Several historians have written stimulating essays and observations on the subject of Negro suffrage. Such commentary merits examination for the fundamental questions raised, methods employed, and conclusions drawn. Moreover, the thrust of reasoning has implications for the historian's craft and Reconstruction historiography today.¹

However, a discussion worthy of the name must examine the background, passage, and ratification of the Fifteenth Amendment. To be sure, some historians quite correctly distinguish between intent and result but then proceed in the course of analysis to ignore the historical grounds undergirding questions of intent. Yet interpretation of intent is the only way to understand who wanted what in the Amendment, and that can only be determined by a consider-

¹ See La Wanda and John H. Cox, "Negro Suffrage and Republican Politics: The Problem of Motivation in Reconstruction Historiography," *Journal of Southern History*, XXXIII (August, 1967), 303–30. The Coxes in their essay on the literature of the Fifteenth Amendment conclude that most historians have either denigrated or downgraded the force of radical idealism. They argue that radical Republican politicians, in spite of the racist risks to be run, went ahead and adopted the Fifteenth Amendment because idealism counted for them. The Coxes arrive at this conclusion by examining only the consequence of the Amendment as they see it and not the purposes of the framers and supporters. They discuss the northern Negro voter and note the congressional box score seven months after ratification of the Fifteenth Amendment. They imply that Republican Congressmen ought to have known or guessed either impending events provided by history or statistical data supplied by the Coxes. Thus, the Coxes do not prove their case by the detailed use of primary historical evidence in 1869 and 1870; they merely assume it by hindsight and presuppose that what they think subsequently happened must have been known and acted upon by Congress resembling a sort of collective I.B.M. computer. Yet a fruitful analysis needs to be made in the light of historical evidence already uncovered, interpreted, and published. An argument that fails to come to grips with the evidence, an argument which obscures the real issue of intent in Congress and in the statehouses, an argument that avoids the only recent study, scarcely seems to be an argument at all.
ation of what the members of Congress and the state legislatures practically desired and realistically expected to get from ratification of the Amendment. What they got is a fascinating story but it is irrelevant to the question of determining intent. If not a single northern Negro vote was secured by ratification, if the idea to enlist the northern Negro voter was the dominant idea in the minds of most framers, ratifiers, and supporters, that fact alone of intent is the key to interpretation of the Amendment. What matters then is the process that shaped the product. To be sure, we as historians can agree to disagree about the meaning and significance of the intent of the framers of the Fifteenth Amendment. After all, controversy has raged over the Fourteenth Amendment for decades. The Fifteenth Amendment as well merits more attention, for it was significant as one keystone of Reconstruction and highlighted the difficulty and dilemma of its politics.

At the outset, let us briefly consider the process by which Negro suffrage was achieved, for the line of growth tells us something about the final product. It has long been considered a commonplace fact that there was a sturdy, steady, and increasing progress toward enfranchisement of the Negro after 1865. In fact, this was not the case. Rather than witnessing inevitable progress and invulnerable principle, there were hard starts and abrupt stops. Indeed, it often appeared that for any step forward there were two steps backward. Republican radicals correctly hesitated to champion Negro suffrage in 1865 and 1866. Monotonous defeats in nine referenda showed the drift of northern public opinion. A poor turnout in Ohio in 1867 underscored abstention by loyal Republican voters and suggested the depth of dissatisfaction with Negro
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2 See the first edition of J. G. Randall, *The Civil War and Reconstruction* (Boston, 1937), pp. 799–801. Randall wrote that "the matter of suffrage for the colored race underwent a process of evolution." He also observed that there was "a steady Radical movement toward giving the Negroes the vote ...." See also James M. McPherson, *The Struggle For Equality* (Princeton, 1964), p. 424, who noted that "the adoption of Negro suffrage by substantial majorities in Iowa and Minnesota in November 1868, gave an important fillip to the movement for a Fifteenth Amendment." Compare Leslie H. Fishel, Jr., "Northern Prejudice and Negro Suffrage, 1865–1870," *Journal of Negro History*, XXXIX (January, 1954) 8–26. His conclusion is a familiar one: "Without doubt, the bias against colored voters retreated before the wave of moral and political attacks: Right and Republicanism marching shoulder to shoulder.... [so] that this form of racial prejudice bowed, if slowly, to the inevitable." Compare above pp. 21–45.
suffrage. Surface victories in one-party states with few Negroes—achieved to some degree in Minnesota by electoral concealment and in Iowa by presidential coattail—did not offset critical defeats elsewhere in 1868 and 1869 in New York, Missouri, and Michigan. Unpopular Negro suffrage was rejected by northern voters where it really mattered in politically marginal states with a potential Negro vote. Republicans desperately wanted and needed that vote in such states but failed to get it.

But it has been suggested that qualified departures toward Negro suffrage and unqualified defeats besetting the effort brought forth appropriate tactics and timing to cope with wholesale rejection. Perhaps. But if so, then radical idealists were less idealistic and more pragmatic, less consistent and more circuitous, than the conventional picture of early Reconstruction would have it and certainly more cautious than the disastrous 1867 elections conveyed it. Clearly in critical states in 1867 the Negro suffrage issue was ineptly handled by the radicals.

There is the further consideration: when does tactical opposition to black suffrage in the early years of Reconstruction become a defensive offensive and then a full-fledged assault in behalf of equal suffrage? Historians have been unclear about either genuine conversions or expedient shifts of white politicians on black voting. When, for example, did Senator Oliver Morton see the light? In any event, one thing was crystal clear about the presidential campaign of 1868: Republicans lauded Negro suffrage in the South but scrapped it in the North for the duration of the campaign by an artful dodge in the party plank. This was sharp but smart politics. But given the agonizing twists and turns of Republican politicians, including radicals, on this question after 1865, monumental defeat in 1867, and the strategy of evasion in 1868 as well, all this cannot be characterized as a victory of principle. After the presidential election was won by a close popular

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3 The Republican platform promise of leaving alone Negro suffrage in the North was of course broken by subsequent congressional action in framing a constitutional amendment after the election in order to introduce Negro suffrage there. The inconsistency has upset some historians but Lincoln certainly was correct when he said that it was better to break a bad bargain than to keep it. At best, consistency has been a minor virtue in American politics and can be a major liability when the march of events alters a situation by changing underlying conditions. Compare Leslie H. Fishel, Jr., "The North and the Negro, 1865–1900: A Study in Race Discrimination" (Ph.D. diss., Dept. of History, Harvard University, 1954), p. 118.
vote in many states and with prospect of decreased Republican strength in Congress, Republicans defined their vital interests and promoted them. They opted for an indirect method of having Republican state legislatures still in session in 1869 ratify a federal constitutional amendment framed by a lame-duck Republican Congress rather than risk further rejection by the people through more direct methods, such as conventions and referenda. Events were to prove that the longest way around was to be the shortest way home. That was the common sense of the matter, but it is illusory and uncritical to depict such developments as ordained either by inevitable evolution or by triumphant idealism or, for that matter, by sudden or massive conversion.

