The New York Nation and the Negro, 1865-1900

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THE NEW YORK NATION

AND THE NEGRO:

1865-1900

An essay submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a degree with Honors in History from the College of William and Mary in Virginia,

by

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Accepted for Honors

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PREFACE

The "Negro Problem" in American history is largely a result of a "white problem." The fixing of American blacks into a position of second-class citizenship in the three decades following the Civil War was a natural product of white American attitudes and actions. This study is an effort to illuminate the racial attitudes of a white intellectual minority through an examination of the positions taken by the voice of this group, the New York Nation.

My primary debt of gratitude is owed to Dr. Richard B. Sherman, my advisor, for introducing me to the tools of the historical profession, and for his continued guidance.

To my fiancee, Marie Bosco, who aided me throughout, both materially and spiritually, and who renewed my will to continue so many times, this essay is dedicated.
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CHAPTER I

E. L. GODKIN AND THE NATION

In the years in which it was edited by E. L. Godkin, the Nation spoke for a group of men and women like him. White Anglo-Saxons, educated at the best schools, they pressed for moralistic reform within the framework of classical nineteenth century liberalism. Dubbed the "conservative minority" by Clinton Rossiter, this group was out of step with the "laissez-faire conservatism" espoused by men like Andrew Carnegie and William Graham Sumner. In contrast, they struggled to preserve the static values of a passing era in a new atmosphere of dynamic industrialization and rapid social and political change. In this respect, their reaffirmation of Manchester economic liberalism and their insistence on the moral purification of government can be seen as a search for stability in a changing age. Viewing politics from the standpoint of a rigid, outmoded ideology, they were repelled by the large scale corruption in public life and felt threatened by the demands of a restless majority: the agrarian crusaders, organized labor, the Greenbackers and the single-taxers. Faced with these demands, they retreated to a political philosophy of elitism. Having little faith in the common man, they envisioned an aristocracy of virtue, intelligence and education who governed according to the principles of laissez-faire. Typical of this group were men like Henry and Brooks Adams, Madison

The ideology of this group was well reflected by the New York Nation. Originally founded by former abolitionist New Englanders, among them J. L. McKim and Frederick Law Olmstead, the weekly journal was primarily intended to promote the interests of the freedmen. The prospectus issued by the initial stockholders foresaw seven major concerns for the weekly, four of which involved the blacks: discussion of the topics of the day on a high level, support of democratic principles, consideration of the condition of the freedmen, diffusion of the doctrine that their uplifting was the concern of all, emphasis on public education, reports on the condition of the South and criticism of books and works of art.  

The new editor, however, had different plans for the Nation. Within a matter of weeks of its founding, Godkin was able to turn the Nation away from the path of radical social reform envisioned for it by some of its more farsighted sponsors. Instead, the journal became both a vehicle for the application of classical liberal reform principles and a defender of morality and orthodoxy from the assaults of "the people". The reversal of its position on the Negro  


question is an excellent illustration of the new role the Nation played under Godkin.

Born in Ireland of English parents in 1831, the young Godkin received a thorough education and a degree from Queen's College, Belfast. When he was only twenty-two, he wrote a popular History of Hungary to publicize the Kossuth's struggles for independence. During the Crimean War, he served as a war correspondent for the London Daily News. After emigrating to the United States in 1856, he made a tour of the southern states, acting on the advice of his friend, Frederick Law Olmstead. He then settled in New York, where he studied law. Although he was admitted to the bar in 1858, he was far more attracted by a career in journalism. He served as an occasional correspondent for London newspapers prior to the founding of the Nation, when he began to realize his dream of creating an impartial, independent journal of criticism.

Under the editorship of Godkin, the Nation acquired and retained certain characteristics which made it an effective vehicle for the class it represented. Although it was a highbrow journal of limited circulation, it had a pervasive influence. It started with about 5,000 subscribers and through the turn of the century it usually had under 10,000. But it was read and respected by an educated

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elite. Among its subscribers were libraries and universities, and its contributors included "nearly every American historian of importance in the late nineteenth century."5 Because the Nation's views were so closely identified with those of its editor, and because its articles were always unsigned, many people thought that Godkin wrote the whole paper. This was not the case. He relied on his staff, which included Richard Dennet, Arthur G. Sedgwick and Wendell Phillips Garrison, for the majority of the articles, although Godkin himself wrote approximately two thousand editorials over the thirty-five year span of his editorship.6 The extraordinary consistency in editorial policy that the Nation exhibited over this period was due to Godkin's dominant role.

With the possible exception of Greeley's Tribune, no other paper has been so consistently identified with its editor. Godkin was an autocratic taskmaster. It was difficult to find assistants who could work with him. For example, from 1881 to 1883, he was a co-editor of the Evening Post along with Carl Schurz and Horace White. However, Godkin's love of domination and his dislike of compromise, combined with Schurz's own strong personality, made the arrangement unworkable. Godkin had his way when Schurz

5 Armstrong, E. L. Godkin and American Foreign Policy 1865-1900, p. 21.

resigned, and the former was made editor-in-chief of the Post. Godkin was accustomed to editorial freedom. He altered and cut articles to make them conform with his own ideas. After one year of the Nation's existence, Godkin became the sole owner of the enterprise. Two conditions enabled him to make the purchase: the magazine's severe financial difficulties, and the dissatisfaction on the part of the original backers with the course laid out for the paper by him. Godkin's editorial freedom continued unchallenged even after 1881, when he sold the Nation to the Evening Post and became an editor of the Post. Henry Villard, the railroad magnate who owned the Post, allowed Godkin so much liberty in editorial matters that one important function of his assistant Wendell Phillips Garrison was to minimize the number of libel suits brought against the editor.\(^7\)

Godkin came to the position of editor as an experienced journalist, and displayed singular writing talent. In fact, his greatest strength as a publicist and critic lay in his ability to use words. Although he was a superficial reader and thinker, he was a master at the use of irony. His style was bold and combative, spiced with humor and often caustic wit.\(^8\) Godkin's overuse of bitter irony


prompted Allan Nevins to write that "while E. L. Godkin is almost beyond praise in small doses, ordinary human nature rejects him if the dose be made too large or long-continued."\(^9\) Although Godkin's style and wit made the Nation what it was, it led Joseph Choate to term the journal "that pessimistic, malignant, and malevolent sheet—which no good citizen ever goes to bed without reading!"\(^10\) Godkin's editorials possessed an irritating dogmatic tone. He intemperately attacked men who took positions different from his own, assuming that these were evidence of defects in character. Two examples of this are his treatment of Wendell Phillips and James G. Blaine. Like other members of his class, Godkin oversimplified issues into moral choices. For example, free silver was merely a choice between honest currency and theft. Although his arguments were couched in claims of moral superiority, economic considerations often influenced his decisions. Despite his unquestioned ability to use irony to stultify his opponents, he often overused it. His editorials sometimes had a bitter and strident tone. Possessing rather tenacious opinions, he seldom changed his mind, and seldom admitted mistakes made by himself or the Nation. It is probable that he merited the remark that he "made virtue odious."\(^11\)

\(^9\)Ibid., p. vii.
\(^10\)Ibid., p. 301.
Whether it was because or in spite of his style, Godkin was the most influential of the critical independent journalists. As such, he reflected the assumptions with which that class of intellectuals approached the question of the role of the black man in post-Civil War America. Godkin's aristocratic conception of democracy posited a well educated, concerned and involved citizenry, who elected the most cultured men of education and wealth to administer the limited functions of government. He believed that there existed no natural right to share in the governing process, and that states had the right to determine who should be entitled to vote. In an 1865 letter to Charles Eliot Norton, Godkin suggested an educational test for all prospective voters. For liberated slaves he recommended a moral test as well to indicate a "disposition to earn a livelihood, or support a family by honest labor." The Negro should prove himself for a period of ten years before being admitted to the franchise, he thought. For Godkin, inclusion into the decision making functions of government was not a matter to be valued lightly, whether by Negroes, or by immigrants, or any others.

Another persistent notion which shows through here is pride in the Anglo-Saxon "race" and contempt for other races. As for the Negro, he wrote in 1865,

12 Ogden, Life and Letters of Edwin Lawrence Godkin II, p. 45.
He has to rebuke the presumption of his unfitness for it [the ballot], raised by his origin—his ancestors having all been either African savages, or as nearly beasts of the field as men can be made; by his extreme ignorance—having been kept in darkness by law; by his defective sense of social obligations—never having enjoyed any rights, not even the commonest.  

Clearly, Godkin approached the question of Negro suffrage with an assumption of Anglo-Saxon superiority.

