11, 1867), pp. 64-65, and Appendix, (July 9, 1867), p. 2.

170. A. Wilbur to Elihu Washburne, Jan. 12, 1867, Washburne MSS, L.C.

171. Congressional Globe, 40th Congress, 1st Session, (July 12, 1867), Appendix, p. 4.



seriously held to the rack."<sup>172</sup> Republican newspapers reported that Southern whites declared openly "that if they can defeat reconstruction, all the blacks will be practically re-enslaved, and every white Unionist will be compelled to leave the South."<sup>173</sup> One Republican article advocated "even impeachment, if needs be," to prevent the Supreme Court and the President from turning over the nation to "those who have sought to destroy it":

...if the Federal authorities are stripped of all power to protect the freedmen...thus rendering the abolition of slavery a mere nullity...we are for beginning a new, setting completely aside the State Governments elected by the President, and in their stead forming governments representing the people of the south irrespective of color. 174

A letter to Governor Oglesby in May of 1867 from a constituent demanded that Andrew Johnson and the Democrats be "sent to hell" to "prepare the way for victory" in the 1868 elections.<sup>175</sup>

These were strong words; the majority of Illinois Republicans in 1867 did not share them. Even the radical Chicago Tribune refused to endorse impeachment in late July:

We think Andrew Johnson's public and private record before and since his accession to the Presidency has been a disgrace to the country; we think that politically he is the most disreputable man that ever attained an office wherein he could do mischief; but it does not follow that he is open to impeachment.... To attempt to impeach him and depose him for mere party purposes, is to do for Johnson what he cannot do for himself--reduce his persecutors to his own level. 176

172. Chicago Journal, Jan. 24, 1867, p. 2.

173. Illinois State Journal, Nov. 9, 1867, p. 1.

174. Ibid., Jan. 5, 1867, p. 1.

175. G. W. Rives to Richard Oglesby, May 29, 1867, Oglesby MSS, I.S.H.L.

176. Chicago Tribune, July 28, 1867, p. 2.

Later in the year the Tribune and some other Republican newspapers called for impeachment, but still there remained considerable Republican opposition to impeachment in Illinois. J. B. Brown, editor of the Galena Gazette, wrote to Congressman Washburne that "nine tenths of the Republican papers in the West oppose impeachment."<sup>177</sup> Washburne took note of this opposition and, with another Illinois Republican representative, Barton C. Cook, voted against a House resolution for impeachment.<sup>178</sup> By late November both the Illinois State Journal and the Chicago Tribune agreed that "Congress had better go to work on the important and pressing financial questions now pending, and let the impeachment business drop."<sup>179</sup> A typical response to Congress' failure to impeach Johnson in 1867 appeared among E. B. Warner's comments to Congressman Washburne: "Impeachment is done for and everybody says amen."<sup>180</sup> Republicans did not like Johnson but they liked the radical step of impeachment still less. Most Republicans preferred instead to nominate a new man for the next Presidential election, which was to be held the next year, and the man they wanted was General Ulysees S. Grant.<sup>181</sup>

The local and county elections of 1867, however, were of more immediate concern than the next Presidential race, still a year away. Although these local elections were minor in the sense that they did nothing to change the major state officials or Congressmen, they became important as indicators of early reactions to the Congressional reconstruction policies. Each party stressed their strongest issues, and once again the Democrats

177. J. B. Brown to Elihu Washburne, Nov. 11, 1867, Washburne MSS, L.C.

178. Greene, Some Aspects of Politics, pp. 71-72.

179. Illinois State Journal, Nov. 28, 1867, p. 1.

180. E. B. Warner to Elihu Washburne, Dec. 12, 1867, Washburne MSS, L.C.

181. Horace White to Elihu Washburne, Aug. 13, 1867, M. L. Ward to Washburne, Aug. 17, 1867, D. W. Lusk to Washburne, Oct. 24, 1867, Washburne MSS, L. C. See also Dan W. Mann to John Logan, Nov. 12, 1867, Logan MSS, L.C.



used racial scare tactics and Republicans waved the "Bloody Shirt."

The Illinois Democratic campaign received two encouraging boosts before the Illinois elections in 1867. The first beneficial development arose from the Chicago Times' reversal of its maverick support of Negro suffrage:

The question of whether the white people of this country will share the government, from the lowest to the highest offices, with a race so naturally repugnant to them that they revolt at social assimilation with it, is today the grand issue between the political parties. It is the grand question upon which men will vote at the coming elections. Let no voter close his eyes to this palpable fact. 182

The other encouraging development came in election returns from other states. Democrats in these states won several victories in 1867 before the Illinois elections were held. Significantly, some of the states, such as Ohio, rejected referenda to allow Negro suffrage. These victories were important to the Democrats in Illinois because they represented a repudiation of Republican policies and reinforced the Democratic conviction that the Republicans could be defeated on the race issue.<sup>183</sup> Therefore, the Democratic press, united again with the return of the Chicago Times to the fold, stepped up its campaign against Negro suffrage and Republican policies. The Democratic papers warned that the inevitable results of Republican policy would be a "war of races," and miscegenation.<sup>184</sup> The Democrats also perceived that the public opposed discrimination which

182. Chicago Times, Sept. 24, 1867, p. 4, and Oct. 11, 1867, p. 4. See also Cole, The Era of the Civil War, pp. 417-418.

183. Chicago Times, Oct. 10, 1867, p. 4, and Oct. 11, 1867, p. 4. See also Chicago Journal, Oct. 9, 1867, p. 2, and Illinois State Journal, Oct. 15, 1867, p. 1.

184. Peoria National Democrat, Sept. 24, 1867, p. 1, Oct. 9, 1867, p. 2, Nov. 1, 1867, p. 2, and Nov. 3, 1867, p. 2. See also Chicago Times, Oct. 31, 1867, p. 4.

favored blacks, and they attacked Republican reconstruction policies for doing just that, and for excessive expenditures. (Several letters to Governor Oglesby indicate that the taxation issue was indeed a major concern among the people of Illinois.)<sup>185</sup> The Chicago Times san-  
ctionously added to this that the Democrats, on the other hand, favored letting the "Ethiopians, just like white men, go to work and earn an honest living."<sup>186</sup>

Republicans, chagrined over the Democratic victories in other states, admitted that racial prejudice "is deeply rooted, and that its eradication must be the work of time."<sup>187</sup> Constituents to Congressman Washburne expressed disappointment over the Republican defeats, but urged Republicans in Congress to "close its ranks" and "move steadily on."<sup>188</sup> Republican support for black rights, however, had been dealt a blow. In response to his son's question, "Will the Radicals of Illinois try to force the negro suffrage question next year [i.e., at the Presidential and Congressional elections of 1868]?", General John M. Palmer, the future Republican Governor of Illinois, responded:

The late elections have alarmed our politicians and we have the prospect of a great fight next year in Illinois.... We will be compelled to meet Negro suffrage and that question will be defeated in Illinois. 189

Palmer clearly worried about his party and felt the Negro issue would cause

185. C. Emerson to Richard Oglesby, Apr. 24, 1867, Leonard Swett to Oglesby, Apr. 26, 1867, and Addison Goody to Oglesby, Feb. 23, 1867, Oglesby MSS, I.S.H.L.