Emerson once wrote that ends are implicit in the means. An analysis of the legislative history of the Fifteenth Amendment suggests the wisdom of that observation. Putting it briefly, Democrats in the course of the debate argued that the Fifteenth Amendment was dangerous and wicked—dangerous because the amendment subverted the right of the states to decide who shall qualify to vote—wicked as well, because the amendment gave the ballot to inferior blacks. Republicans responded that Negroes deserved the franchise, for they had fought for their freedom in wartime and now needed the ballot to protect themselves as citizens in peacetime. The debate consumed three hundred pages in the Congressional Globe, took up a quarter of the time of the session, and taxed the patience of everyone. The length and fire of debate underscored the agony of passage. Beneath the high-flown rhetoric were deeper problems often ignored by historians. Parliamentary tangles between moderate and radical Republicans, and between the two houses of Congress; conflicts of interest between supporters of northern and southern Negroes and between friends of impartial and universal suffrage; conflicts of jurisdiction between advocates of national or state authority over suffrage control and qualification; the relentless ticking of the clock as time ran out on the lame-duck session; the sustained conservative opposition in Congress and entrenched strength of Democrats in several state legislatures—all spelled trouble in the launching of the Fifteenth Amendment. The result was a legislative nightmare on Capitol Hill and a hard, bitter fight in a dozen statehouses. Victory was
finally achieved only after extraordinary pressures and measures were applied.

Such a result was ultimately achieved by what was put in and what was left out of the Amendment. The wording and voting indicated for one thing that property qualifications and literacy tests would not be outlawed, a matter which affected more southern than northern Negroes. Similarly, in the failure to include a provision for Negro officeholding the same result was self-evident for the same reason. Southern Republicans wanted and needed the provision; northern moderates did not, and so officeholding was scuttled. Obviously, northern white politicians were more interested in enabling blacks to vote than in raising an unpopular issue or guaranteeing the rare prospect of whites voting blacks into office. An affirmative and explicit grant of suffrage to blacks was rejected. Federal authority over voters was defeated and so the potential opportunity for state evasion was left wide open. One southern newspaper declared what everybody said and knew at the time, that there were "loopholes through which a coach and four horses can be driven." Here again was not a triumph of radical idealism but a demonstration of its effective failure. Republican Senator Charles Sumner was so disenchanted with developments that he was lectured to do his duty by abolitionist Wendell Phillips. But Sumner scoffed such counsel. The Fifteenth Amendment was not Sumner's creature but William Stewart's and George Boutwell's, not the vehicle of idealistic desire but a centrist maneuver, not a radical creation at all. If the Amendment was a triumph of principle over expediency, it is difficult to explain the fury and frustration of that band of radicals who were defeated so often on vote after vote and who, with Sumner, refused to appear for the final conference report roll call. And if the majority was idealistically impelled, they went about it in a curious fashion—by eliminating idealistic reforms. The Fifteenth Amendment was instead a moderate measure, supported by pragmatic moderates and practical radicals who understood the limits of their power and thus acted with limited purposes in mind, modest means in the articles, and practical results in securing ratification and northern Negro voting. Reform was nourished by professional politicians who did what they could because they knew what could and could not be accomplished, and when and how. They knew the quirky
ways of Congress and the real mood of the country. They recognized what the political traffic would bear.4

The northern objective was candidly expressed at the time by two key proponents among others. Republican Congressman George S. Boutwell suggested potential Negro recruits as follows: "Seventeen hundred in Connecticut, ten thousand in New York, five thousand in New Jersey, fourteen thousand in Pennsylvania, seven thousand in Ohio, twenty-four thousand in Missouri, forty-five thousand in Kentucky, four thousand in Delaware, thirty-five thousand in Maryland." Republican Senator William M. Stewart referred to Negro voters in the border states.5 Others, both idealists and realists, said the same thing about the northern objective again and again.6 Without such concrete gains in mind, it would have been foolhardy to run risks if defeat would certainly result. Indeed, fear of reaction would have prevented any action by the moderate majority.

The northern objective was clearly appreciated as well by the press and the people. Earlier in 1868 northern Republican state

4 Daily Richmond W'hig, March 2, 1869; see above pp. 46–78.

As to the notion that the entire ratification fight was irrelevant, this amounts to ignoring the weight of inconvenient evidence by simply denying half of the story. It is arbitrary at best to assume that the legislative history of the Fifteenth Amendment ended when the Senate approved the Amendment on Friday, February 26, 1869, and sent it to the state legislatures for action. To further assume that some miraculous political transformation occurred over the weekend before the state legislature of Nevada met on Monday, March 1, strains one's sense of probability, especially when nothing happened. To further dismiss the subsequent record of congressional requirements of ratification for three states in April of 1869 and another in December appears as unhistorical as to fail to identify, interpret, and weigh the judgments of state legislators and members of the Fortieth Congress who threw themselves into the ratification fight both in Washington and in the statehouses. Finally, it is untrue, and apolitical as well, to assume that all Republicans upon the first of March were immediate and automatic puppets captured or seduced by the Republican party line. Clearly ratification fights in Rhode Island and elsewhere revealed a different story where the Amendment bore directly, concretely, and sometimes critically upon state politics. For the ratification fight, see above pp. 79–165. Compare the article by the Coxes, p. 321.


6 See above pp. 48–49, nn. 8–9. The Coxes, however, stress the other side of the coin. In effect, the Coxes accept as their thesis the judgment pronounced in 1869 by Senator Henry Wilson. Wilson's declaration that "every single question pertaining to the rights of the black men . . . instead of bringing us votes has cost us votes," did not always or exactly correspond to the political realities. Wilson argued and the Coxes agreed that a quarter of a million votes were lost because of endorsing
conventions, such as Delaware and Maryland, passed resolutions in behalf of an Amendment. The first call for a Fifteenth Amendment, by the Philadelphia *Press*, following the presidential election specifically referred to the northern states where the Negro should be enfranchised so as to change the balance of power. In January of 1869 a delegation of the National Colored Men's Convention appeared before the House Judiciary Committee in behalf of a constitutional amendment which would give the Negro the vote in the North and the West. Journals of all political persuasions at the time understood the aim of the Amendment. The abolitionist organ *National Anti-Slavery Standard* declared: "Evenly as parties are now divided in the North, it needs but the final ratification of the pending Fifteenth Amendment, to assure ... the balance of power in national affairs." The Negro newspaper, *Washington New Era*, made the same prediction for the border states. Indeed, most newspapers at some time referred to the northern objective. And when elaborate celebrations over ratification occurred in 1870, they appeared in the North. Subsequently, federal election enforcement paid great attention to the North. All this is not to argue that the southern Negro was irrelevant. On the contrary, an important secondary objective of the Amendment was to safeguard vulnerable Negroes against fraud and to prevent repeal of Negro suffrage. But the northern Negro clearly mattered more in framing the Fifteenth Amendment, as