In other respects, Godkin reflected the spirit of his class. He had no sympathy for the farmer or the worker and viewed their demands as a perversion of democracy as well as a disruption of the established order. Like other believers in laissez-faire, he prescribed a limited role for government. But going one step further, he was convinced that legislatures were powerless to solve social problems, whether it was violence in the South or polygamy in Utah. He was not a thoroughgoing Social Darwinist, although the phrase "the fit survive" crept into his writing on a few occasions. For the most part, Godkin did not rely on Social Darwinian rhetoric or justifications to support his positions.

Godkin labored all of his life for a cause that he finally suspected was futile. Seeing that his brand of moral reform had failed, and with his youthful hopes for democracy shattered, Godkin became increasingly bitter in his last years. Laissez-faire was being turned around by expanding corporations, and corruption in government was accepted as normal. Waves of illiterate peasant

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13 Ibid.
immigrants threatened to inundate the distinctiveness of American character and democratic institutions. When Godkin died in 1902, he considered his efforts at reform a failure. The journal to which he had devoted his life extolled the virtues of a passing era, and spoke primarily to men outside the main currents of change. As a voice unable to understand the forces of change in industrial America, the Nation stood little chance of controlling the direction of those changes.
CHAPTER II

THE RECONSTRUCTION ISSUES

Views of the Civil War

The Nation was founded in July of 1865, three months after the surrender at Appomatox. Facing the country was the immense task of healing the wounds of the war and reconstructing a devastated land. The most immediate problems of Reconstruction revolved around rebuilding the South on an economic basis of free labor, politically reuniting the rebellious states with the Union, and resolving the question of the status of the freedmen. Although there was no question over his status as a free man, conflicts arose over the possibility of distinctions between him and a white man, and over whether his status should be settled and his condition improved before the South rejoined the Union. Thus the future of American blacks was inextricably bound up with the resolution of the Reconstruction issues. Those issues could only be resolved through a national effort, just as the Civil War itself had involved the entire country.

The role of the Nation in the resolution of the Reconstruction issues, particularly the fate of the freedmen, illustrates the involvement of the entire country in that process. The Nation brought certain preconceptions to the issues which strongly influenced the positions it took. The first of these

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concerned the purpose of the war itself. To Godkin and the Nation, as well as many other whites, the war had not been fought primarily for the black; thus, Reconstruction should not concern itself primarily with the interests of the black. Secondly, the dichotomy that the Nation posited between political and social equality resulted in half-hearted support or opposition to many measures designed to promote black independence and dignity.

The result of the conflict between the original dedication of the journal to black interests and the beliefs of its editor was a changing Reconstruction policy. At first a champion of Negro interests and a strong supporter of Radical programs, within a few years the Nation became highly critical of the Radicals and Congressional Reconstruction. Viewing the reconstructed state governments as holidays of "Negro Rule" and unmitigated corruption, the Nation hailed the return to power of white conservative Democrats and the subsequent curtailment of black participation in government.

For the Negroes the Civil War was, first of all, a war for their freedom. For them the primary issue was their rights as men and citizens. For Northern whites, the war began as a war to preserve the Union, and it was only later that the Administration included emancipation in the goals of the war. For the liberals of the day, the Nation particularly, the Civil War

was more than a victory for the Union and for freedom. It was a test of the ability of a democracy to survive internal strife.\textsuperscript{3}

Although the slavery controversy was the immediate cause of the war, they felt, the true issue at stake was the anti-democratic political structure of the South. Victory meant the break-up of sectional parties, which had threatened the future of the Republic even more than slavery.\textsuperscript{4} Oligarchic privilege having been overcome, the path to a free society based on the liberal democratic ideals of peace, progress and reform was now open.\textsuperscript{5}

Viewed from this standpoint, freedom for the former slaves was a desirable by-product of the struggle. Abolition of "the institution" removed one obstacle inhibiting progress towards a democratic society, but it guaranteed nothing. The war being essentially over the nature of the political system, as opposed to a crusade for human rights, the ideology behind it prescribed no specific status for the freed slaves, either politically or economically.

**Political Versus Social Equality**

At the close of the war, the future political and social status of Negroes was unclear. Some whites, like President Johnson, felt that blacks were not yet ready for the privileges


\textsuperscript{4} *Nation*, I, August 17, 1865, p. 20c.

\textsuperscript{5} Grimes, *The Political Liberalism of the New York Nation*, p. 3.
of citizens. Many white southerners believed that they never would be. On the other hand, many northern Negroes, among them Frederick Douglass, demanded uncompromised political equality. Among the Radical Republicans there came to exist an equally strong commitment to political equality, and in the case of Senator Sumner of Massachusetts, a belief in the necessity for the elimination of social discrimination as well.

For the Nation's part, distinctions between political equality and social equality were taken for granted. The Nation tirelessly pressed for the implementation of its definition of political equality, but evaded the issue of social equality whenever possible. To Godkin, political equality meant not that all men shared equally in the governing process, but that all men were equal in the eyes of the law and that all restrictions were equally shared. Social equality, the unfettered interaction of individuals on a personal level, was not opposed per se, but any efforts to achieve this through legislation were vigorously attacked. The Nation drew a fuzzy line between the two, and sought to champion political equality while denying the importance of social equality. This, of course, sometimes led to inconsistencies, especially when the issue was legal segregation. Other issues as well illuminate the artificial

6Franklin, From Slavery to Freedom, p. 304.
7Meier and Rudwick, From Plantation to Ghetto, p. 148.
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The dichotomy between political and social equality which the Nation perceived: "personal freedom," the franchise, intermarriage, and discrimination, both private and governmental.

In keeping with its conception of political equality, the Nation categorically insisted that every man be allowed certain personal freedoms: the right to testify in court, to sue and be sued, and the right to own, buy and sell real estate. In 1866, the journal favored a Constitutional amendment forbidding exclusion from these political rights on the grounds of color. This was a reaction to the Black Codes passed by some Southern states in 1865 and 1866. These codes ordinarily circumscribed the rights of blacks with respect to contract action, property ownership and vocational choice.

However, political equality did not mean to the Nation that all men should vote. A state could set any qualifications it desired for the suffrage; in fact, "a wise state should demand conditions." But these qualifications should be equitably applied, and should not be racial in character. Godkin saw in the controversy over Negro suffrage an opportunity to implement the educational test which he was convinced was so essential to intelligent voting. Consequently, the Nation urged exclusion from the franchise of illiterates, both white and black.

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9_Nation, II, February 1, 1866, p. 134.
10_Meier and Rudwick, From Plantation to Ghetto, p. 154.
11_Nation, I, July 20, 1865, p. 74.
12_Ibid., August 3, 1865, p. 134.
13_Ibid., July 13, 1865, p. 40.
Thus, the Nation approached the matter of Negro suffrage cautiously. Initially, all it asked for was the equal application of restrictive qualifications in both the North and the South. Following the changing mood of Congress, the Nation soon became convinced that the ballot was necessary to enable blacks to protect themselves, although it would not be sufficient. Liberal political ideology held that the strongest safeguard against the abuse of power was the representation of every class, and when faced with the abuses of the southern states, support of unrestricted black voting was a consistent policy for the Nation.

Like the Congressional Republicans, the Nation realized that the newly-enfranchised freedmen would be loyal supporters of Republican candidates and of Congressional Reconstruction. The journal saw nothing wrong with using the Negro vote to maintain Republican control of Reconstruction. Blacks had demonstrated their loyalty to constitutional and democratic principles, it noted, and had more right to the vote than disloyal whites.

Extension of the franchise to blacks was seen as a necessary first step. Beyond protection from flagrant class legislation, and ending open discrimination, outrages and assaults, the ballot would do little for Negroes. Unlike Horace Greeley,
who saw the ballot as a panacea, the Nation affirmed that universal suffrage was a "mere quack remedy" unless the Federal government compelled southern states to establish a common school system.\footnote{Ibid., III, November 29, 1866, p. 430.}

Once committed to support equal suffrage (Godkin never desired universal suffrage), Godkin brought his writing talents to bear on the opponents of Negro suffrage. Every negative argument, he said, was based on prejudice.\footnote{Ibid., II, May 22, 1866, p. 648.} He denied the catastrophic results foreseen by some, and affirmed that only improvement could come from it.\footnote{Ibid., V, August 29, 1867, p. 171.} Godkin made no efforts to conceal the contempt he felt for southern whites, nine-tenths of whom he felt were illiterate, lazy, shiftless and ignorant of political issues.\footnote{Ibid., I, July 20, 1865, p. 69.} For him, there was no viable alternative to equal suffrage. Government for all colors was the only possible government in the South.\footnote{Ibid., V, November 21, 1867, p. 414.}

After the Civil Rights Act of 1866 was passed over Johnson's veto, the Nation urged Congress to uphold its duty to secure equal political rights, as well as to protect the freedmen's person and property. It labeled the extension of the suffrage to blacks "a wise and necessary course."\footnote{Ibid.} However, it continued, the Negro must now demonstrate his capacity for self-government.
by showing qualities of "prudence, forebearance, and deference to superior wisdom." As early as June of 1868, the Nation was willing to "leave the political relations of the two races at the South to be decided by their relative mental and moral capacity and power of multiplication" within the framework of political equality.