186. Chicago Times, Oct. 12, 1867, p. 4, and Oct. 19, 1867, p. 4.

187. Chicago Tribune, Oct. 10, 1867, p. 2.

188. J. H. Wilson to Elihu Washburne, Oct. 12, 1867, Washburne MSS, L.C.

189. Son to John M. Palmer, Oct. 10, 1867, and John M. Palmer to son, Oct. 16, 1867, John M. Palmer Papers (Manuscript Division, Illinois State Historical Library).



its defeat in Illinois. Governor Richard Oglesby, on the other hand, urged "universal suffrage" for both North and South. He reasoned that Republicans needed the black vote to counteract the Democrats and Andrew Johnson.<sup>190</sup> In response to public attitudes that the Negro was ignorant and progressing too slowly, the Republican press maintained that because blacks had started with nothing, it would take time, and the public must be patient.<sup>191</sup> The Republican paper also declared that the elections reversals had not changed anything; reconstruction and impartial suffrage would move forward. Republicans argued that Democrats opposed Negro suffrage because they knew that blacks would vote against them. Finally, the Republicans recited their standard rhetoric: "The great principles for which the war was waged are not yet fully settled, and the rebellion cannot be considered as over until they are."<sup>192</sup>

In the Illinois elections of 1867 the Democrats won the majority of the local offices. The Democratic press highly publicized this long-awaited victory as a clear rejection of the Republican stand on the Negro and their reconstruction policies:

The people have spoken in the late elections, and they have spoken emphatically. Among other things they have spoken about is the negro. They have said that the negro shall not at once and indiscriminately be elevated in political equality with the white.... They [the voters] have considered and condemned the attempt to establish state governments in a part of the republic by subjection of intelligent white men to ignorant, vicious, and besotten negroes. 193

190. Richard Oglesby to J. L. E., Oct. 14, 1867, Oglesby MSS, I.S.HL.

191. Chicago Tribune, Oct. 16, 1867, p. 2, and Oct. 17, 1867, p. 2.

192. Ibid., Oct. 10, 1867, p. 2, Oct. 12, 1867, p. 2, and Nov. 4, 1867, p. 1.

193. Chicago Times, Nov. 7, 1867, p. 4, Nov. 15, 1867, p. 4. See also Peoria National Democrat, Nov. 8, 1867, p. 2.

The Republicans, like the Democrats in earlier elections, blamed the defeat on a poor turn-out. The Republican press stoutly denied that Negro suffrage had been rejected once and for all in Illinois:

The question of impartial suffrage, though it has met with a temporary reverse in some of the States, has not been decided upon its merits.... Prejudice--even Copperhead prejudice--will give way. 194

Despite such excuses and protests, however, Republicans were clearly shaken. Dr. John F. Snyder received a letter from a fellow Democrat in Illinois that insisted the election was an "indication of a real change in public sentiment," and predicted a victory in the Presidential and Congressional elections of 1868. Significantly, the man declared that the suffrage issue had contributed to the Republican defeat and predicted that the "fanaticism" of the radical Republicans was finished.<sup>195</sup>

In 1867 Negro suffrage once again played a key role in Illinois politics. Republicans came out openly in favor of it as a result of their position on reconstruction legislation and their 1866 election victories in Illinois. Their defeat in the local elections of 1867, however, made them think they had gone too far in advocating Negro suffrage to a basically racist, segregationalist society. As a result of these setbacks, the Republican party in Illinois avoided the Negro suffrage issue as much as possible during the important campaign of 1868.

194. Illinois State Journal, Nov. 7, 1867, p. 1, Nov. 12, 1867, p. 1.

195. J. M. Eppler to John F. Snyder, Nov. 8, 1867, Snyder MSS, I.S.H.L.



## V. Republican Retrenchment

In 1868 the Republican party in Illinois "reverted to form" and returned to their earlier strategy of minimizing the Negro suffrage issue and concentrating on the "Bloody Shirt." They also resurrected the impeachment question, for which there remained still no concensus among Illinois Republicans. During the state and national campaign, Republicans waved the "Bloody Shirt" and nominated a popular war hero, Ulysees S. Grant, for President. These tactics prevailed against the Democratic appeals to racial prejudice, and the Republicans captured the Presidency and most of the major state offices.

In 1868 Illinois Republicans faced a Democratic party reinvigorated by the election victories of 1867. The Democrats believed that they finally had a mandate from the people and that their appeals to racial prejudice were paying off. Therefore the Democratic newspapers increased their attacks on the Republicans for their reconstruction policies and their support of Negro suffrage. They endorsed various schemes to send blacks "back to Africa."<sup>196</sup> They maintained that they favored government "by and for" white men, and again accused Republican reconstruction of giving blacks the vote simply to keep control of the South and Congress in Republican hands. The Democratic Chicago Times printed articles from correspondents in the South that charged Southern Negroes were mere pawns, incapable of thinking for themselves, in the grasp of unscrupulous Republicans.<sup>197</sup> The Loyal Leagues received particular attention from the Democrats, who denounced them as organizations established to help Republicans control

196. Peoria National Democrat, Feb. 11, 1868, p. 2, Apr. 11, 1868, p. 2, and Chicago Times, Apr. 11, 1868, p. 4.

197. Peoria National Democrat, Jan. 7, 1868, p. 1, Jan. 8, 1868, p. 2, and Chicago Times, Apr. 6, 1868, p. 4, Mar. 24, 1868, p. 2.

the South. The Democratic press accused these organizations of terrorizing the South and causing insurrection:

The secret negro loyal league of the south, composed mainly of negroes, and officered by the refuse of northern penitentiaries and northern society...have carried terror all over the south. They have murdered and robbed conservatives, broken up democratic meetings, and obliged the negroes to vote the radical ticket on pain of death. Unless these organizations are suppressed, they will, sooner or later, plunge the South into a volcano of insurrection, in which either the white or black race will be utterly consumed. 198

Although the Democratic press did not support the rise of the Ku Klux Klan in the South, they used its existence as proof of their charges:

The south is subject to military despotism; and it is the intention of those who have fastened this tyranny on her to place the dominant white race under the rule of sensual and ignorant negroes just released from slavery.... The fact of the existence of the Ku Klux Klan is conclusive proof of the cruelty and hideous criminality of the thing dubbed reconstruction. 199

Democrats obviously hoped to shock Illinois whites with conditions in the South and felt that the natural racial prejudice of whites would overcome the Republican "Bloody Shirt" appeals.