Negro suffrage. But such an endorsement was not forthcoming in the North in 1865, 1866, or in 1868, while there were net gains in capturing the South by recruiting the black electorate there. One, moreover, simply fails to understand how support of the Fifteenth Amendment would both hurt and help Republicans. If the issue of Negro suffrage was that unpopular and that decisive, then how did Wilson confidently predict in the same breath that ratification would prove successful and indeed that there was a bright political future ahead for the party? During congressional framing, Wilson's ultra-radical views did not represent the majority of practical radicals and committed moderates nor indeed reflect their speeches, votes, and motives. Even Charles Sumner disagreed when he saw political mileage to be gained by the northern Negro voter. Wilson's grandiose, utopian reforms banning all suffrage tests and requiring a guarantee of Negro officeholding were rejected. Even abolitionist, black, and radical journals were to criticize such proposals. Although the Coxes uncritically accept the Wilsonian judgment about political risk, they proceed to criticize other historians for accepting Wilson's other judgment that the Amendment was as he said "very lame and halting," a "half-way proposition," supported by "timid, conservative, halting, short-sighted Republicans...." See speeches of Henry Wilson, *Globe*, pp. 672, 1626–1627, Appendix, p. 153, and the Cox article, pp. 317, 328.

Beyond the historical questions themselves are other problems, which are largely unstated but are in fact no less significant. For some revisionists today, indeed for the Dunningites as well, it appears that expediency is a dirty word, pejorative at best and evil at worst. I do not share their understanding but rather I regard it as a fundamental misunderstanding of how the American political process works and how politicians behave. According to the dictionary, there are two versions of expediency. The first is defined as the “quality or state of being expedient; suitability for a given purpose; appropriateness to the conditions.” Such a definition practically describes politics as the art of the possible, as the matching of desirable ends to available means. Clearly the existential needs of politics and the demands of the day require calculation of consequences, fallible as that human judgment might prove to be. The Fifteenth Amendment was correctly expedient in this sense, for it represented the possibility of the occasion. The Amendment fulfilled a need by providing a vehicle in turn by bridging the gap between the desirable and the essential.

But the Fifteenth Amendment was much more, for it met partly the second definition of expediency as well, namely the “doing or consideration of what is of selfish use or advantage.” Yet the Amendment accomplished this not at the expense of justice but by achieving equal suffrage and party advantage at the same time. It was right and good to satisfy the demands of healthy selfishness to achieve political self-preservation so that Republicans could keep power. But in both the short-term calculation and the long-range expectation, there was to be found the seeds of enlightened self-interest, not narrow self-interest alone. It is simply wrong to equate self-interest with automatic condemnation. After all, the
political order in American democracy, given its pluralistic nature and pragmatic needs, requires that the definition of self-interest prove flexible enough and enlightened enough to satisfy the electorate. What then is wrong with expedient motives and methods? What is the conflict between partisanship and equalitarianism? Why must genuine concern for the party welfare completely exclude any concern for the Negro? What is wrong in identifying equal suffrage with partisan advantage? What is the purpose of politics but to get and use power? The Fifteenth Amendment met both senses of political expediency because it was prudent and practical.8

The dichotomy between idealism and expediency is then misleading on three scores. In the first place, the dichotomy does not represent the real choice for the politician but rather an assumed choice between the extremes of good and bad, light and darkness, the pulpit and the gutter. It is both fallacious and dangerous to suppose that effective choice can only be made between extremes. More often the real choice is a question of degree, a necessary selection of evils, a reconciliation of differences of interest in the means. Legislative actions and political strategies often are determined on the grounds of their probable results, not ultimately on their self-evident value or political purity or logical consistency, for too often time is shorter, pressure is greater, choices are narrower and harder.

In the second place, addiction to ideology often can be harmful in itself and dangerous in result. Adherence to idealistic principle or to dogmatic ideology can dull the senses and even destroy the pragmatic nerve. Without realistic weighing and testing of concrete alternatives, without the inventiveness of intuition and insight, political bankruptcy and intellectual sterility can develop with a closed mind. Many reactionary and doctrinaire southern Democrats after the war followed a course that suggested no war had been lost and no issues resolved. Many liberal Republicans made a profession of jumping parties, shifting coalitions and candidates, and selling out Negro interests in what amounted to

8 See above, p. 53, for the earlier use of ”prudent and practical.” One’s attitude toward power is crucial. Those who depreciate power, denigrate its process, downgrade its uses, and ignore its abuses will be reduced to irrelevancy in its analysis or destroyed by it in politics. One United States Senator put it best: ”Power is like sex. If you think it’s sinful, you don’t enjoy it and you’re not much good at it.”
a fool’s labor of doctrinaire Gladstonian liberalism. The worship of muddy abstractions, philosopher Sidney Hook has warned us, can prove both obtuse and injurious; the most irrational system of all is a closed rational system when grounded on a monolithic ideology. Perhaps political marriages of self-interest often do work better and stand the test of time longer than a tidy but temporary union of ideological principle. The Negro continued to vote Republican for sound reasons, but ritualistic liberals of the old school two short years after ratification of the Fifteenth Amendment tried to sell the Negro down the river in the presidential election of 1872. The doctrinaire approach to politics—purist in object, moralistic in tone, impatient in style, absolutist in demand, rigid in method—often proved not only ineffectual in Congress or at the ballot box but oblivious of real Negro needs and desires. The framers and supporters of the Fifteenth Amendment, to their enduring credit, understood that abstract principles can be the bane of rational accommodation, political compromise, and centrist action.

In the third place, there was no conflict at the outset between the interests of the black electorate and the interests of the Republican Party. Rather, the interests were mutual and not mutually exclusive. There was no necessary conflict between the immediate interest and the practical ideal, the achievable objective. Each needed the other; each would give to get; each would use the other. This was recognized at the time. Radical Congressman William D. Kelley declared, “Party expediency and exact justice coincide for once.” A Negro clergyman named Peck, of Pittsburgh, observed that “the Republican Party had done the Negro good but they were doing themselves good at the same time.” In the best sense, the Fifteenth Amendment was the common sense of the matter because it was relevant and needed. It corresponded to reality, yet also incidentally but only partly met the test of equalitarian principle. The Amendment was both good politics and the highest statesmanship. Only expediency in both senses sparked action. Without expediency there would have been no Fifteenth Amendment at all. Thus the Amendment was to prove in its own way both bold and prudent: bold in enfranchising Negroes despite opposition and in ordering change by establishing constitutional guidelines; prudent in adapting desirability to circumstances so
that the Amendment would not only pass Congress and be ratified by the states but would also be enforced and interpreted by men judging their own needs and times on their own terms.