Segregation of public accommodations existed by custom and by statute in both the North and the South even before the Jim Crow laws of the late 19th century were passed. The Civil War and its limited commitment to civil rights increased the sensitivity of some whites to the injustice of segregation, especially that sanctioned by law. It became a political issue in the Reconstruction period largely because continued black opposition to segregation and agitation for prohibitory legislation, such as the Sumner Civil Rights Bill. The writings of the Nation on that issue reflect the division it made between social and political equality.

When the Nation believed it was dealing with a question of political equality, it attacked de jure segregation as inconsistent with liberal principles. For example, the Nation classed the rights to ride a horse-car, occupy a stateroom on a steamboat and ride integrated railway cars as political rights, because exclusion from these facilities would work serious hardship on blacks. However, when the Nation saw in efforts to

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24 Ibid.
25 Nation, VI, June 11, 1868, p. 464.
26 Meier and Rudwick, From Plantation to Ghetto, p. 80.
27 Nation, IV, May, 1867, p. 366.
eliminate de jure segregation an attempt to legislate social equality, it strongly opposed the measure. Any attempt to do so, it believed, was both dangerous and futile. Thus, the Nation objected to the 1868 statute of the Reconstructed South Carolina legislature providing for equal treatment in hotels. Whites would not freely patronize a hotel serving Negroes, it warned, and felt it unfair to expect hotel owners to pay the price for social equality. Besides being unenforceable, the statute would merely increase white hostility. Integrated accommodations were unnecessary, in contrast to transportation facilities, because blacks supposedly could find satisfactory lodgings at black hotels.

Legislation for social equality, the Nation wrote, jeopardized that for political equality. Finally, it objected to efforts to eradicate symptoms of prejudice without touching the cause. 28 Throughout the entire period, the Nation adhered to the position that "political justice and safety, not social equality, is in question." 29

The source of the Nation's distinction between social and political equality was its conception of the nature of prejudice. It was prejudice which made social equality impossible, and rendered legislation powerless to implement it. Two main views of prejudice coexist in the pages of the Nation of the period.

28 Nation, VII, August 20, 1868, p. 142.
29 Ibid, I, July 20, 1865, p. 68.
One view saw it as an essentially rational identification of color with an apparent want of mental, moral and physical vigor. According to Godkin, white prejudice rested on the lack of previous Negro accomplishment. Thus, the removal of prejudice would have to be wrought through the prudence, energy and ability of the persecuted race. The Nation enjoined Negroes to acquire property, education and middle class standards of behavior. Respect and social acceptance could only be gained by earning them. Blacks were entitled to "fair play and a fair field for all," but the rest depended on them.

The second main view saw prejudice as a barbarous and unchristian belief, a holdover from the degrading effects of slavery. This view believed that the eradication of prejudice would follow once whites began to see and treat the black as a human being. Contributors of both outlooks agreed that prejudice, whether rational or irrational in origin, resulted in absurd reactions on the part of Negrophobic whites. The journal usually condemned examples of blatant racism such as the Black Codes or lynching.

According to Gunnar Myrdal, white resistance to social equality usually presented itself as a determination to prevent racial amalgamation. Myrdal observes that intermarriage

31Ibid,
32Ibid, I, November 9, 1865, p. 570.
is resented because it indicates social equality, while the rationalization is that social equality will bring intermarriage. Since the question of intermarriage is so much a symbol of white opposition to social equality, and has traditionally been used as an indicator of integrationists' sincerity, it is appropriate to examine the Nation's views on this. Although Godkin thought the question of intermarriage an inappropriate topic for a journal of politics and art, the issue inevitably received consideration as peripheral to the larger questions of political and social equality.

Throughout the period under study, the Nation expressed disapproval of laws forbidding intermarriage. Laws of this type were premised on the assumption that the Negro was something less than a human being, and as such were merely "old dogmas in new dresses." The Nation had no objections to individual mixed marriages (for example Frederick Douglass'). But the journal was not about to embark on a campaign to encourage interracial marriage, as Wendell Phillips did. Perhaps the willingness of the journal to countenance individual examples of mixed marriages was a result of its unshakeable conviction that widespread race-mixing was highly unlikely to occur. Political equality was not going to lead to social equality, was the reiterated theme. Social relations were voluntary, and would always reflect the prejudice shared by most


34Nation, II, January 25, 1866, p. 104.
whites of this period. The disinclination of whites to marry Negroes, the Nation wrote, was due to unspecified "causes which will probably outweigh most of the political organizations now in existence." 35 Not only would white resistance to intermarriage endure, but blacks were unlikely to force themselves where they were unwanted, Godkin believed. 36

For Godkin, as well as for the majority of white Americans, the continued operation of separating forces was not a dismal prospect. He believed, like Booker T. Washington, that the two races could live side by side in peace. Washington's phrase "separate as the fingers, yet one as the hand in all matters essential to mutual progress" aptly describes the Nation's conception of race relations. 37 To those who contended that intermarriage would improve the white race, the Nation replied with characteristic Anglo-Saxon racial pride that although one could not predict the results of race mixture, it was unnecessary:

Besides which, the white race on this continent is a very good race as it stands. We do not know of anything it needs which education and culture cannot supply without galling in the assistance of professional breeders. 38

It was with these kinds of convictions that the Nation approached the Reconstruction legislative issues: that the Civil War was not primarily a war fought for black people,

35Tbid, V, December 12, 1867, p. 481.  
37Meier and Rudwick, From Plantation to Ghetto, p. 203  
38Nation, V, December 12, 1867, p. 481.
that political equality should be an essential feature of the postwar society, that legislators should not concern themselves with issues of social equality, and that America was destined to remain a nation of two separate races. Northern white public opinion, for the most part, shared these assumptions. There existed, however, among some former abolitionists, social reformers and Congressional Radicals, a determined egalitarian idealism with which the Nation would soon come into conflict.

A Changing Reconstruction Policy

By the summer of 1865, it was clear that widely divergent points of view existed on the direction that Reconstruction should take, and who should control it. President Johnson was already implementing plans for lenient, Presidential Reconstruction. Some Radical Republicans, led by Charles Sumner and Thaddeus Stevens, were determined that Congress control the process, and that the southern states be treated as conquered provinces. Most Congressional Republicans felt that Congress should cooperate with Johnson and share control.

The Nation steered a moderate and sometimes vacillating course between extremes. The journal initially gravitated to a Radical position, but later lost interest in efforts to protect and elevate the freedmen. The Nation's changing Reconstruction policy illustrates the shrinking commitment to black interests of both that journal and the country at large.
President Johnson's lenient program for Reconstruction required only that state conventions abolish slavery and repeal the ordinances of secession. Southern states took advantage of this and passed Black Codes to replace slavery as a system of social control. The Nation's initial recommendations were a reaction to these events, and urged caution and delay in deciding how southern society was to be reorganized. A partial realization of the significance of the adjustment that whites had to make, and their apparent reluctance to do so, led the Nation to advocate a period of probation rather than immediate acceptance of the rebel states.39 This period, which would last until southern whites had accepted the new order, would enable the North to both learn more about the situation and ensure the penitence of the rebels.40

The Nation was determined that southern society be reorganized on the basis of political equality so that a man might not "be excluded from civil rights for the ridiculous reason that his skin is of a particular hue."41 To the Nation, the expedient solution to the Negro problem coincided with moral duty, both being the elimination of unequal restrictions. It rejected schemes for separate territories for blacks, like that advanced by General J.D. Cox, Republican candidate for governor of Ohio. Instead, the Nation demanded "absolute

39 Nation, I, July 6, 1865, p. 9.
41 Ibid, July 27, 1865, p. 102.
political justice for the Negro even if it necessitated the occupation of the South for a generation, and forewarned a day when whites and blacks lived together in political and industrial unity. As noted earlier, the Nation's most emphatic demands were limited to issues of a political and economic nature.