Another Democratic charge, which partially explains the Republican defeats in 1867, was the cost of Reconstruction. The Democratic press maintained that Republican measures, such as the Freedmen's Bureau, cost the taxpayers "double the price we ought to pay for sugar, teas, and all other articles of consumption."<sup>200</sup> Republican concern about this charge appeared in several letters to Governor Oglesby in 1867, and to Congressman

198. Chicago Times, Apr. 8, 1868, p. 4.

199. Ibid., Apr. 13, 1868, p. 4.

200. Peoria National Democrat, Jan. 8, 1868, p. 2.



Washburne in 1868. These letters revealed a disunity among Republicans over financial questions, and called for lower taxes and denounced the "moneyed men of the country."<sup>201</sup>

Washburne and other Republican politicians did not back off their demands for Reconstruction because of the cost, however, and agreed with the sentiment in a letter to Washburne that Republicans in Illinois would have "economy and reconstruction."<sup>202</sup> Republicans still regarded Reconstruction as a means of keeping control of the government. One constituent declared to Congressman Logan:

I should favor almost any scheme for keeping political power in the hands of loyal men. I should never admit the representatives of any rebel state to Congress unless I was satisfied that loyal men had full control of it and could keep it. 203

Similarly, Levi North advised Richard Yates not to hurry in admitting Southern states back into Congress because of the important Presidential and Congressional elections at the end of 1868:

I am in no hurry about reconstruction. The rebel states will help the enemy [Democrats] in this year's contest more than they will us. If with the army among them the ballot box can't be protected now, rest assured it will not be protected next November, when the President and Congressmen are to be elected. 204

201. E. A. Small to Elihu Washburne, Jan. 3, 1868, B. Close to Washburne, Jan. 4, 1868, L. H. Bowen to Washburne, Mar. 3, 1868, C. H. Rosenshell to Washburne, Feb. 26, 1868, Washburne MSS, L.C. Also, A. G. to Richard Oglesby, Feb. 23, 1867, C. E. to Oglesby, Apr. 24, 1867, and L. S. to Oglesby, Apr. 26, 1867, Oglesby MSS, I.S.H.L.

202. E. A. Small to Elihu Washburne, Jan. 3, 1868, C. H. Rosenshell to Washburne, Feb. 26, 1868, Washburne MSS, L.C.

203. Louis Bristol to John A. Logan, Jan. 17, 1868, Logan MSS, L.C. See also J. W. Elliot to Richard Oglesby, Jan. 18, 1868, Oglesby MSS, I.S.H.L.

204. Levi North to Richard Yates, Feb. 21, 1868, Yates MSS, I.S.H.L.

But Republicans were clearly shaken by their defeats in 1867, and were on the defensive in early 1868. The Republican press, reacting to Democratic charges concerning Negro suffrage, tried to explain their position without ruffling any feathers. In their best "Bloody Shirt" rhetoric, Republican newspapers invoked the name of Abraham Lincoln, maintained they only wanted to give blacks an "equal chance," and averred that after that it was up to blacks to prove themselves:

The best commentary upon and explanation of that clause of the Declaration which asserts that "all men are born equal," was uttered by our illustrious statesman, Abraham Lincoln. He said, "Every man has the right to be the equal of every other man if he can, and any law which prevents that right is unjust and tyrannical and ought to be overthrown." And this is all the right which the Republicans ask and demand for the colored race. If, with this right given them, they cannot compete with white men in the race of life, the failure is their own. 205

Other Republican articles stressed the absurdity of the Democratic allegations that equal rights would result in Negro domination:

The Copperhead Democracy, in their zeal in behalf of their rebel brethren, persist in misrepresenting the principles of the Republican party. They blatantly talk about "maintaining the supremacy of our white race," and "preventing the Africanization of the country"--just as though somebody was striving to effect either of those absurd propositions--just as though there is the remotest possibility in the world that the white race will not always maintain the supremacy under our Government. 206

Republican Senator Lyman Trumbull pointed out, in the Senate debates over the March Supplementary Reconstruction Bill, that the South would not be

205. Illinois State Journal, Jan. 9, 1868, p. 2.

206. Ibid., Jan. 22, 1868, p. 2.



placed under "Negro control" because white population exceeded black population in all the Southern states except Mississippi and South Carolina.<sup>207</sup> Republican articles, also equivocating on the suffrage issue, suggested they now favored a qualified suffrage that involved some tests for the right to vote:

[Republicans] advocate impartial suffrage--not universal suffrage necessarily, but suffrage without qualification by reasons of race, color, religion or previous condition, applying only such tests as loyalty to the principles of the government, intelligence, and a character unblemished by crime. <sup>208</sup>

The Republicans answered Democratic charges that the Negro was too ignorant to vote with the retort that Negroes "know well enough who their political friends are, and they vote with them. They always vote on the side of loyalty; and that is more than can be said of some Copperheads."<sup>209</sup> The Republican newspapers did not deny that the blacks were an "inferior race," but they insisted that blacks be given a chance to better and to protect themselves.<sup>210</sup> Thus the Republicans couched their support of Negro suffrage in the South in an appeal to the American sense of "fair play."

While the elections of 1867 shook the Republicans, the impeachment crisis of 1868 further revealed that the Republican party in Illinois was not united on how to handle President Johnson. Although in 1867 many persons held deep reservations about impeachment, by early 1868 most

207. Illinois State Journal, Jan. 9, 1868, p. 2.

208. Ibid., Jan. 22, 1868, p. 2.

209. Ibid., Jan. 9, 1868, p. 2.

210. Bureau County Republican, Jan. 16, 1868, p. 4.

Republicans in Illinois supported it. The Illinois Republican press and the majority of the state's Republican leadership, including Governor Oglesby, Senator Yates, Congressmen Shelby M. Cullom, Elihu Washburne, John Logan, and several others, all supported impeachment. Congressman Logan, who became one of the House prosecution managers, received a letter from an Illinois constituent that summed up the Republican position on impeachment:

The prayer upon the lips of every Union man I have met is that Congress and Stanton stand firm as the everlasting rocks in resisting Johnson's mad and ruinous course. Thousands who have heretofore opposed impeachment now are clamorous for it. 211

Another letter to Logan referred to impeachment as a "measure of such plain expediency."<sup>212</sup> Obviously some Republicans regarded impeachment as a political necessity. Senator Yates received a letter from George J. Bergen that declared "if the Senate fails to convict Johnson now, the Republican party will be terribly beaten in the fall campaign."<sup>213</sup> When Congress finally resolved to impeach President Johnson on February 24, 1868, Congressman Washburne, Congressman Logan, Senator Yates and his secretary John Strong, and Governor Oglesby received a flood of letters from friends

211. James Fishback to John A. Logan, Feb. 23, 1868, Logan MSS, L.C. See also Shelby M. Cullom, Fifty Years of Public Service, Personal Recollections of Shelby M. Cullom (Chicago: A. C. McClurg & Co., 1911), pp. 154-158. See Cole, The Era of the Civil War, pp. 408-409, and Greene, Some Aspects of Politics, p. 72, Krug, Lyman Trumbull, p. 262.