If the Amendment has been characterized as too idealistic, representing too much forethought, it also has been criticized as too cynical, representing little progress or forethought. One historian characterized the Amendment as weak because impartial rather than universal suffrage was adopted. But it was precisely this omission which secured passage and ratification because it rallied moderates who opposed universal suffrage on grounds either of principle or of opposition to Irish and Chinese voting. Prudence paid.9

In a similar vein, the Amendment also has been characterized as timid.10 Timidity is relative, dependent upon the conditions imposed by time and place. Judgments on such matters ought to take into consideration the real choices open at the time. It is easy enough today to conclude from the perspective of 1969 that more should have been done in 1869, and then glibly to assume that more could have been done. But given the agony of congressional passage, the division of the support, and the ferocity of the ratification fight in the states, it is illusory to demand or expect more than the framers were legislatively able to do. Perhaps a fairer conclusion is that they did what they could; they made possible what they felt was urgently necessary. It is, moreover, an altogether different matter whether the framers really wanted more progress. We can scarcely indict them for not securing what they did not want—federal control of suffrage and universal suffrage—precisely what many radicals wanted and indeed proposed but

9 See above use of my term "prudent" on p. 164 before the term was employed subsequently by the Coxes. For criticism of the Amendment as weak, see William R. Brock, An American Crisis (New York, 1963), p. 288, and above, p. 59, n. 52.

10 See C. Vann Woodward, "Seeds of Failure in Radical Race Policy," Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society, CX (February, 1966), 1–9. Professor Woodward wrote that the Amendment "reveals more deviousness than clarity of purpose ... more timidity than boldness." Kenneth M. Stampp in The Era of Reconstruction, 1865–1877 (New York, 1965), pp. 141–42, characterized both Republican efforts in behalf of Negro voting in 1865 and 1866 and their presidential campaign of 1868 as "timid," but did not characterize the Fifteenth Amendment as such. Senator Henry Wilson characterized supporters of the final version of the Fifteenth Amendment as "timid" and clearly implied that the Amendment itself was also timid. Globe, pp. 672, 1627, Appendix, p. 154.
could not get. Prudence then need not be confused with passivity or stagnate into mediocrity. After all, radicalism can easily degenerate into empty posturing and conservatism into creeping reaction.

Perhaps some would argue that noble stands should have been made. In fact at the time there was the example of Senator Charles Sumner, who expressed the essence of the symbolic approach earlier during the framing of the Fourteenth Amendment when he told Robert Dale Owen that "I must do my duty without looking to consequences." But in the parliamentary process, legislators who are more interested in taking the right posture than in making real progress by ignoring available alternatives and likely consequences will help send the best of measures to oblivion by sheer ineffectuality through symbolic stands. Such an approach often paralyzed rather than promoted effective reform. Charles Francis Adams aptly assessed Sumner and dissected the ritualistic approach to politics: "For Sumner never carried any measure whatever . . . at no moment of his career did he show any proof of high practical wisdom of a Statesman. He could never cooperate to gain an end because he never admitted of difference of opinion."\textsuperscript{11}

Finally, it is not difficult to reconcile the failure of equalitarian impulses, aims, and actions before, during, and after the Civil War with only limited progress toward real political equality in the Fifteenth Amendment. The Amendment clearly represented the pattern, so why is it to be singled out for censure for so accurately corresponding to the harsh realities? Like the settlement of the disputed election of 1876–77, the Fifteenth Amendment in some senses "was not ideal . . . nor was it very logical either. But that is the way of compromises."\textsuperscript{12} The Amendment was a step in the right direction—no less and no more. It represented neither an unalloyed victory nor an unforgivable sellout; it represented only "practical wisdom."

History however would prove not only dull but distorted if we surveyed solely the realm of motivation and ignored the record of

\textsuperscript{11} Diary entry for November 6, 1874, Adams Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society (microfilm, Princeton University).

\textsuperscript{12} C. Vann Woodward, \textit{Reunion and Reaction} (Boston, 1951), p. 4.
action. But before doing so another important assumption needs to be examined, namely, the lack of a significant relationship between federal and state politics. Thus, two historians decided to restrict their inquiry to presidential and representative contests, "since these were of direct concern to Republicans in Congress responsible for the Fifteenth Amendment." But since United States Senators were elected by state legislatures, the bearing of state politics upon federal elections cannot be ignored and the weight of the evidence simply thrown out.

Of supreme importance was the development of Senate campaigns in which a candidate for the United States Senate stumped the state in a campaign for state legislators and urged voters to vote for candidates pledged to vote for him for Senator. When such a campaign occurred, especially during a gubernatorial election, keeping in touch with state developments occupied much of the time and energy of a United States Senator. Once elected, a Senator tried to stay in Washington by controlling, influencing, intervening in the affairs of his state to insure reelection. Federal postmasterships and customs patronage had much to do with local politics and senate races. For example, Rush Sloane, president of an Ohio railroad, advised United States Senator John Sherman to delay action on a federal appointment for maximum

13 See the article by the Coxes, pp. 321–22. William Riker, "The Senate and American Federalism," American Political Science Review, XLIX (June, 1955), 452–69. Riker traced the growth of centralized federalism in the enhanced prestige and greater power of United States Senators. He noted the decline of forced resignations and state instructions after 1846; the rise of the public or Senate canvass, starting in 1834 and flourishing by 1884; the growth of the party primary after 1888; and adoption of direct election of senators in 1913. The widespread practice of senatorial campaigns did not mean that it was universally accepted or admired. That political innocent, editor Samuel Bowles of the Springfield Republican, declared: "I consider it very gross impropriety, for instance, for candidates for the United States Senate to go to the capitals as Hamlin and Morrill did at Augusta, and Fenton and Morgan did at Albany, and there, personally, superintend the combinations by which they hoped to secure their elections—to ask votes as a personal favor, or to suggest that it is for the interest of men to vote for them." Bowles to James G. Blaine, April 9, 1869, Samuel Bowles MSS, Yale University.