The Thirty-Ninth Congress met on December 4, 1865. By this time, all of the seceded states save Texas had fulfilled the President's requirements for readmission and had elected federal Congressmen and Senators. At the instigation of Thaddeus Stevens and a number of other Radicals, the Joint Committee on Reconstruction was established to study the situation in the South. The Nation advised Congress to compel the repeal of the Black Codes, guarantee Negro suffrage in the South and establish military government in the South. To ensure the security of life and property, the nation should be willing to maintain an occupation army of two hundred thousand men for twenty years if necessary, the Nation wrote. The substance of these recommendations was later implemented in the Reconstruction Act of 1867, so it is clear that at this time, the Nation's thinking coincided with that of the Radicals.

In February of 1866, Johnson alienated many conservative Republicans with his veto of the Freedmen's Bureau bill and by making a vituperative speech which harshly condemned

42Ibid, August 24, 1865, p. 229.
43Nation, I, December 7, 1865, p. 711.
the Radical leaders. The Nation, having opposed his policy from its first issue, increased the intensity of its attacks on the President. Johnson further alienated moderates with his veto of the Civil Rights bill, which guaranteed blacks ordinary rights of citizenship, in April 1866, giving the Radicals enough support to pass it over his veto. Prior to its passage, the Nation had firmly supported the bill, saying that a "more important bill has never come before Congress." It represented an opportunity to "put human rights theory into practice." Naturally, Johnson's veto infuriated Godkin. It was labeled "one of the most discreditable state papers known to American history, "and was said to make the Dred Scott decision look respectable." "In the name of heaven and humanity, what are civil rights if those which we have enumerated are not included under that term?" the Nation demanded.

As support for Johnson evaporated in the summer of 1866, the Nation's attacks on him grew even fiercer. It alleged that he had resolved to break up the Republican party and rule as a dictator. The New Orleans riot on July 30, 1866, in which blacks and Unionists were murdered by the local police, occasioned harsh criticism in some northern circles. The federal government had failed to act quickly to use the soldiers in New Orleans to restore order, and Johnson became the target for

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44Ibid., II, March 22, 1866, p. 353
45Ibid., April 5, 1866, p. 422.
46Ibid., p. 423.
47Ibid., III, July 19, 1866, p. 50.
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abuse when he failed to condemn the white perpetrators of the outrage.48 The Nation labeled the riot the President's "crowning, his damning disgrace."49 There was "not a doctrine in his political creed which he has not violated, not a promise he has not broken."50

For Godkin, the Reconstruction problem had two main aspects: attitude change by southern whites and improvement of the blacks' condition. Both of these goals, he realized, would take time to achieve and would come only with material and social progress.51 But this did not mean, as Henry Ward Beecher suggested, that the Negro must be left to the operation of natural forces. On the contrary:

A government which tells a citizen or subject who complains to it that he is oppressed or maltreated by his fellow-citizens, as Mr. Beecher wants our Government to tell the Southern freedmen, that he must look for an improvement in his condition to the general progress of Southern society, absolves him from his allegiance.52

Godkin upheld the role of the federal government in providing security for person and property, enforcing political equality, disfranchising disloyal Southerners and requiring educational facilities to be provided by state governments.53 As the victor of a real war, the Union was left "master of the situation"

49Nation, III, August 9, 1866, p. 101.
50Ibid., August 16, 1866, p. 130.
51Ibid., July 5, 1866, p. 11.
52Ibid., September 20, 1866, p. 231.
53Ibid., November 8, 1866, p. 370; Ibid., July 5, 1866, p. 11; Ibid., November 29, 1866, p. 430.
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and was duty bound to ensure the survival of the gains of the war. 54

Despite the apparent determination of the Nation to have the North enforce its will on the South, the government's duty to the Negro was essentially that prescribed by laissez-faire economics. In this case, provision of a fair field for all was limited to enforcement of equal legal rights. The following illustrates this parallel;

We, too, are in favor of having the negro work out his own salvation. We would have him tread the thorny path to civilization as other races have trodden it: with bleeding feet, if he cannot procure himself shoes; with naked back, if he cannot buy clothes; with much stumbling, if God has not given him good eyesight. Every disability of brain or muscle which the Creator has inflicted on him, we are content that he should bear; but we insist that when he enters the lists to strive for knowledge or fortune or fame men shall not weigh him in the race; that Southern constables shall not rush up and fill his pockets with lead and throw pepper in his eyes in the shape of acts of legislature forbidding him to buy or lease land, to open schools, to prosecute or defend freely in the courts, to learn or pursue certain kinds of industry, to carry arms for his defense, to debate publically with his fellows upon the means of bettering his condition. 55

The election of 1866 formalized the popular repudiation of Johnson's policies. It left him with the support of less than one-third of both the House and the Senate. 56 The crowning blow to his influence was the rejection of the Fourteenth Amendment, on his advice, by every southern state.

54Ibid., November 22, 1866, p. 410.

55Ibid., September 6, 1866, p. 193.

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except Tennessee. The Radicals were now in control when Congress met in December, 1866. The Nation joined the chorus in calling for immediate action by Congress. "The day of grace is past," it warned. Godkin, like the majority in Congress, believed that military rule was a necessary, though transitory, stage to establish the foundations of democratic government. In addition, Godkin stressed the necessity and feasibility of establishing a system of popular education as an essential feature of any plan.

The Reconstruction Act of March 2, 1867 was the product of Radical reaction to Johnson's discredited policy and to Northern demands for military government of the South. The Act divided the South into five military districts, proclaimed martial law, disfranchised ex-Confederates and required all states to ratify the Fourteenth Amendment before they could rejoin the Union. The disfranchisement of ex-Confederates placed southern politics under the control of a Republican party made up of Negroes, whites loyal to the Union (scalawags) and northerners (carpetbaggers) who had moved South for business or philanthropic reasons. This last feature probably doomed the program from the beginning, because it resulted in an identification of Reconstruction corruption with "Negro Rule."
Although it failed to provide for the establishment of a public school system, the Nation approved the Act. It saw no alternative, given the abuse of self-government that had occurred under Johnson’s policy.\textsuperscript{60}

After the passage of the Reconstruction Act of 1867, the Nation's interest in the southern question began to wane. It predicted that "the political issues of the war will soon pass away, unless revived by the folly of those who assume to be the especial friends of the South,"\textsuperscript{61} It confidently asserted the permanency of the black man's right to vote. The Nation was eager to turn its attention to the future political issues: the "eight-hour delusion," temperance and financial questions. It did affirm, though, that blacks would continue to require assistance from the North and the national government.\textsuperscript{62}

In late 1867 and early 1868 divisions between the opinions of Nation contributors and those of Radical leaders such as Wendell Phillips and Thaddeus Stevens began to appear. The first issue to separate them was Charles Sumner's proposal to grant each colored head of a family forty acres of land, derived from land either sold for taxes or confiscated from whites as a condition of pardon. This would have done more to satisfy the freedmen's longings than all of the legis-

\textsuperscript{60} Nation, V, July 4, 1867, p. 2.

\textsuperscript{61} Ibid., IV, June 27, 1867, p. 518.

\textsuperscript{62} Ibid.
lation for civil and political rights. To the freed slaves, land, more than political rights, meant freedom, responsibility and improvement. Northern politicians and philanthropists, though, were divided on the propriety of confiscating white-owned land and distributing it to the former slaves. To Godkin this smacked of robbery and the crudest sort of class legislation. The Nation sprang to the defense of property rights. Instead of land, he asserted;

What the negroes want is education. Let us vote millions for schools, tens of millions for books and papers, but not one cent for gifts or largesses. No man in America has any right to anything which he has not honestly earned, or which the lawful owner has not thought proper to give him.

Confiscation, he believed, would exacerbate race tensions in the South, and teach the newly-enfranchised blacks to misuse their votes in support of class legislation. As it was, the result was the emergence of sharecropping and crop-lien systems to replace the slave labor plantation system. The second issue at which the Nation was at odds with the Radicals was the plan of paying off war bonds in greenbacks. The proposal, associated with Democratic Ohioan, George H. Pendleton, provided for a substantial increase in the number of greenbacks in circulation, and inflation as a result.