212. Louis Bristol to John A. Logan, Jan. 17, 1868, Logan MSS, L.C.

213. G. J. Bergen to Richard Yates, Feb. 29, 1868, Richard Yates MSS, I.S.H.L.



and constituents endorsing the action.<sup>214</sup> A mass rally was held in Chicago demanding Johnson's conviction.<sup>215</sup>

There still remained, however, some Republicans who opposed impeachment in 1868. Governor Yates received a letter from a constituent protesting the Governor's "inflammatory" telegrams urging impeachment of President Johnson.<sup>216</sup> Congressman John Logan received a letter from John Medill of the Chicago Tribune, who perceived the latent opposition to impeachment, and who warned about the loss of popular support unless a trial based solely upon the tenure of office issue could be speedily effected:

The universal feeling and opinion in this city and state, so far as I can learn is that a grave and terrible blunder has been committed in forcing through the House the last two counts in the indictment against Johnson. All hope of a speedy trial is now ended and the chance of conviction is badly weakened. If Johnson can't be impeached, and ousted for violating the Tenure-of-office law he will never be put out for anything he said while swinging around the circle. We are in danger also of causing a reaction in the popular mind against Congress and the Republican party by drafting in this extraneous and unnecessary matter as it is regarded by everybody.... Andy has entered on his last year and soon people will begin to demand that he be allowed to finish his remaining months. 217

214. W. L. Coe to Elihu Washburne, Feb. 24, 1868, A. W. Lenell to Washburne, Feb. 24, 1868, C. M. Worthington to Washburne, Feb. 25, 1868, Washburne MSS, L.C. W. L. Church to Richard Yates, Feb. 25, 1868, W. Talcott to Yates, Feb. 25, 1868, Yates MSS, I.S.H.L. Martin H. Cassell to John Strong, Apr. 5, 1868, John D. Strong MSS, I.S.H.L. E. C. Ingersol to Richard Oglesby, Mar. 2, 1868, R. G. Ingersoll to Oglesby, Feb. 26, 1868, John Wilcox to Oglesby, Feb. 26, 1868, Oglesby MSS, I.S.H.L. J. Medill to John Logan, Mar. 8, 1868, Logan MSS, L.C.

215. Illinois State Journal, Feb. 26, 1868, p. 1.

216. Barton Able to Richard Oglesby, Feb. 26, 1868, Oglesby MSS, I.S.H.L.

217. John Medill to John Logan, Mar. 6, 1868, Logan MSS, I.S.H.L. The 10th and 11th articles that Medill referred to accused President Johnson of "high misdemeanor in office" for Johnson's criticism of Congress.

The most noticeable dissent on impeachment occurred on May 11th and 12th, when the Chicago Tribune, reversing its previous position and calling for acquittal, admitted the partisanship of the whole impeachment movement.<sup>218</sup> Another major "defection" occurred when Senator Lyman Trumbull voted against conviction. Trumbull's biographer, Mark Krug, maintains that Trumbull's decision was his own, based on legal convictions. Krug also suggests that the Chicago Tribune's opposition to Johnson's impeachment lay in its opposition to his would-be successor, Benjamin Wade, whom it opposed on the tariff issue.<sup>219</sup> On May 16 it became obvious that Johnson would not be convicted: he was acquitted by one vote.

Despite the failure of impeachment the Republican party in Illinois remained a force to be reckoned with. Neither the Chicago Tribune nor Senator Trumbull was ostracized for their break with the party over the impeachment, and neither received the abuse the Democratic Chicago Times suffered for its maverick stand on Negro suffrage in 1866. Although Trumbull later left the party, it was not because of the impeachment, and the Chicago Tribune continued as a respected leader of the Republican press.<sup>220</sup>

Richard Yates received a letter from a friend in Illinois who urged the Republicans to reunite after the impeachment differences because the "rebels" in the South were still a "threat": "unashamed Rebels in the South...will stuff ballot boxes" and attempt to swing the elections by "violence and murder, intimidating the loyal blacks and whites."<sup>221</sup>

The Republicans remained the majority party in Illinois. They controlled

218. Krug, Lyman Trumbull, pp. 266-268, and Cole, The Era of the Civil War, p. 409.

219. Ibid., p. 262-268.

220. Cole, The Era of the Civil War, pp. 269-270.

221. Benjamin Folz to Richard Yates, June 1, 1868, John Strong MSS, I.S.H.L.



the Governorship, both U. S. Senatorships, eleven of the fourteen U.S. Representative posts, and a two-thirds majority in the state General Assembly. As A. C. Cole pointed out, they "knew their strength and proceeded to consolidate it, taking their stand on past achievements."<sup>222</sup> Determined to overcome the election reversals and the impeachment fiasco, the Republicans launched a concerted campaign to win the Presidential, Congressional, and state legislature elections in the fall of 1868.

This stepped-up campaign entailed more "Bloody Shirt" appeals, further justifications of Congressional Reconstruction, and more calls for suppression of the "rebels." Republicans called a vote for their ticket a vote for "peace" and suggested a Republican victory would mean "the close of the civil war."<sup>223</sup> To help their cause they nominated the respected war hero, General Ulysees S. Grant, for President. Grant, who was from Illinois, was extremely popular in the state, and Congressman Washburne, an early advocate of his nomination, received several letters from home supporting Grant for President.<sup>224</sup> The Republican campaign also meant resorting more often to racist tactics--repaying the Democrats in kind for their accusations concerning the Negro.

But Republicans realized that the Negro was their Achilles' heel, and although they never denied they favored "impartial suffrage," they tried to sidestep it as a campaign issue:

222. Cole, The Era of the Civil, p. 413. See also Church, History of the Republican Party, pp. 101-102.

223. Chicago Tribune, July 13, 1868, p. 2. Illinois State Journal, Aug. 4, 1868, p. 2, Oct. 21, 1868, p. 2, and Chicago Times, Aug. 14, 1868, p. 4.

224. H. H. Houghton to Elihu Washburne, Jan. 3, 1868, and Evans Blake to Washburne, Jan. 28, 1868, Washburne MSS, L. C. See also Illinois State Journal, July 21, 1868, p. 2.