Historian David Rothman in Politics and Power: The United States Senate, 1869–1907 (Cambridge, Mass., 1966) has traced the internal growth of postwar party discipline and organization within the United States Senate committee structure, seniority system, and political controls, both formal and informal. Rothman writes, "In post–Civil War America, Senate contests were so vitally linked to state leadership that they assumed unprecedented importance." Rothman, p. 174.
advantage back home. "One thing do not do, that is, do not con-
firm Anderson's successor until after the senatorial election. Be
sure of this. It may preserve two votes for you." The reverse
was also true, for state politics were relevant to federal Senators.
Thus, Republican politician J. S. Van Voorhis wrote to Wash-
ington for help in Harrisburg. Van Voorhis requested that United
States Senator Simon Cameron see to it that legislative apportion-
ment of the state house of representatives include two counties
in the same district so that Republican "nomination would then
be equivalent to an election." Van Voorhis concluded about
creating a safe district that if Cameron "will only pay a little
attention to it, I may be of service to you in 1873" (when
Cameron was up for reelection). Even President Grant when
making cabinet appointments always gauged local political mile-
age, according to Hamilton Fish's account of cabinet meetings.
Instead of institutional isolation, instead of jealous islands of
power, there was vigorous political intercourse between the county
courthouse, the statehouse, and Washington. The Fifteenth Amend-
ment as well reflected realities by the interplay between state and
national politics. The Fifteenth Amendment was generated from
national politics and from state politics; politicians at each level
and often Senators acting at both levels recognized need and
roughly calculated net gains from northern Negro enfranchisement.
It was suggestive that some Republican state conventions in the

14 Rush R. Sloane to John Sherman, December 4, 1871, John Sherman MSS, Li-
brary of Congress. In another letter the writer counseled: "I think you can safely
aid Mr. Lucky, although I do not know how he stands senatorially." C. Foster to
Sherman, September 16, 1871, ibid. See also Sherman's involvement in the organ-
ization and makeup of the state legislature; R. D. Harrison [Chairman, Executive
Republican Committee of Ohio] to Sherman, October 14, 1871, ibid. Senators did
not confine their activities to their campaigns alone. A Democrat complained to
Sherman about one of the Ohio Senator's speech-making tours: "You were not then
a candidate and your reelection to the United States Senate did not depend on the
legislature then to be elected, yet you came into my district and made speeches in
both counties assailing my positions." Subsequently, Campbell denounced Sherman's
current speechmaking, which meant "a transfer of the independence of the Senate
and the citizen, during a canvass involving your reelection..." He termed such a
strategy an "unmanly system of warfare that attacks political opponents from a
masked battery." L. D. Campbell to Sherman, August 18, 23, 1871, ibid.

15 J. S. Van Voorhis to Simon Cameron, MSS, Historical Society of Dauphin
County (microfilm, Yale University).
North requested a federal suffrage amendment in 1868. The impulse depended upon the local situation; every state party had its problems but they varied from state to state and so did the power generator.

If political involvement was the case, then we cannot dismiss out of hand local and state developments. Neither did politicians at the time. Connecticut politics with its delicate balance of party strength was an example. If in February, 1870, before the Fifteenth Amendment was ratified, the Connecticut Republican establishment put pressure on the Grant Administration to get the Negro vote; if the editor of the Hartford Courant, former Governor Joseph Hawley, wrote the Attorney General that "1,200 Negro voters" were at stake and published editorials as well to speed up federal proclamation of ratification for the Connecticut gubernatorial election so that there would be time for Negroes to register; if Republican Governor Marshall Jewell wrote the same message to President Grant; if United States Senator Orris Ferry of Connecticut pushed through the Senate a resolution trying to order formal ratification; if Connecticut Democrats abruptly ended their appeasement of Connecticut Negroes when it became clear that formal ratification would come too late to allow Negroes to register for the Connecticut gubernatorial election; then clearly the northern Negro voter mattered and his power counted in Connecticut. In result, the Democrats won the governorship by 843 votes in April, 1870, because "a thousand or twelve hundred from the colored vote," in the Courant's words, were prevented from voting. But a year later in the 1871 election, with Negroes then voting, Republicans elected their candidate as governor by a slim margin of 100 votes. The Courant declared that victory was "due to our colored voters: The result would have been different without them!" The Democratic New Haven Register observed that Republicans owe their "majorities to their colored not to their white constituents." Connecticut Democrat Gideon Welles also agreed when he wrote after the election that the Democratic candidate would have won "but for the Negro vote. They were from one thousand to twelve hundred Negro votes, of which Jewell received at least 95%, probably more. Deduct the Negro vote, and the majority for English would be at least one thousand." The evidence indicates that the black electorate turned the table on
Connecticut Democrats. Republicans knew it, acted upon it, and said so at the time in Connecticut and throughout the North.

Without ignoring the fact that politics fluctuates as the ocean tides and no election is quite the same, without suggesting a Negro determination of American political history, without taking at face value political gossip which tended to inflate the number and turnout of Negro voters as well as exaggerate their influence and

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16 See above, pp. 126-30; also Gideon Welles to Montgomery Blair, May 1, 1871, Montgomery Blair MSS, Library of Congress; New Haven Evening Register, April 5, 10, 1871; New York Globe, February 24, 1883.

17 The analysis of presidential and congressional races by the Coxes requires consideration. In the first place, it scarcely is surprising that the ultimate national outcome of presidential elections during Reconstruction, with one exception, was not dependent upon the Negro voter. Such a finding was anticipated in my statement in 1965 that the "potential Negro vote could prove more important in state and congressional elections than in presidential elections . . ." In examining congressional elections, one is in danger of being seduced by statistics. County breakdowns do not tell us very much except on a congressional district basis, for the number and character of counties vary widely from one district to another and it is less than clear how redistricting and reapportionment affected such districts. Percentages are ultimately meaningless, for the key question is whether the total Negro electorate was larger than the margin of Republican victory. After all, elections can swing by smaller margins—just small enough to be statistically negligible, thus impossible to handle in statistical terms alone but just large enough to produce Republican dividends. Therefore the question needs to be handled by primary historical research.

It behooves historians to take historical evidence seriously. The Coxian analysis, moreover, is not quite clear, for either the Negro voter helped Republicans or hurt them—yet the Coxes find enfranchisement was often an asset in certain cities and counties in Ohio, New Jersey, Indiana, and elsewhere; but because this was not completely nor uniformly so, they dismiss altogether the significance of the northern Negro voter.

Ultimately the question rests on expectations and assumptions. If there were new Republican victories, if there was some increase in Republican polling, and if there was some decrease in Democratic majorities—and the Coxes admit there was some of each—that situation delighted the framers but disappoints the Coxes. Moreover, the framers neither expected nor could have foreseen political developments in the future. Realistic expectation of relative gains must not be confused with permanent, absolute guarantees of victory regardless of subsequent events. The framers did not assume the degree of coercion in the borderland which was encountered (but then circumvented), nor the difficulty of the black electorate in several places to develop internal cohesion. Surely when Republicans began to suffer electoral reverses and endure a conservative comeback in the South and in Congress, when the party was involved in political scandal and held responsible for national depression, this was not the most ideal time to conduct close elections with dramatic rescues at the hands of black voters. It needs to be kept in mind that there always is in history an inevitable canyon between promise and performance. Events do not keep pace with original aims or even realistic expectations. Seldom has the law of history been logic, but experience. Things rarely turn out as they were supposed to. Men and events refuse to cooperate. Yet given the narrow margins in 1868 and 1869 and the
power, one can note that the northern Negro electorate was sometimes critical in close contests in southern New England, middle Atlantic, and Midwestern states, especially during the 1880's. In Connecticut, Republicans won the governorship in 1871 by a margin of only 100 votes with an estimated 1,200 Negro voters. Republicans again won the governorship in 1878 by a margin of 2,482 and in 1880 by 2,777, and the presidential voting there in

subsequent chances of victory by the black voter, it was a keen, realistic expectation of profit, not loss, that moved the suffrage question off dead center through Congress and through state legislatures to fruition.