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63 Meier and Rudwick, From Plantation to Ghetto, p. 150.
64 Nation, IV, May 16, 1867, p. 395.
65 Ibid., June 27, 1867, p. 520.
66 Meier and Rudwick, From Plantation to Ghetto, p. 150.
The deflationary policy of retiring greenbacks approved by the Republican Congress in 1866 had resulted in a recession and in Democratic gains in the 1867 state elections. Consequently, by 1868, a majority of both parties favored inflation. Opposition to "soft money" was centered in Eastern banking centers such as New York, where the Nation was published. Godkin sided with the Democratic financiers against the Radical Republicans such as Benjamin Butler, Thaddeus Stevens and Oliver P. Morton, who were outspoken in their advocacy of the Ohio Idea. The Nation saw Radical support of the plan as merely a cowardly attempt to recoup public support for their Reconstruction policy, which in part, it was. It called for the fulfillment of obligations to white bondholders as well as the freedmen. Godkin considered the currency issue, like many others, a moral one. As greenbacks were worth less than the money originally borrowed by the government, Pendleton's plan was simply repudiation and theft. Consequently, he believed that supporters of the plan must have been morally degenerate.

A third issue on which the Nation criticized the Radicals was a bill introduced in January of 1868 which sought to place the military districts of the South under President Grant's control and to limit the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court.

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68 Nation, VI, January 23, 1868, p. 64.
69 Ibid., VII, July 30, 1868, p. 82.
Court over Reconstruction legislation. The Nation thought this would be a bad precedent. Excluding laws from the jurisdiction of the Court might become a habit, it feared, one that could be used against blacks in the event of a Republican fall from power. 70

This bill was a response on the part of Northern Republicans to white southern resistance to the Reconstruction Act of 1867. White opposition to corrupt carpetbag legislatures and black political participation found its most spectacular outlet in societies such as the Pale Faces, the Knights of the White Camellia, the Society of White Roses and most important, the Ku Klux Klan. 71 Through attacks on the persons of peaceable whites as well as blacks, the Klan sought to intimidate all of the supporters of the carpetbag regimes. The Klan's struggle against black political power gave its lawlessness a social dignity among Southern whites. 72

Congress and northern public opinion, as well as the southern state governments, became increasingly concerned that Klan violence might destroy political and economic stability in the South. Following Tennessee's lead (1868), many southern states passed Ku Klux laws which were generally ineffective in suppressing the violence. The inability of southern state governments to keep order in their own house strengthened the determination of Congress and the President

70 Ibid., VI, January 30, 1868, p. 82.

71 Synnestvedt, The White Response to Black Emancipation, p.27.

to crush the Klan. In May, 1870, an Enforcement Act was passed to protect black voters, providing fines and imprisonment for those who obstructed voting, enforced by federal agents. In February, 1871, the Act was amended to provide for federally appointed supervisors of elections. Fresh reports of outrages resulted in the passage of the Ku Klux Act in April 1871. The Act gave President Grant power to proclaim martial law and suspend the writ of habeas corpus in any state. However, these laws were wholly inadequate. As the federal government showed an increasing tendency to leave the South alone, white Conservatives continued to employ the tactics of political pressure, economic sanctions and violence to curtail black political participation. 73

The period from 1868 to 1872 saw the Nation adopt a position in favor of letting the South and the Negro alone to work out their own salvation. Although the Nation had initially expressed a willingness for the North to maintain military rule for a generation, by August 1868 this period had shrunk to four more years. 74 By mid-1869, the Nation repeatedly called for the removal of all federal troops. 75

This reversal was accompanied by an increasing emphasis on the deep-seated nature of non-political forces, and an increasing willingness, if not eagerness, to let the southern

73 **Ibid., p 161, 173.**

74 *Nation, I, December 7 1865, p. 711; Ibid., VII, August 20, 1868, p. 144.*

75 **Ibid., VIII, March 25, 1869, p. 225; Ibid., VII, June 10, 1869, p. 445.**
regeneration occur under a white man's government. Of primary importance to this change was Godkin's recognition of the impracticability of continuing military rule with public support for the policy waning.76 Perhaps of even greater importance was the apparent impatience of Godkin to leave the war issues behind and get on with the business of reform.

In June of 1868, the Nation asserted:

The three great questions of the day we hold to be the reform of the civil service, the condition of the judiciary, and the finances.77

The Nation's rationale for leaving the South alone was based on the conviction that legislation had done all it could do, and further social and political improvement had to be the product of time, education and prosperity.78 With the ratification of the Fifteenth Amendment (March, 1870), which provided that rights of United States citizens might not be denied on account of race, color or previous condition of servitude, the Nation considered the work of the North in guaranteeing equality complete.79 What was now needed, Godkin believed, was individual regeneration; each white would have to purge himself of prejudice, and each former slave would have to acquire through his own diligence intelligence, morality and wealth.80 Seeing the problem

76 Ibid., VII, August 20, 1868, p. 144.
77 Ibid., VI, June 4, 1868, p 466.
78 Ibid., IX, July 15, 1869, p. 44.
79 Ibid., VIII, February 11, 1869, p. 102.
80 Ibid., X, April 28, 1870, p. 266.
as one for individuals, it was easy for Godkin to join moderate Republicans such as Carl Schurz and Lyman Trumbull in concluding that all legislation could do had been done. The latter two felt that further federal interference was politically inexpedient as well.81

With the legislative aspect of the Negro problem presumably solved, the Nation advocated a southern policy similar to Hayes' but antedating it by seven years. The journal urged conciliation and a return of native white political domination. The Nation avowed that it worked on the assumption that men, if left alone, improve.82

The Nation's treatment of the Ku Klux Act of 1871, which represented a departure from the growing northern mood of indifference to the southern problem, reflected the weekly's changed attitude towards legislation to secure black rights. In 1868, the Nation had recommended direct pursuit by soldiers and the hanging of all Klansmen as a solution to the problem of intimidation.83 By 1871, however, despite the fact that Klan violence had increased since 1868, the journal urged a gentler course of action. Those interested in the decline of Klan outrages, the Nation advised, should work for: the decline of carpetbag influence, immigration to the South and the establishment of efficient school systems, instead of harsher laws.84

82Nation, XX, January 20, 1870, p. 36.
83Ibid., VI, April 9, 1868, p 283.
84Ibid., XII, January 19, 1871, p. 35.
When the Ku Klux bill came up for discussion in Congress, debate was acrimonious. For its part, the Nation joined the Democratic and moderate Republican opposition, which included James Garfield and Carl Schurz, and attacked the bill savagely. The journal wailed,

Never in the political history of the country has so direct a blow been aimed, under color of legal authority, at the supremacy of the Constitution, or a precedent been established so dangerous to free institutions. The Nation warned that in addition to being unconstitutional on four counts, the bill would destroy state sovereignty and result in the centralization of all governmental functions. After the Ku Klux Act became law, the Nation sourly commented that the southern community's sense of local responsibility for law and order (which was none too strong in the first place) was sure to be destroyed by the bill.

In keeping with the Nation's conviction that no further legislation was needed, was its call for Negroes to become self-sufficient citizens and cease being wards of the nation. The theory of protecting the black while he advanced in intelligence and morality was fine as a theory, wrote the journal in early 1869. In fact, it was a "purely moral and admirable policy." But it was held to be impractical for two reasons. First, the popular laissez-faire mentality led Americans to regard dependent men with contempt. Secondly, it was impossible to concentrate public attention on the issue of the

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85 Franklin, Reconstruction: After the Civil War, p. 167.
86 Nation, XII, April 20, 1871, p. 268.
87 Ibid.
88 Ibid., April 27, 1871, p. 284
89 Ibid., VIII, February 18, 1869, p. 124.
freedmen long enough to ensure success of the policy. The
time had come for blacks to work and save, and to "win
social consideration and political weight by their own energy,
and ability and skill." The Pecuniary success was sure to
bring acceptance, the Nation counseled:

Every deposit in a savings-bank is worth ten votes
to him. His color will be forgotten as soon as he is
"respectable" and to be "respectable in modern times
means to exhibit the faculty of acquiring independent
wealth."

The Freedmen's Bureau, established in March 1865, was
a compromise between abolitionists, who perceived the need
for a period of tutelage, and those who held that only an
emergency relief operation was necessary. The two basic
outlooks represented in the conflict over the nature of the
Bureau were each represented in the pages of the Nation,
but at different times. The sympathetic approach to the
ey early work of the Bureau exhibited in "The Freedmen" columns
of the first few years indicated general agreement with the
limited objectives of the Bureau and the philosophy of ward-
ship. However, the Nation signaled its entrance into the
"stand on your own two feet" camp in late 1868 when it first
called for the dissolution of the Bureau. To this time,
the Freedmen's Bureau had performed services of vast impor-
tance in the areas of health care, resettlement, labor

90 Ibid., X, January 27, 1870, p. 50.
91 Ibid., VIII, February 18, 1869, p. 124.
92 Robert Cruden, The Negro in Reconstruction (Englewood
93 Nation, VII, November 12, 1868, p. 386.
contract supervision and education. The Nation lauded this work, but believed that the continued existence of the Bureau threatened the growth of black self-reliance. Political equality and paternalism were incompatible, it reasoned.