The question of negro suffrage [the Illinois State Journal observed] is not now before the people of Illinois. The Constitution of the State expressly prohibits it, and until we have amended the organic law, it would be perfectly absurd to make that question an issue in a political campaign, since it cannot be reached either in the election of Governor or Congressmen, or of members of the General Assembly. 225

Republican articles stressed that Republican policy was designed only to insure that blacks and other "loyal" men in the South were kept free and "politically" equal. Republican papers denied vehemently that they favored "Negro supremacy" in terms that revealed not only their racism, but also their fear of the Negro issue:

Nothing has been done by Congress to impair or invalidate the supremacy which belongs, in the nature of things, to wealth and education...all the elements of power are on the side of the whites. The utmost that the negroes can hope for, or that anybody can hope for them, is that they may defend their own liberty by the ballot. The idea of their establishing a supremacy over the whites is one of the most preposterous conceptions ever advanced to a thinking people. 226

The Republican press even tried to turn the Negro suffrage issue back onto the Democrats. Republican papers charged that Southern Democrats actually "begged" for black votes. The Illinois State Journal insisted sarcastically that Democrats in the South had integrated with blacks in their social and political life, and that they accepted the Negro as "a man and a brother."<sup>227</sup> Republican newspapers also used the miscegenation scare and charged

225. Illinois State Journal, May 11, 1868, p. 2.

226. Chicago Tribune, Oct. 1, 1868, p. 2, July 14, 1868, p. 2.

227. Illinois State Journal, Sept. 22, 1868, p. 2. See also Aug. 21, 1868, p. 2, and Aug. 29, 1868, p. 2, and Bureau County Republican, Aug. 28, 1868, p. 4.



Democrats with responsibility for the large mulatto population in the South.<sup>228</sup>

The Democratic party also perceived that the Negro issue was the Republicans' major weakness in the 1868 elections. Dr. John F. Snyder received a letter from a fellow Illinois Democrat who predicted a Democratic victory in the fall because of Republican "radicalism" on the Negro issue.<sup>229</sup> Therefore the Democratic campaign tactic was to emphasize the Republican record of support for Negro rights, particularly suffrage. Democratic newspapers began with the national Republican convention, held that year in Chicago, which they characterized as a "black-and-tan" or "miscegenation" convention because of the black representatives present.<sup>230</sup> The Democrats charged accurately that "The radical leaders have very adroitly kept the negro suffrage question from the people, well knowing the evil effects it will have upon their chances for success," and predicted that "should the Republican party gain a new lease of power at the coming elections, one of the results of the same will be the forcing of negro suffrage upon the people of the North."<sup>231</sup> The Democrats also charged that the Republican Presidential nominee, General Grant, was "a soldier not a statesman" and that he would be manipulated by the Republican Congress to enforce any law that Congress passed, including Negro suffrage in the North.<sup>232</sup> Similarly, Illinois Democratic papers attacked the Republican nominee for governor of that state, General John M. Palmer, and several other prominent

228. Illinois State Journal, June 2, 1868, p. 2, Aug. 13, 1868, p. 2, Oct. 24, 1868, p. 2.

229. J. M. Epler to John Snyder, June 7, 1868, Snyder MSS, I.S.H.L.

230. Chicago Times, Mar. 24, 1868, p. 2. See also Cole, The Era of the Civil War, p. 412, and Church, History of the Republican Party, p. 101.

231. Peoria National Democrat, Aug. 21, 1868, p. 2.

232. Chicago Times, June 3, 1868, p. 4, Aug. 14, 1868, p. 4.

Illinois Republican politicians, including Governor Oglesby and Congressman Ebon C. Ingersoll, for their support of Negro suffrage in the North.<sup>233</sup> Democratic articles charged that the Republicans supported Negro suffrage simply in order to gain political supremacy, and that a vote for Grant would extend Congressional Reconstruction "infamy", which they declared discriminated against whites in favor of blacks:

...if Grant be elected, the white man of the South "will be made to accept their late slaves as their equals, whether they will or not." This statement ought to disgust white men who respect their own race; but, revolting as it is, it is not as bad as the actual workings and purposes of the reconstruction infamy. The infamy makes the negro superior of the white man. It gives the black political control. It enforces his supremacy with the bayonet. It takes northern men to maintain a standing army to enforce, not negro equality, but negro supremacy. <sup>234</sup>

The Democratic press also included several articles reporting black "riots" and other violence directed against whites in the South. Repeatedly the Democrats pointed to Republican reconstruction policies, such as the Freedmen's Bureau and the Loyal League, as the cause of this black violence.<sup>235</sup> Inevitably, the Democrats charged, "social equality and intermarriage are a sure result" of political equality.<sup>236</sup>

In addition to the race issue, the Democrats accused the Republicans of corruption and fiscal irresponsibility. The Democrats had gained support in the 1867 elections by their attacks on the cost of reconstruction

233. Chicago Times, May 11, 1868, p. 4, and Peoria National Democrat, May 10, 1868, p. 2, and Sept. 19, 1868, p. 2.

234. Chicago Times, Oct. 31, 1868, p. 4. See also July 24, 1868, p. 4, Oct. 3, 1868, p. 4.

235. Ibid., Sept. 24, 1868, p. 4, Oct. 14, 1868, p. 4, and Peoria National Democrat, July 19, 1868, Aug. 26, 1868, p. 4, Sept. 2, 1868, p. 4, Sept. 6, 1868, p. 4, Sept. 15, 1868, p. 4, Oct. 8, 1868, p. 4.

236. Peoria National Democrat, May 21, 1868, p. 2, Sept. 24, 1868, p. 2, and Chicago Times, Sept. 12, 1868, p. 4.



and high tariffs, and they continued this tactic in 1868. The Chicago Times charged the Republicans with high expenditures and rampant corruption in government:

They the people are tired of taxation. They are disgusted with whisky rings; revenue thieves; robbers of customs duties; congressmen bribed by lobbyists; and with all devices with which the treasury has been plundered. 237

Despite all such Democratic charges, the 1868 elections resulted in nearly a clean sweep for the Republican candidates. Besides the election of the national Republican ticket (Grant received 56% of the popular vote), Illinois elected the Republican nominee for Governor, John Palmer, ten of the fourteen Republicans running for Congress, and gave the Republicans a majority in both houses of the Illinois General Assembly.<sup>238</sup> The Republican campaign strategy of avoiding the Negro suffrage issue as much as possible, countering racist charges with racist charges, pointing to past achievements, "waving the Bloody Shirt," and nominating a war hero from Illinois for President, was effective. Of course, the Republican party remained the majority party in Illinois, and their candidates were better-known and more popular. Dr. John Snyder, for example, did not like the Democratic ticket, as was noted in a letter from his brother before the election.<sup>239</sup> General Grant, in fact, was considered a moderate on Reconstruction and Democratic in sentiment by many, which caused a number of Democrats to support him.<sup>240</sup>

237. Chicago Times, Oct. 8, 1868, p. 4, July 9, 1868, p. 4, Aug. 17, 1868, p. 4, Sept. 9, 1868, p. 4.

238. Lusk, Politics and Politicians, pp. 205-208. See also Cole, The Era of the Civil War, p. 414, and Peoria National Democrat, Nov. 11, 1868, p. 2, and Illinois State Journal, Jan. 4, 1868, p. 2.