In the course of their analysis, the Coxes make two crucial assumptions which are by no means self-evident. They assume that the decisive and exclusive issue in 1870 and even afterward was the adverse reaction of racist whites to black voting. To be sure, there was racist Democratic manipulation by preaching backlash in hopes of reaping it, but there is danger in confounding campaign techniques with election returns. All racist issues, moreover, were not generated by Negro suffrage alone, especially after ratification of the Fifteenth Amendment. To also characterize every congressional election by national issues alone can be misleading for the forces which determined congressional election turnout varied widely from district to district from one election to another. National issues appeared to decline steadily between 1870 and 1880, while district and state issues were much more important. If parties often developed along state and district lines, then differences between districts were greater than assumed, and local issues, like railroads or prohibition, counted more than is assumed today. See Donald E. Stokes, "Parties and the Nationalization of Electoral Forces," in William N. Chambers and Walter D. Burnham, eds., The American Party Systems: Stages of Political Development (New York, 1967), p. 194.

If perhaps the Coxes sometimes overemphasize national issues and downgrade local and state issues in congressional elections, and also overgeneralize northern white backlash to the Fifteenth Amendment after March, 1870, they also assume a full black turnout immediately in 1870 and then downgrade its significance because the Negro electorate did not make enough of a difference to fulfill their wholly unrealistic expectations in the first place. Yet we do not know for a fact what the actual black turnout was in a particular election in 1870 until historical research is undertaken. Given our lack of knowledge, it is too easy to oversimplify, and a trifle premature to dismiss black voting. It may be that in several areas Negroes did not vote in an off-year congressional election because they were not yet qualified, still illiterate, and undermotivated. Black suffrage cannot be taken for granted at the very start of its exercise in the North in every election. The growth of the northern Negro electorate was organic, not mechanistic, not a hothouse affair contrived and controlled by a computer. Black voting took time and patience, cultivation, education and experience, organization and mobilization for power to increase and patronage to develop. Bribery had to be countered. If today it takes much time, energy, patience, and support for Mississippi and rural southern Negroes to develop their voting strength, it is unhistorical to expect that the brave new world should have dawned on a November morning in 1870. It takes illusions to be disillusioned. See above, pp. 82-83; compare the article by the Coxes, pp. 321-30. For one instance of poor Negro turnout for voter registration, see New Haven Evening Register, March 25, 27, 1871.
1880 by 2,656 while the Connecticut Negro electorate of 3,500 exceeded such margins. In Rhode Island, Republicans in 1892 won the governorship by 2,000, with 2,400 Negro voters in the state. In both Rhode Island and Connecticut, because of constitutional provisions which required specified margins to achieve election, it appears that the Negro voter kept Democratic margins often small enough to deprive Democrats of the governorship by automatically throwing gubernatorial contests into Republican-dominated state legislatures which elected Republicans. The Pennsylvania gubernatorial margin in 1869 was 4,596, while the estimated Negro electorate in 1870 was 9,000 to 13,000—good grounds in the Commonwealth to pressure for a Fifteenth Amendment. The Republican majority in 1875 was 12,030. By 1880, there were 23,900 Negro voters, while the Republican vote in 1878 was 22,353. In New York it was estimated that there was a black electorate of roughly 20,000, while Republicans won the presidency there in 1888 by 14,373. In Ohio in 1875 Republicans won by 5,000 votes, with about 15,000 black voters. During the eighties, the Ohio Negro electorate was between 21,000 and 25,000 and every Republican gubernatorial margin of victory was smaller: in 1879 (17,000), 1881 (14,000), 1885 (17,000), 1887 (23,000). Republican Joseph Foraker learned about this the hard way when he lost the confidence of Ohio blacks in the election of 1883, and lost the governorship. But Foraker won over the black electorate in 1885 and was elected governor. He wrote in retrospect that the "negro vote was so large that it was not only an important but an essential factor in our consideration. It would not be possible for the Republican party to carry the State if that vote should be arrayed against us." In presidential elections held in Ohio, the Republican majority was smaller than the black electorate in 1876 (7,516), 1888 (19,000), 1892 (1,027). Republicans won the Indiana governorship in 1868 by only 961 votes and every estimate then of the Negro electorate exceeded that margin. This fact partly explains the furious fight over ratification in Indiana. By 1880 there were roughly 10,700 Negro voters, and Republicans won the governorship by 6,953 in 1880 and by 2,200 in 1888; they also won the presidency in that state by 6,642 in 1880 and by 2,348 in 1888. In brief, without the Negro voter in the North, the national outcome of two presidential elections would
have changed between 1872 and 1892. Take away the Ohio Negro voter in 1876 and Democrat Samuel Tilden would have won Ohio and the White House. Without the indispensable aid of New York and Indiana Negro voters, Republican candidate Benjamin Harrison would have been defeated in 1888 by incumbent President Grover Cleveland. There were then occasions when the Negro voters of the North were a necessary quantity in Republican calculations of success. In contrast to the South, by the eighties the Negro voter in the North had importance out of all proportion to his number.\textsuperscript{18}

Some historians have dismissed the black voter in the border states as well: "Any hope that may have been entertained of gaining substantial strength [for Republicanism] in the loyal border states was lacking in realism." This strikes one as a trifle hasty at best. To write off black political power in the borderland was something border politicians could not and did not glibly do. For example, it is illusory to note that the congressional score was not improved in 1870 when in fact many Negroes who were entitled to vote were prevented from doing so while whites previously disenfranchised voted in that election. It is also curious to dismiss the results in 1872 as an unusual presidential election alone, when in fact the Negro voter seemed to provide the margin of victory in almost every instance. And when border Republicans mounted their gubernatorial comeback in the nineties and afterward, the Negro electorate appeared indispensable.\textsuperscript{19}

\textsuperscript{18}Hartford Courant, October 11, 1884; New York Globe, September 8, 15, 1883, February 16, October 6, May 10, 1884; New York Freeman, May 16, June 13, 1885, November 13, 1886, February 26, 1887; New York Age, February 11, March 10, October 27, November 17, 1888, April 11, 1891; Ronald R. Berry, "The Involvement of the Negro in Rhode Island Politics from 1883 to 1892" (unpublished seminar paper, History Department, University of Connecticut, 1965); Joseph B. Foraker, Notes of a Busy Life (Cincinnati, 1916), I, 177. The New York Tribune argued that Harrison’s victory in 1888 was because of Negro voters in New York, Ohio, and Indiana, quoted in New York Age, March 29, 1890. Reference is also made to the northern Negro balance of power by the Washington National Republican, quoted in New York Freeman, March 26, April 16, 1887. Election statistics were found in the Tribune Almanacs and in Svend Petersen, A Statistical History of the American Presidential Elections (New York, 1963).