Although it advocated its dissolution, the Nation remained sympathetic to black interests in the Freedmen's Bureau for some time. In 1871 it defended the Bureau from charges of mismanagement, citing its beneficial works.

When the Freedmen's Savings and Trust Company failed in 1874, largely because of white chicanery and mismanagement, the Nation held Congress morally bound to pay the depositors in full. The institution was never guaranteed by the government nor was it a responsibility of the Freedmen's Bureau. However, most Negro investors believed that the bank, headed by a Bureau superintendent, John W. Alvord, was a federal agency and consequently trusted in it.

The Nation pleaded that for whites to exhort blacks to save, and then to take their money would destroy the blacks' faith in justice. Negro depositors eventually received approximately one-tenth of their savings back, after the liquidation of the bank.

94 Franklin, From Slavery to Freedom, p. 307.
95 Nation, VII, November 12, 1868, p. 386.
96 Ibid., XII, January 5, 1871, p. 3.
97 Ibid., XXII, May 25, 1876, p. 323.
99 Nation, XX, April 15, 1875, p. 254.
100Patrick, The Reconstruction of the Nation, p. 233.
The Nation's declining interest in the southern problem mirrored the changing mood of the North in late 1869 and the early 1870's. The only significant gestures of Congress were the Enforcement Acts of 1870 and 1871, which came much too late to check southern resistance to reconstruction. Northern business interests pressed for the return of sectional peace, which would bring the resumption of normal business relations. Many northern political leaders who had supported the Reconstruction Act of 1867 changed to a position supporting conciliation, Carl Schurz, George W. Julian and Edward Atkinson joined Godkin in shifting their attention to other matters.¹⁰¹

The Civil Rights bill of 1875, which forbade discrimination in accommodations, transportation, theatres and jury selection, encountered stiff opposition in Congress.¹⁰² Introduced by Senator Charles Sumner in 1870, the bill was defeated in 1872 and again in 1874. When it finally passed in 1875, its prohibition of segregation in schools and churches had been deleted. The leaders of the Peabody Fund, a northern philanthropic agency, were instrumental in protecting school segregation from the provisions of the bill.¹⁰³ The weakened Act remained a ringing rhetorical gesture to egalitarian ideals. However, it went unenforced for the most part until the Supreme Court declared it unconstitutional

¹⁰¹ Franklin, Reconstruction: After the Civil War, p. 201.
¹⁰³ Franklin, Reconstruction: After the Civil War, p. 201.
in 1883 on the grounds that the Fourteenth Amendment did not authorize general legislation for civil rights.\textsuperscript{104}

With the introduction of Sumner's Civil Rights bill in 1870, the \underline{Nation} supported it, contending in this instance that prejudice was a habit that could be broken by laws. The journal expressly approved of the provision forbidding the exclusion of Negroes from public conveyances, but expressed doubts as to the propriety of integrating hotels and theatres. These doubts, though, were brushed aside as mere quibbles.\textsuperscript{105}

In 1872 the \underline{Nation} again expressed limited support for the bill, excluding its provisions for integrated cemeteries and theatres as interferences with individual liberty.\textsuperscript{106} In 1874, however, opposition to the bill stiffened. Not content to merely label the bill inexpedient, the \underline{Nation} called it a blow aimed at popular education.\textsuperscript{107} The journal contended, probably correctly, that southern whites would refuse to go to integrated schools. The bill, it felt, was plainly unconstitutional and was sure to be thrown out by the Supreme Court if it became law. The \underline{Nation}'s concern for white reaction to legislation which aided blacks was evident;

Deeply as we sympathize with his [the Negro's] wrongs, we have no expectation or hope of seeing them righted by hounding on his old masters to acts of violence and lawlessness by the passage of equally violent and lawless acts of Congress. The Reconstruction period is ended;

\textsuperscript{104}Ibid., p. 202.

\textsuperscript{105}\underline{Nation}, X, May 19, 1870, p. 314.

\textsuperscript{106}Ibid., XIV, February 1, 1872, p. 66.

\textsuperscript{107}Ibid., XIX, September 17, 1874, p. 180.
and the negro in the future will occupy such a position as his industry and sobriety entitle him to. Such bills as the one we have been considering do nothing for him but turn his friends into enemies. 108

When the bill finally passed in its deleted form in 1875, the Nation retracted its predictions of a serious southern reaction and called it a harmless bill, whose chief objection was its entire unconstitutionality. 109

Reconstruction State Governments

Although Reconstruction officially ended in 1877, the recapture of southern state governments by white Conservatives was an accomplished fact in every former Confederate state prior to Hayes' election. After Virginia and Tennessee came under Conservative control in late 1869, other southern states followed in succession: North Carolina (1870), Georgia (1871), Texas (1873), Arkansas and Alabama (1874), South Carolina (1876), and Florida and Louisiana (1877). 110

The white southerners who overthrew Reconstruction, and their apologists ever since, justified their actions by charging Negro domination and corruption. The fact is that Negroes were never in control of any southern state. No Negro was ever elected or nominated for governor, and only in the lower house of the South Carolina legislature did black legislators ever constitute a majority. Georgia, for example,

108 Ibid.
109 Ibid., XX, March 4, 1875, p 141.
110 Franklin, Reconstruction: After the Civil War, p.
had only one black Congressman and no Negroes at all in the state's most important executive and judicial offices. 111

Nor can Negroes, or even the white-run carpetbag governments, be said to have monopolized corruption. Most of the skyrocketing state debts were the result of expenditures for railroads and schools, which were misused by unscrupulous promoters. 112 Democrats were as much involved as Republicans in the mis-appropriation of railroad contracts and subsidies, and post-Reconstruction regimes as much or more than Radical Republican regimes. 113 Even the Nation later admitted that the overthrow of carpetbag rule had not brought good government to Mississippi as promised by Conservatives. 114 Finally, corruption in government was not an exclusively southern phenomenon. The Tweed Ring in New York City was guilty of as much or more financial chicanery as any southern state. 115

What emerges from revisionist treatments of Reconstruction state governments is a mixed record. On one hand, there existed inefficiency, inexperience and widespread corruption in southern government. On the other hand, those governments accomplished needed reforms. Most gave property rights to women, established public school systems, reformed tax systems and established orphanages, insane asylums and schools for the

111 Meier and Rudwick, From Plantation to Ghetto, p. 170.
113 Meier and Rudwick, From Plantation to Ghetto, p. 171.
114 Nation, CXVI, May 26, p. 395.
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The facts concerning black participation in Reconstruction state governments do not support charges of Negro domination, or indicate any particular unfitness for political life on the part of Negroes.

Nevertheless, these beliefs, born of southern resentment and racism, were used to justify the violence and economic intimidation which put local government back into the hands of southern whites. Among northern sources who accepted the Conservative interpretation of events, the Nation was one of the most vehement critics of the Radical Republican regimes. The Nation was among the first northern journals to condemn the carpetbag regimes. From 1869 to 1874, the issue of carpetbag corruption was incessantly hammered upon by the Nation, and apocalyptic rhetoric was used to predict the effects of continued "Negro domination." By 1871 the experiment of placing southern government in the hands of Unionists and blacks was viewed as a total failure;

worse governments have seldom been seen in a civilized country. They have been largely composed of trashy whites and ignorant blacks. Of course, there have been in them men of integrity and ability of both races; but the great majority [were not].

116 Ibid.


118 Nation, XII, March 23, 1871, p. 192.
Some months later, the Nation observed;

The state of things at the South, which cannot well be worse, and which almost seems to threaten a dissolution of society, owing to the deep and unblushing corruption and rascalities of the class which has there got into power, and the responsibility of which, under ordinary circumstances, would naturally fall on the Republican party is...covered up by the Ku-klux outrages... which many people are willing to rely on the bayonet to cure.119

Without condoning white violence, the journal stressed that it was merely a natural and inevitable outgrowth of carpet-bag corruption.

The Nation accepted as valid southern claims as to the extent of "Negro domination" and black unfitness for political activity. All of the South's political ills were traced to the men suddenly raised from a condition of bestial servitude, inheriting the weaknesses of barbarism, aggravated by the weaknesses of slavery...[who] have been put in full and exclusive control of that most delicate and complicated piece of mechanism known as the government of a civilized State.121

Although the Nation could not ignore the presence of whites in the carpetbag organizations, their involvement was blamed on the ignorant blacks who supported them. One 1874 editorial skillfully selected facts to illustrate the supposed stranglehold blacks had over South Carolina.