239. W. H. Snyder to John Snyder, Aug. 8, 1868, Snyder MSS, I.S.H.L.

240. Cole, The Era of the Civil War, pp. 410-414.

The Republicans welcomed the victory as a conclusion to the Southern problem, of which they were tired.<sup>241</sup> A congratulatory note to Richard Oglesby summed up the feeling of relief among Republicans in Illinois:

We may rest safe in the belief that we have seen the last of the rebellion--that...slavery is dead... [and that the election of Grant] will bring us peace. <sup>242</sup>

The Republican victory in 1868 marked the beginning of the end for the Democratic party's racial prejudice campaign tactics in Illinois. Although popular prejudice and Negro suffrage remained a subject of partisan conflict for the next year, the Democrats began to see with this defeat that they were not going to win a major election on racist appeals. After the elections Democratic newspapers started to emphasize other areas of contention, such as fiscal issues. One Democratic paper insisted that the Democratic defeat was primarily the result of "big money Republicans."<sup>243</sup> The Chicago Times also maintained that financial questions would be the big issues in the future and that the Democrats would win on those issues.<sup>244</sup>

The Republican victory at the polls in 1868 paved the way for Negro suffrage in Illinois. The Democratic press had predicted before the 1868 elections that the Republican party would insist upon Negro suffrage in the North if the Republicans won. This Democratic prediction came true, as the Republican press soon began a campaign to support a

241. Harris L. Dante, "Western Attitudes and Reconstruction Policies in Illinois, 1865-1872", p. 155, Journal of Illinois State Historical Society, (Springfield: Vol. 49, 1956).

242. James P. Root to Richard Oglesby, Nov. 15, 1868, Oglesby MSS, I.S.H.L.

243. Peoria National Democrat, Nov. 5, 1868, p. 2.

244. Chicago Times, Nov. 4, 1868, p. 4.



Constitutional amendment, the proposed Fifteenth Amendment, to extend suffrage to blacks throughout the nation.<sup>245</sup> This did not mean that racial prejudice against the Negro had disappeared, but only that Republicans had decided they needed the black vote in every state. With the mandate given them in the 1868 elections, they felt safe in going after that vote.

245. Chicago Tribune, Nov. 13, 1868, p. 2. Bureau County Republican, Nov. 26, 1868, p. 4. Illinois State Journal, Dec. 28, 1868, p. 2. See footnote #231 for Democratic prediction.

## VI. 1869-1870: The End of the Issue

The sweeping election victories of 1868 renewed Illinois Republican confidence in their party's Reconstruction policies and their support for Negro suffrage. In the two years after the election Illinois ratified the Fifteenth Amendment and rewrote its state constitution to include black suffrage. These actions were primarily designed to increase Republican voting strength in close elections, and their accomplishment marked an end of the "Negro issue" in Illinois politics as both Republicans and Democrats chose to drop the subject and move on to other issues.<sup>246</sup>

The Republican party had determined that Negro suffrage remained in their best interest politically, and they resolved to push it through. The Republican press in Illinois generally fell in line with the national party leadership in advocating the proposed Fifteenth Amendment.<sup>247</sup> Many Illinois Republicans recognized, however, that considerable opposition to black rights remained, not only to social and civil rights, but also to political rights as well. During the debates over the Amendment's wording, a clause to guarantee the Negro right to hold office was struck down. The Chicago Tribune admitted that the state was not ready to ratify an amendment establishing "universal officeholding."<sup>248</sup> William Gillette indicated that Illinois Republican Congressman John A. Logan worked "to scrap the Negro officeholding guarantee, no doubt accurately reflecting the will of his

246. R. M. Pearson to Elihu Washburne, Jan. 15, 1869, J. Medill to Washburne, Feb. 2, 1869, Washburne MSS, L.C. See also Chicago Tribune, Oct. 19, 1869, p. 2, Oct. 23, 1869, p. 2.

247. Illinois State Journal, Feb. 2, 1869, p. 2, Mar. 1, 1869, p. 2, and Bureau County Republican, Feb. 4, 1869, p. 1, and Chicago Tribune, Feb. 10, 1869, p. 2, Feb. 10, 1869, p. 2.

248. Chicago Tribune, Feb. 10, 1869, p. 2.



constituency, where opinion against Negro officeholding ran strong."<sup>249</sup>

One prominent Illinois Republican who opposed the amendment was Senator Lyman Trumbull, who had never been an advocate of Negro suffrage.<sup>250</sup>

Trumbull's biographer, Mark M. Krug, related that the Senator opposed the Fifteenth Amendment and also two other amendments that would have either affirmed Negro suffrage or prohibited its abridgement.<sup>251</sup> Senator Trumbull did make a sarcastic remark on February 9th in response to another senator's speech to exclude Chinese-Americans from the proposed amendment, which revealed Trumbull's opposition to Negro suffrage, if not his racism:

When we are declaiming that the Hottentots and cannibals from Africa shall have the right to vote and to hold office, it seems to me paradoxical to insert a clause that citizens of the oldest empire of the earth...shall be excluded. <sup>252</sup>

The Democrats fought the Fifteenth Amendment from the very beginning. The Democratic press in Illinois denounced the Amendment as an infringement on states' rights to regulate suffrage, and as an attempt to promote Negro equality.<sup>253</sup> They pointed out every Republican action that contradicted their championship of Negro suffrage. For example, Democrats reported that President Grant' inaugural ball denied admittance to blacks, and they called attention to the considerable opposition among Republicans in the far West to the Fifteenth Amendment (because it would give the Chinese-Americans the

249. William Gillette, The Right to Vote: Politics and the Passage of the Fifteenth Amendment (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1969), p. 68.

250. See footnotes 74 and 75.

251. Krug, Lyman Trumbull, pp. 274-275.

252. Congressional Globe, 40th Congress, 3rd Session (Feb. 9, 1869), p. 1036.

253. Peoria National Democrat, Nov. 14, 1868, p. 2, Jan. 17, 1869, p. 2, and Chicago Times, Nov. 26, 1868, p. 4.

vote).<sup>254</sup> Finally, the Chicago Times declared that the Amendment would not do as much for the Negro as had been purported: "Under the amendment, they [Negroes] can be permitted to vote and be denied all other political privileges."<sup>255</sup>

The Illinois General Assembly voted ratification of the Fifteenth Amendment on March 5, 1869. A Republican majority and a clever leadership in that body forced the ratification through. William Gillette, in his book on the passage of the Fifteenth Amendment, detailed the Republican strategy for passage:

First, surprise and speed shocked Democratic legislators and restricted debate; then firm parliamentary control demoralized opposition. The endorsement of ratification by President Grant and approaching adjournment paved the way for ratification. Despite downstate grumbling, Republican legislators supported it, with only one deserter. <sup>256</sup>

The Republicans hailed this prompt action. To those who cried doom, they noted that "we had the same fears sounded in our ears...when the thirteenth article abolishing slavery was adopted, and when the civil rights bills were passed, and hence nobody is frightened by their croakings."<sup>257</sup> They declared that this was the last measure needed to "consummate the moral revolution which has during the past eight years kept pace with the reconstruction of the nation."<sup>258</sup> Republicans saw the Fifteenth Amendment as the final solution to the "Negro problem," and it proved to be the beginning of the end for Republican support to Negro rights in Illinois

254. Chicago Times, Feb. 6, 1869, p. 4, Feb. 17, 1869, p. 4.

255. Ibid., Feb. 27, 1869, p. 4.

256. Gillette, The Right to Vote, p. 145. See also Lusk, Politics and Politicians, p. 352, and Illinois State Journal, Mar. 6, 1869, p. 2.