\textsuperscript{19}Congressional voting, as reported in the Tribune Almanacs and census reports, is also suggestive. The total Republican congressional vote in the six border states increased from 220,928 in 1868 to 262,202 in the off-year congressional elections of 1870. The increase of 41,374 votes was due to Negroes voting for the first time. But the Negro turnout was quite small, given a potential Negro electorate of
In brief, the approach of some historians fits the brilliant characterization of the "invisible-man solution," formulated by C. Vann Woodward. If, as Professor Woodward phrased it, "Crevecoeur simply defined the Negro out of American identity," some historians have prematurely dismissed black political history from nineteenth-century American politics. To downgrade the efficacy of black political power, without painstaking historical examination through the decades, in effect bestows upon white radical 87,000 to 233,000. Force and fraud caused many Negroes to stay away from the polls. The Republican increase, moreover, was offset by a much larger Democrat gain, because, with the end of proscription, whites in Tennessee, West Virginia, and Missouri were now able to vote for the first time since the war. The Democratic increase, 79,118, doubled the Republican. As a result, Republicans in 1870 lost seven congressional seats in Missouri, six in Tennessee, and one in West Virginia. Except for Missouri, the Republican defeat would have been worse had it not been for the Negro electorate. For example, in east Tennessee in the first and second congressional districts the Republican pluralities were 605 and 532 respectively, while a mere 10% of the Negro population in each district was double the margins of victory (1,374 and 1,597). Similarly, in the second district of West Virginia, the Republican margin (913) was less than the estimated Negro electorate (947). With more Negroes voting by 1872, the results were impressive. Republican pluralities were smaller than the Negro electorate (figured conservatively at 10% of the Negro population within the district) as follows: in Delaware at large, 362 and 2,279; in Maryland in the fifth district, 1,105 and 4,756, and in the sixth district, 1,713 and 1,901; in Missouri in the first district, 142 and 1,786, in the third district, 1,081 and 1,786, in the fifth district, 1,902 and 4,790, in the eighth district, 1,613 and 4,370, in the ninth district, 1,243 and 6,737, and at large, 15,637 and 32,000.

The more significant Republican gubernatorial resurgence came about first in Delaware in 1894 when Joshua Marvel won by a margin of 1,225 (51%), with an estimated 6,000 Negro electorate. The Republican reign in Dover began in earnest in 1900 with the victory of John Hunn by a margin of 3,613 (54%), with at least 6,000 Negro voters. In Maryland the Democratic monopoly of the governor's mansion was broken in 1895 when Lloyd Lowndes won by 18,767 votes (52%), with an estimated Negro vote between 45,000 and 48,000. In Kentucky, William Bradley was elected in 1895 by 8,912 votes (48%). The Negro electorate there was between 34,000 and 58,000. In West Virginia the first post-Reconstruction Republican governor was George Atkinson in 1896, and he carried the state by 12,070 (52%), with that margin probably supplied by Negroes. In Missouri, Republicans defeated the Democratic establishment when in 1908 Herbert Hadley became governor. He won by 15,339 votes, and the Negro electorate numbered at least 33,000. In Tennessee, the most southern-oriented of the border states, Republican Ben Hooper was elected in 1910 by a margin of 12,325 votes, with at least 64,000 Negro voters in the state. In every border state then the Negro voter was critical in developing two-party politics and in achieving Republican victory. Tribune Almanac (1895), p. 280; (1896), pp. 238, 240; (1898), p. 296; (1901), p. 320; (1909), p. 338; (1911), p. 701. See also William Gillette's essay on the border states in Richard Curry, ed., Radicalism, Racism, and Party Realignment (Baltimore, 1969).
politicians more foresight and purer idealism than perhaps the historical record warrants, and thereby enhances the self-esteem of a few white liberals today. Yet to discover that good white radicals did the right things in the right ways for supposedly the right reasons may not be sound enough, searching enough, or realistic enough for critical political history.

If some historians have denied the black role or downgraded the effect, earlier historians denigrated and demeaned the Negro political experience. One historian writing in 1955 characterized northern black participation from 1870 to 1900 as political puppetry, largely on Victorian liberal grounds. James Ford Rhodes summed up the point of view in 1906:

The negro's political activity is rarely of a nature to identify him with any movement on a high plane. He takes no part in civil service or tariff reforms; he was not a factor in the contest for honest money; he is seldom, if ever, heard in advocacy of pure municipal government and for him Good Government Associations have no attraction. He is greedy for office and emolument; it is for this reason that he arrogantly asserts his right to recognition. . . . In a word he has been politically a failure and he could not have been otherwise. . . . he was started at the top and . . . he fell to the bottom.

In brief, since the Negro did not identify such values as his own or become a good Gladstonian liberal, the black voter was a political flop. Yet such a standard is misguided. Negroes did not start at the top but at the bottom. Like every ethnic group in the American political experience, the black electorate was not entirely independent, totally rational, genuinely disinterested, adequately informed, properly organized and harmonized, or completely versed in politics, but then no group was before them. To further imply that the upper middle class and the editorials of the *Nation* monopolized honesty and political intelligence is simply class conceit. To stress as well black illiteracy and to ignore white illiteracy of immigrants and frontiersmen is unfair and unhistorical. As for the conventional wisdom that officeholding and patronage-hunting were dispensable and detrimental, they were to every group at the bottom of the ladder necessary and desirable, and in this regard blacks were no different from anyone else. Finally, to demand divorce from the Republican Party as the alter-
native to supposed subjugation was to misunderstand real conditions and to ignore black support for the party that had supported blacks. Unwilling "to swap a devil for a witch," Negroes naturally gravitated to the Republican Party and generally stayed there, as most groups have done with one party or the other in a particular place for some period of time.20

Enough then has been written about impossible expectations that were inevitably dashed by reality; enough has been said about mythical proceedings for immediate divorce. It is time we knew more about the political marriage itself. One can only sketch the outlines of the emerging picture, for further study is still needed. But one thing is clear: the Negro was not a political serf, a Republican robot. Political alliance did not mean abject surrender; it did not mean an absence of disagreement and discontent, or an end to sustained pressure and controlled revolts. Black politicians and editors understood that the best bargaining position was an aggressive one, for a party showed more interest in militant voters that it might lose than in docile ones it took for granted. Negroes in Newport, Rhode Island, thus boycotted sufficiently for Republicans to endorse integrated schools and Democrats to appoint a black to the school committee. Ohio blacks referred to as "kickers" kicked up enough fuss to help elect a Democratic governor who helped enact civil rights legislation. Republicans saw the light and pushed for more progress in subsequent administrations in the state. To be sure, there could have been more tough bargaining from the Negro community, but it was only beginning to feel and flex its adolescent muscle. Blacks then were not politically apathetic, inert, or rudderless; they were in fact more interested and involved, more active and articulate in politics than often has been assumed. In Providence, for example, black political meetings had larger proportional turnouts than white meetings. Northern Negro newspapers were full of intelligent political activity, and not mind-

less activism or servile subjugation. Interest in black economic development, moreover, did not exclude political activity. In short, Negroes operating under tremendous handicaps in difficult and disheartening times pressured for change and helped make limited progress by voting their best interests. Of course more needed to be done, but at least something constructive was done, and one major method was the path of practical politics.  