Among executive officers, "The Governor alone is a white, elected by black votes," it claimed.122 In actuality,

119Ibid., XIII, November 23, 1871, p. 332.

120Ibid., December 7, 1871, p. 364; Ibid, XII, March 30, 1871, p. 213.

121Ibid., XIII, December 7, 1871, p. 364.

122Ibid., XVIII, April 16, 1874, p. 247.
whites controlled the state Senate and in 1874 the lower house as well.\textsuperscript{123} The Nation presented an extremely distorted picture of black political participation to its readers, especially in this instance.

Appalled by what it perceived to be the effects of "Negro domination," the Nation welcomed the "cessation of plunder, [and] restoration of peace and prosperity," which the Ku Klux Klan labored to bring about.\textsuperscript{124} The Nation sympathized with the whites as members of the foremost civilization in the world, taken over by a people sunk in barbarism.\textsuperscript{125} White control of the government was seen as the only way to restore peace and order. In 1876, the Nation spoke of the violence which accompanied the elections in Mississippi and South Carolina:

\begin{quote}
We are sorry to observe, too, that once more the campaign uproar and tumult breaks out in the two States where the negroes and their friends have a decided majority. How is it that peace and order reign in the States in which the whites are in a majority? We ask this question in all seriousness; a candid answer to it would go to the root of the Southern trouble.\textsuperscript{126}
\end{quote}

When the final Republican defeat in South Carolina came in 1876, the Nation asked:

\begin{quote}
Will there not be under the new administration of affairs greater order throughout the State, more justice done upon the whole to both whites and blacks, and greater honesty and economy in public expenditures— in short, a better government— than when the State was in different hands?\textsuperscript{127}
\end{quote}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{123} Franklin, \textit{Reconstruction: After the Civil War}, p. 133.
\textsuperscript{124} Nation, \textit{XIX}, August 27, 1874, p. 132.
\textsuperscript{125} \textit{Ibid.}, October 8, 1874, p. 132.
\textsuperscript{126} \textit{Ibid.}, XXIII, August 10, 1876, p. 81.
\textsuperscript{127} \textit{Ibid.}, XXV, July 5, 1877, p. 2.
\end{flushright}
Even given Godkin's and the Nation's categorical opposition to every form of corruption, it is difficult to explain why their criticism of the carpetbag regimes was so virulent. Although Tammany was a frequent target for Nation writers, New York's fiscal chicanery was never the absorbing and threatening issue that the Nation made of carpetbag irregularities. What amounted to an obsession with the evils of "Negro rule" led the Nation to exaggerate the facts, and to draw inconsistent conclusions. For example, white southerners were simultaneously praised for their high level of civilization and condemned for their atrocious savagery evident from the Ku Klux outrages. While affirming white superiority, the Nation admitted that "In resorting to such modes of repressing negro excesses, the Southern men reach the lowest negro level."128

What emerges from the examination of the Nation and the Reconstruction issues is the basic assumption of that journal and its editor, that whites were to continue in their position of social, economic and political dominance. The only change the Nation expected to come out of Reconstruction was the extension of equal protection of the law to both blacks and whites. After an initial outburst of optimism concerning what could be done to settle the Negro question, the Nation, like the North as a whole, found the prospect of sectional reconciliation and the resumption of normal political and economic relations more appealing than that of guaranteeing black rights.

128Ibid., XXIII, July 27, 1876, p. 52.
CHAPTER III

THE NEGRO IN AMERICAN LIFE 1877-1900

Negro Progress and the Negro Problem

In many respects, the period from 1877 to 1900 was the nadir of the black American experience after the Civil War. By 1877, the entire South had regained the right to resume its plans for placing Negroes in the status of second class citizens, subject to the limitations of the federal Constitution and laws and northern public opinion. The two decades following the end of Reconstruction saw the peak of southern lynching, the implementation of Jim Crow segregation statues and successful movements for Negro disfranchisement. But the same years saw substantial Negro progress in the field of education, and several determined, if unsuccessful, efforts by northern Republicans to stay southern efforts to reduce black political and social status. However, the general trend of increasing Southern discrimination, proscription and mob violence met with the acquiescence, if not approval, of most northerners, and the Nation was no exception to the dominant northern mood.


With Reconstruction a completed process, the Nation turned its attention to the issues of the tariff, the currency, civil service reform and a host of other minor issues. Despite this shift in emphasis, which was nearly complete by 1877, the Negro question remained an issue in local and national politics, and could never have been ignored. Consequently, the Nation continued to express itself on issues which vitally concerned blacks throughout the rest of the nineteenth century. Over a period of years, the Nation offered advice on nearly every aspect of what it called the Negro problem: blacks' social and economic status, white prejudice and discrimination, southern mob violence, blacks' declining role in southern politics, the sectional issues in national politics, and the effect of imperialism on the race problem at home. With only rare exceptions, the advice seldom departed from the general outlines established towards the end of Reconstruction. The Nation continued to advocate local solutions for what it saw as local problems, stress the long-term character of southern social changes, oppose sectionally divisive political issues and exhort the black man to achieve equal status through his own hard work.

The essence of the Negro problem as the Nation defined it was white prejudice, which grew out of the fact that blacks had been slaves "and are still as a race generations behind the whites in civilization."4 Thus, the wrongs from which the Negro suffered could not be righted in short order by any

4Nation, L, January 23, 1890, p. 61.
convention, political party or government. The burden of eradi-
cating prejudice rested with the black man, the Nation thought.
When they, as a race, equalled or surpassed the whites in wealth,
education and the "arts of civilized life", then prejudice would
disappear. 5 The upward rise of the Negro, Godkin emphasized,
must be accomplished without assistance, for only self-reliant
men would be respected by whites. Only when blacks stopped
depending on the government and learned that they as well as
whites must make their own way in the world can progress occur,
wrote the Nation.6

Accompanying this belief was the conviction that the
problem of the Negro's status was one for southerners to solve.
Since most blacks remained in the South,7 and there were too
few blacks in the North to make effective political demands,
the Nation merely reflected northern public opinion when it
declared in 1886 that "the nation no longer has a negro problem
to solve."8 That Godkin considered the problem an inappropriate
subject for federal legislation is doubly borne out by his con-
victions that laws were powerless to solve social problem,
and that even if they were not, Congressional efforts to resolve the

5 Ibid, XXXVII, August 23, 1883, p. 152.
6 Ibid, XLVI, April 19, 1888, p. 313.

7 Alan Pendleton Grimes, Equality in America (New York:
Oxford University Press, 1964), p. 59, states that 90 percent
remained in the South. Franklin, From Slavery to Freedom,
p. 397, notes that in 1880, more than 75 percent remained in
the former Confederate states.

8 Nation, XLII, July 8, 1886, p. 26.
race question would necessitate such centralization of power as to destroy the cornerstone of the democratic system. The country had already made a large enough sacrifice in extending the suffrage, wrote the Nation; "the greatest that any civilized community has ever made. It involved greater risks than war on the largest scale." Any further attempts to extend black political participation, it continued, would require adaptation of the political structure "to the special needs of the ignorant, the weak, the lazy, and incompetent Negroes."  

The end of Reconstruction brought little improvement in the economic status of the Negro. However, with politics closing as an avenue of racial advancement, and with the growth of segregation in the last decade of the nineteenth century most southern and many northern Negro leaders felt that the most promising means of progress was in the economic sphere. Among articulate blacks there arose the philosophies of self-help and racial solidarity, coupled with an emphasis on economic advancement and black support of black business. Consequently, although large numbers of blacks remained on the farms as tenants and sharecroppers, significant numbers of Negroes purchased their own farms, took industrial jobs, moved away from the South in search of economic opportunities, and formed business enterprises. Economic gains, though, were hard-won at the hands of the white community. With the notable exception of the Knights

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9 Ibid., L, January 23, 1890, p. 64.
10 Franklin, From Slavery to Freedom, p. 382.
of Labor, labor unions did not welcome blacks. Many white
industrial employers, North and South, refused to hire Negroes.
In an age when the opportunities for small entrepreneurs, either
white or black, were being narrowed by the growth of trusts,
black capitalists frequently saw their efforts fail.

The economic progress that was made, the Nation wrote,
illustrated the superfluity of governmental involvement in the
solution of the Negro question. To the Nation it was obvious
that "the negro problem is solving itself as rapidly as could
be expected and in the only way that a solution is possible"
(through blacks' own efforts). Much of the space the journal
devoted to the consideration of the black man's condition was
spent documenting advances in education and material prosperity,
which it attributed to a rising spirit of self-reliance among
blacks. Thus, the considerable progress that Negroes made in
the decades following emancipation, which was made in spite
of meager white assistance or downright hostility, was attributed
to that very paucity of assistance and served to justify the
let-alone policy favored by the Nation.