257. Illinois State Journal, Mar. 6, 1869, p. 2.

258. Ibid.



and in the rest of the nation as well. As the Chicago Tribune said, "With the adoption of the Fifteenth Amendment the 'negro' will be removed from American politics."<sup>259</sup> Suffrage and Negro rights in general disappeared from private correspondence. Calling for an end to "agitation" over the issue, the Illinois State Journal quoted from the new Grant administration, "'let us have peace,' but 'no step backward.'"<sup>260</sup>

Democratic reaction to the Illinois General Assembly's ratification of the Amendment was predictably bitter. The Democratic press insisted that Republican politicians had forced the amendment through the state legislature, and that it did not represent the true will of the people of Illinois. The Chicago Times also accused the Republicans, probably correctly, of deliberately keeping the question from a popular vote:

Had this issue been made in the last general election, no intelligent citizen can doubt that the result of that election would have been very different from what it was.... The people of Illinois are not only opposed to indiscriminate negro suffrage and negro officeholding in Illinois, but they are opposed to giving up their rights to regulate this matter for themselves in their own way. It is the knowledge of this fact which made the recent rump Congress so very anxious to pass the amendment in time to get it before the state legislature now in session. The fanatics of the rump did not dare submit the question to the people. Their plan, and their most anxious desire, was to evade an expression of the popular will. 261

The Democratic press printed numerous articles about Negro violence and asserted that a black "reign of terror" resulted from Republican

259. Chicago Tribune, Oct. 19, 1869, p. 2.

260. Illinois State Journal, Aug. 23, 1869, p. 2.

261. Chicago Times, Mar. 8, 1869, p. 4. See also Mar. 6, 1869, p. 4, and Peoria National Democrat, Apr. 2, 1869, p. 2.

policies:

Holding offices over white men and killing negroes who vote for white men are two of the asserted political "rights" of our exemplary Ethiopian "fellow-citizens" in the beginning of the new radical millenium. What further "rights" they will assume, it is not necessary to conjecture. 262

Illinois Democrats also sought to link the Republican position on Negro suffrage to Negro officeholding, which they knew was unpopular in Illinois. Democratic newspapers printed stories of Negroes appointed to various offices in the South and other states as examples of Republican folly.<sup>263</sup> In an article about blacks in the Chicago fire department, the Chicago Times, using typical racial and ideological slurs, implied that the Republicans intended to extend black officeholding into Illinois:

There is a movement in progress to "elevate" the Ethiopian to the public service in the fire department of Chicago. This is as it should be. It is another step toward the consummation of the grand millenium which the Jacobin theory comprehends. It is surely not enough to assert that the nigger is in all respects the equivalent of the white man; the assertion must be carried into practice. 264

In retaliation the Republican press charged that Democrats in the South opposed Negro suffrage only because the North did not require it, and predicted that when it became law the Democrats would scramble for the Negro vote.<sup>265</sup> In response to Democratic charges about the "will of the people," they pointed to the Connecticut endorsement of the Amendment.<sup>266</sup>

262. Chicago Times, June 19, 1869, p. 4, Mar. 23, 1869, p. 4.

263. Peoria National Democrat, May 7, 1869, p. 2. Chicago Times, Mar. 25, 1869, p. 4, June 12, 1869, p. 4, June 23, 1869, p. 4, July 7, 1869, p. 4.

264. Chicago Times, June 23, 1869, p. 4.

265. Illinois State Journal, May 24, 1869, p. 2.

266. Ibid., April 19, 1869, p. 2, Apr. 10, 1869, p. 2, May 19, 1869, p. 2.



Republican papers also carefully condemned instances of Negro violence, and reported that whites continued to discriminate and to commit violence against blacks in the South.<sup>267</sup> Republicans quickly denied charges of "race mixture." For example, the Chicago Tribune praised Georgia's new legal system with its provisions for prohibiting interracial marriage and integration of hotels and other public accommodations.<sup>268</sup> As for "amalgamation," one Republican article blamed Southern whites for race mixing in the South--the result of taking advantage of their slaves--and predicted that freedmen would avoid such illicit unions.<sup>269</sup>

By 1869 the Chicago Times once more came to the conclusion, as it had in 1866, that Democrats could not win on the Negro issue. It urged Democrats to move on to other issues, and announced that the party should "wash its hands of the result of wholesale negro enfranchisement." It also declared that the Democrats would "favor impartial suffrage, but there is a wide difference between that and the enfranchisement of half-barbarous negroes, provided proper requirements for qualifications be made."<sup>270</sup> Other Democratic paper such as the Peoria National Democrat opposed the Times and insisted "This great evil [Negro suffrage] shall not be brought upon the country by any word of ours."<sup>271</sup> However, the old zeal was gone, and the Times was not pressured to change its opinion again. It continued to maintain that Democrats had lost the issues of Reconstruction and Negro suffrage, and should move on to other issues.<sup>272</sup> This did not mean, however, that the

267. Chicago Tribune, June 9, 1869, p. 2. Illinois State Journal, June 11, 1869, p. 2, June 15, 1869, p. 2.

268. Chicago Tribune, June 30, 1869, p. 2.

269. Illinois State Journal, July 9, 1869, p. 2.

270. Chicago Times, July 19, 1869, p. 4.

271. Peoria National Democrat, Aug. 26, 1869, p. 2, Oct. 2, 1869, p. 2.

272. Chicago Times, Dec. 16, 1869, p. 4. Illinois State Journal, Sept. 6, 1869, p. 2.

Times had accepted black equality. It continued to print occasional articles asserting the inferiority of blacks and supporting segregation.<sup>273</sup>

In late 1869 and early 1870 a state constitutional convention was called to rewrite the Illinois state constitution to make it conform with the provisions of the Fifteenth Amendment. Although party distribution at the convention was relatively even (46 Republicans, 32 Democrats, 7 Independents), the revision was speedily accomplished, once the convention had voted (40 to 33) to adopt a resolution approving the General Assembly's quick ratification of the Fifteenth Amendment:

Resolved, that this Convention having been called for the purpose of altering, revising, or amending the Constitution of the State of Illinois, it is not within the province of its legitimate duty to revise the action of the Legislature, in its adoption of the proposed fifteenth amendment to the Constitution of the United States, and that it will be unwise and improper to attempt any interference therewith. 274

The Democrats decided not to further oppose the amendment after its ratification. The Chicago Times in March 1870 asked, "What can be gained by fighting the amendment? The President will proclaim its enforcement.... The Democratic party has acted in opposition to the popular will on the 'nigger question,'" and it stated that the party's only recourse was to attract the Negro vote.<sup>275</sup> Even the Peoria National Democrat, among the most rabid of the anti-suffrage newspapers, capitulated that "it [Negro

273. Chicago Times, Aug. 28, 1869, p. 4, Sept. 21, 1869, p. 4.

274. Illinois State Journal, Nov. 6, 1869, p. 2. Journal of the Convention (Springfield: State Journal Printing Office, 1870), p. 110. Debates and Proceedings of the Constitutional Convention of the State of Illinois (Vol. II), (Springfield: E. L. Merritt & Brothers, 1870), p. 175.