The parties responded to black pressure although the character of the response varied sharply from place to place and from time to time. In the eighties Republicans started to take serious note of black dissatisfaction and started to worry about Negro defection. The Hartford Courant termed any Negro who voted Democratic as "an ingrate," while the Norwich Bulletin warned that Democrats who once hunted fugitive slaves now hunted Negro voters. Candidate Benjamin Harrison declared hopefully in 1888 that blacks "will, however, naturally mistrust the sincerity of those party leaders who appeal to their race for support only in those localities where the suffrage is free and election results doubtful and compass their disfranchisement where their votes would be controlling and their choice cannot be coerced." And when Democrats paid real attention to black voters, Republicans replied swiftly in kind. Democratic initiative depended dramatically on the local political situation. Most notable was the pleasant surprise of a Democratic President, Grover Cleveland, making speeches and more appoint-

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21 Negroes, for example, were elected to public office: to the Massachusetts legislature from two white districts, to the New Haven city council in 1874, to the Rhode Island legislature in 1885, to the Philadelphia city council in 1884, in Harrisburg in 1882, to the Ohio legislature in 1879, and to the Indiana statehouse in 1880. Negroes sat in the state legislatures of Illinois, Kansas, Colorado, and New Jersey in 1883. In 1896, the year of Plessy v. Ferguson, three blacks served on the Boston city council. An editorial in the Globe reflected the aggressive stance: "a white Republican who treats a black man like a dog before election, should be made to feel the boot of a black man in the shape of his ballot at the polls. If we cannot strike back with money and learning, thank God we have something in our hands more potent than either." New York Globe, November 8, 1884. See also ibid., January 13, September 15, 1883, February 2, May 10, December 20, 1884; New York Freeman, March 7, October 24, 1885, March 26, 1887; New York Age, December 17, 1887, on the black bolt in the ninth ward of New Haven.

22 Hartford Courant, September 29, 1884; New York Age, September 15, 29, October 27, 1888. A good example of frenzied Republican activity was in New York City. In 1884 there were 35 Negro political clubs, but with Democratic activity in 1888 there were 200 Negro political clubs. See also Seth Scheiner, Negro Mecca (New York, 1965).
ments than before in an effort to win the favor of northern Negroes. The Republican National Republican observed that Cleveland's bold move "to secure at least a part of the colored vote in the States where this vote to some extent holds the balance of power" was directed "to influence the colored vote of the North and selected colored men from the North for that reason." In brief, where and when the Negro voter was really needed in close elections, he was both respected and rewarded—for politicians wanted votes and blacks wanted rights.23

What then is needed is simply more work on the subject of black political history. Research into the internal history of black politics and black politicians is needed, as well as the history of blacks and whites in political cooperation and conflict. City and state studies with attention to black voting are sorely needed before sound generalization can take place; otherwise, we shall be drowned by superficial survey and premature synthesis. And there are dangers. It would be wrong to inject black chauvinism to replace white racism or to introduce historical presentism or political activism as a substitute for comprehensive ignorance of the subject. It would be wrong as well to build history on quicksand. To deny or disguise real racial problems was once well-meaning, but then

23 Washington National Republican, quoted in New York Freeman, March 26, April 16, 1887. Massachusetts blacks were wooed by Democratic gubernatorial candidate Benjamin Butler, and there was as well a bipartisan scramble by the incoming Republican and outgoing Democratic governors in November, 1883, to appoint a Negro as judge of the Charlestown district court. In 1885 the first Negro police officer was appointed by a Democratic Irish mayor of Boston, who then increased the number and also selected a black lawyer for a high post in 1888. In Connecticut between 1883 and 1884, Democratic Governor Thomas Waller integrated the state militia, appointed a black to the prison commission, and helped enact a civil rights bill before the 1884 election. In Rhode Island, Democrats endorsed equal suffrage and nominated Negroes for the legislature in 1883, and a Democratic governor appointed a Negro to the state prison commission in 1887. Similarly, in Pennsylvania a Democratic mayor of Philadelphia first set the example of appointing blacks to the police force. In Ohio, Democratic Governor George Hoadley in 1884 embraced civil rights after some blacks had embraced him at the ballot box. But in monolithically Democratic states like New Jersey, it often if not always turned out that border style Democrats were open foes, and there were Republicans who were false friends. Boston Globe, November 20, 1883, Hartford Courant, January 25, March 28, 1884; Berry essay; New York Globe, November 10, 17, 1883, January 5, February 2, 1884; New York Freeman, August 22, December 26, 1885, June 5, 1886, April 16, September 3, 1887; New York Age, December 17, 1887, May 28, 1888.
as well as today it has proved to be unsound and untrue. The his-
torical experience of each race was not identical, but neither was it
altogether different. Real differences created real problems, but
identity of interest and action were grounds for coalition. It would
also be wrong and racist to homogenize whites and blacks into
monolithic entities which sacrifice individual, group, class, and re-
gional divergence for uniformity. Finally, if black history and Re-
construction history are today the storm centers of American his-
toriography, the limit of their potential and the source of their
danger can be found not only in ignorant obtuseness but in moral
arrogance. Personal commitments have a curious way of going be-
yond the reach of historical evidence by exciting hope which in turn
generates belief. Law office history, like propaganda, remains the
bane of historical craftsmanship.

In brief, if congressmen, state legislators, newspaper editors,
and commentators of all political persuasions declared that the
aim of the Amendment was a northern Negro electorate; if pro-
visions were inserted and others deleted to secure precisely that
objective and no more; if the battle for state ratification centered
on enfranchisement of Negro males in sixteen northern states—it
seems fair to suggest that the primary object of the Fifteenth
Amendment was the northern Negro voter and the springboard
of action was political expediency. The institutional needs of the
Republican Party proved more important than the burden of prej-
udice or the pull of principle. When a party and its politicians are
scared then they will run realistic risks and undertake sensible de-
partures to keep power. Something needed to be done and some-
thing was done. The framers had then both a sense of limits and
a sense of purpose. They had the diplomat's timing, knowing
when to move and when to wait. They also had the courage of the
warrior to take great risks upon which great interests were staked.
Both the caution and the courage, the prudence and the boldness,
the restraint and the resourcefulness, marked the framers and their
strategy in formulating the Fifteenth Amendment.