275. Chicago Times, Mar. 30, 1870, p. 4.



suffrage] has been forced upon us and we submit."<sup>276</sup> On May 13, 1870 the Convention adopted the new constitution and on July 2, 1870 the people ratified it.<sup>277</sup>

The State Convention marked the virtual end of Democratic campaigns against Negro suffrage in Illinois, and articles began to appear in Democratic newspapers about attracting the Negro vote. For example, the Chicago Times asserted that "the colored men will prefer to vote for honest men [Democrats] rather than the nominees of the 'bummers,' the 'dead-beats,' and the 'scalawags.'"<sup>278</sup> In another article the Times predicted "the Democracy ought to carry the negro vote on all financial issues."<sup>279</sup> In an article entitled "Sambo in a new Role," the Times observed that the constitution had opened up a new profession for the Negro: "ballot peddler,"<sup>280</sup>

The Republican press welcomed the ratification of the new constitution as the final mandate on Negro suffrage: "These figures [five to one for ratification] tell the story of the popular acceptance of the results of the war. They give proof of the fact that the ratification of the Fifteenth Amendment by the legislature, was a truthful expression of the will of the people."<sup>281</sup> Republicans believed that the new Negro vote would swing close elections for their party in the Northern states, especially "border" states such as Maryland and Kentucky:

276. Peoria National Democrat, Apr. 12, 1870, p. 2.

277. Constitution of the State of Illinois (Springfield: Illinois Journal Printing Office, 1870), pp. 8-9.

278. Chicago Times, Oct. 24, 1870, p. 4.

279. Ibid., Feb. 25, 1870, p. 4.

280. Ibid., July 3, 1870, p. 6.

281. Chicago Tribune, July 12, 1870, p. 2.

The Fifteenth Amendment will confer the ballot on not fewer than 900,000 Negroes, all but 100,000 of whom are in the South. Their vote will revolutionize politics and reverse the position of parties in Kentucky, and will probably secure for the Republicans at least a reasonable chance of becoming a Republican state. The colored electors there, as elsewhere, will vote, almost unanimously, with the Republicans. 282

The Illinois State Journal, citing the potential black vote in Delaware and Maryland, exulted that "everywhere the power of the colored man [and the Republican party] is being extended."<sup>283</sup>

The Negro in Illinois did make use of his new-found right, and voted in Illinois as early as April 5, 1870.<sup>284</sup> Even in Cairo, the very center of Democratic opposition to Negro suffrage, blacks voted, though not without opposition.<sup>285</sup> The Chicago Tribune, reporting that black voters would vote for the first time in a general election in Chicago on November 8, 1870, exhorted that they be respected, and be given a chance to prove that they were not political pawns.<sup>286</sup>

Thus by 1870 the Negro in Illinois had gained, in addition to his emancipation, the right to vote. Amid the general Republican rejoicing over the suffrage triumph, however, there also existed a great amount of relief that the racial issue was finally settled. People had tired of moral appeals concerning the Negro, and the "Bloody Shirt" tactic had become "old and tired." Republicans could sense this, and articles about the triumph of Negro suffrage began to take on the semblance of hand-washing:

282. Bureau County Republican, Feb. 17, 1870, p. 4. This supports William Gillette's thesis about the Fifteenth Amendment in The Right to Vote.

283. Illinois State Journal, May 9, 1870, p. 2.

284. Cole, The Era of the Civil War, pp. 337-338.

285. Lusk, Politics and Politicians, p. 352.

286. Chicago Tribune, Nov. 5, 1870, p. 2.



For twenty years the peculiar condition of the negro race has been the absorbing topic of our national politics, and one great cause why the American people should rejoice at the final solution of these amendments is that the negro has at last been reduced to a common level with all other people, his civil and political distinctions removed, and henceforth legislation will be general and include all races alike. The negro, by being merged politically with the rest of the people, ceases to be an object for special attack or defense, and thus drops out of general politics. Hereafter he has to run the race of life, dependent, like all others, upon his own energy, ability, and worth. 287

Even the Democratic Chicago Times, in its usually astute, if bitter, observation, declared that "the nigger question is settled at last:"

The country is thoroughly sick of a question of race that for almost half a century has been thrust forward by political demagogues as a hobby upon which to ride into office; that has never, in any instance, resulted in a public good; that has embittered our political discussions, and disgraced our public councils with animosity and violence; that has plunged the country into civil war.... But the nigger question is settled at last. As individuals, we may or may not like the terms of the settlement; but as a people, we are not just now in a mood to encourage any unsatisfied implacables who propose to disturb the settlement. 288

Obviously both parties were ready to leave race behind, and to move on to other issues. Republicans and Democrats both had used the Negro to gain political power and to make an emotional appeal to the electorate, but it was a used-up tactic. In the process, however, this "tactic" afforded the Negro gains in civil rights which otherwise would have certainly been denied him.

287. Chicago Tribune, Feb. 4, 1870, p. 2.

288. Chicago Times, July 28, 1870, p. 4.

Race was a key issue in Illinois politics from 1865 to 1870.

During this period Illinois repealed its discriminatory "Black Laws," ratified the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments, and rewrote its state constitution to include black suffrage. Despite these seemingly egalitarian actions, however, Illinois remained a largely racist society, and this racism was a constant factor of the political campaigns of the period.

Because of their Reconstruction policies, Illinois Republicans supported legislation for black civil rights. In their campaigns they carefully justified these policies in terms of the "Bloody Shirt" and avoided direct support of black rights. The Illinois Democrats based their campaigns on a direct appeal to racial prejudice. This tactic was generally inadequate against the "Bloody Shirt" appeal, except in 1867, when Republicans came out too strongly for Negro suffrage. In 1868, however, Republicans scored sweeping victories as a result of toning down their support for Negro suffrage and returning to the "Bloody Shirt" strategy. With this mandate they were able to conclude the race issue in Illinois politics with the enactment of Negro suffrage. People tired of the race issue by the end of the decade, and both parties turned to other issues.



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