Although the Nation lauded the rise of a self-reliant
spirit among blacks, it objected to the organization which
symbolized the self-help and racial solidarity ideals. It
labeled the 1890 Chicago convention of the Afro-American League,
which acted on the principle that blacks would have to stick
together, a failure. The whole idea of accomplishing

12 Franklin, From Slavery to Freedom, p. 401.
13 Nation, L, January 23, 1890, p. 61.
14 Meier and Rudwick, From Plantation to Ghetto, p. 194.
anything through the League was wrong, it argued. The best thing for blacks to do the Nation advised, was to work hard, save money and go to school. The Nation attributed the growth of the self-help ideology not to the fact that it was a last resort in the face of white hostility, but to the happy demise of the Republican misconception that blacks were the wards of the nation.

The Nation was aware of the obstacles to black economic progress posed by white discrimination. Its response to evidence of such obstacles was symptomatic of the kind of relief the Nation offered the black man. In an editorial review of W.E.B. DuBois' study The Philadelphia Negro, published in 1899, the journal agreed with many of Dr. DuBois' findings: that race hatred had prevailed in Philadelphia, that black advancement reflected the obstacles laid out by whites and that color prejudice was a powerful force against Negroes. It further accepted DuBois' conclusions that the only occupation open to blacks was domestic service, and that social rise was impossible. But, it contended, there was nothing wrong with domestic service; in it there was "room for the display of all the virtues and of every kind of talent." Furthermore,

the struggle to rise in social rank involves so much unhappiness and so many failures that it is not altogether undesirable to be exempted from it; and there is no reason why colored people should not have doctors and lawyers of their own blood if they want them.

15 Nation, L, January 23, 1890, p. 61.

16 Ibid., L 11, April 2, 1891, p. 274.

17 Ibid., LXIX, October 26, 1899, p. 310.
Migration away from southern farms to southern urban centers, to the North and to newly developed agricultural lands in the South itself, was one way blacks tried to improve their economic condition. At certain times, such as the Kansas Exodus of 1879, black migrations assumed the character of protests against discrimination, although the usual motivation was economic. Although many Republicans encouraged the migrants of 1879, northern commercial interests opposed the exodus on the grounds that it would disrupt the economy. The Nation viewed it as natural that men would want to move where they would do better economically, and agreed that the enterprising and thrifty Negro would be better off in the North. Furthermore, the Nation warned, the massing of blacks in such states as South Carolina, Mississippi, and Louisiana not only exposed the South to the dangers of Negro political rule, but created a situation where blacks, set apart from white influences, regressed into barbarism. It noted that

The negro race has not yet displayed much inherent capacity for social and political advancement when withdrawn from all extraneous influences.

What emerged from the Nation's treatment of the Negro problem was a philosophy remarkably similar to that articulated


by Booker T. Washington. Although Washington's 1895 Atlanta Compromise speech did not receive editorial coverage, his expressed opinions on accommodation, self-help, acceptance of disfranchisement, economic accumulation and industrial education were almost identical with those of the Nation. Both believed the solution to the race problem to be black economic prosperity, acquired through black efforts. Agricultural and industrial education was endorsed by both to be the best way to, in the Nation's words, "fit the colored pupils effectively to lead to better lives the simple people among whom their lots are cast."21 Both were content that the Negro take a back seat politically, until such a day when the race's economic foundations secured respect for their constitutional rights. The Nation regarded Washington as one of the wisest leaders of the race, and agreed that it was better for the Negro to fit himself for the future exercise of the suffrage, rather than to mis-use it in the present.22 There is no evidence that the Nation made the mistake that most whites did in assuming that Washington expected Negroes to always occupy a subordinate position in American society.23 The Nation, as did Washington, recommended accommodation as a means of achieving equality rather than as a permanent solution.

21 Ibid., XLVIII, June 6, 1889, p. 461.
22 Ibid., LXIII, December 17, 1896, p. 449.
23 Meier and Rudwick, From Plantation to Ghetto, p. 204.
Washington's covert activity would not, in many instances, have met with the approval of the Nation's editor. For example, given the Nation's approval of the Supreme Court's decision in the Civil Rights Cases, Washington's secret financing of segregation and disfranchisement test cases would have probably been opposed as political efforts to promote black interests, which they were. However, it was the mask Washington presented to the white public that the Nation saw, and of it the Nation approved.

The Southern Regeneration

For Godkin, the solution to the Negro problem was material and intellectual. The white problem, prejudice, presented a different issue. Much prejudice, Godkin believed, would disappear as blacks proved themselves capable. However, he saw white prejudice as a smaller aspect of the whole nature of southern society, which was going to have to undergo a regeneration before it conformed with the liberal conception of a democratic society. Godkin shared with most northerners a dual view of the South as a land sunk in barbarism and as an aristocratic, noble civilization. He identified as the heritage of the peculiar institution a habit of violence, contempt for legal processes and prejudice born of its degrading influences. These conditions, of course, were incompatible with liberal democratic ideals.

The process of civilizing the South must begin, wrote the Nation, by winning the whites over by kindness, patience
and conciliation.\(^24\) The barbarous condition of society could only "be got rid of by time, education, industry and the growth of population."\(^25\) Consequently, outrages were to be expected for a generation to come. \(^26\) Sympathy for southern whites was what was needed, and it was what the Nation gave them.

Northern orators, the Nation felt, were all too eager to launch moralistic sermons against southern sins, when blacks in the North were subject to the same kinds of discrimination. It was with glee that the Nation pointed to incidents of northern prejudice. The usual reaction to northern criticisms of southern prejudice, then, became a countercharge of hypocrisy. It was "arrant hypocrisy for Northerners to prate about the 'insane prejudices' of Southerners against the negro."\(^27\) The actual practice of American society was, the journal wrote, not to treat Negroes as social equals, and one should not expect men to rise above this practice.\(^28\)

The Nation's liberal ideal of rational, orderly men governed by the rule of law, however, left no room for

\(^{24}\) Nation, XII, March 23, 1871, p. 190.

\(^{25}\) Ibid., XXII, January 27, 1876, p. 54.

\(^{26}\) Ibid., XXIV, May 10, 1877, p. 272.

\(^{27}\) Ibid., XLIX, July 11, 1888, p. 26.

\(^{28}\) Ibid., XXX, April 15, 1880, p. 278.
lyching and mob violence. To resort to lynch law, it believed, was to admit that popular government had failed.

When a bishop approves...[of] armed mobs... he completes one of the most shocking pictures of anarchy we have ever read of, wrote the Nation in 1894. To counteract a surge of lynchings, the Nation advocated that the practice of pardoning white criminals stop, and that justice become swift and sure. If punishment could be expected for criminals, the Nation reasoned, then people would resort less often to mobs to meet out justice. Blacks, however, were sometimes lynched because they were black. The Nation's remedy was one designed to foster the growth of respect for legal justice: over a period of time, and gave little comfort to victims who were pulled from the jails or lynched after a verdict of innocent was reached.

The Negro in Southern Politics

The struggle for redemption in the border states was primarily between opposing white parties, while in the lower South the battle was between Negroes with radical leadership and whites, who at first were divided among conservatives, moderate Republicans and scalawags. The victory of the Redeemers, complete by 1877, left the native white population

29 Ibid., LVIII, June 28, 1894, p. 479.
30 Ibid., LXV, September 9, 1897, p. 199; Ibid., July 1, 1897, p. 7.
of the South, under its own leaders, in a position to dominate the southern political situation. Fraudulent elections rendered it impossible for the Negro to hold the balance of power between competing white parties, and removed the political necessity for whites to respect Negro wishes. After the failure of southern Populism in 1892, the consolidation of white supremacy accelerated, bringing the completion of disfranchisement and segregation.

The Nation had advocated the return of southern whites to power since 1869, and reacted with glee to Conservative victories. "The utter impracticability of the negroes acting as legislators for the Southern whites" had long been obvious to the Nation. "In one State after another intelligence and force, or perhaps we might say the laws of Anglo-Saxon dominion, have triumphed over numbers" the Nation cackled in 1877. The Nation saw it as inevitable that the Negro would, for a temporary period, play a subservient political role. It counseled southern blacks to divide their votes, however, so as to maximize their influence as a balance of power. And the Nation, after an initial period of hesitation,

32 Ibid., p. 58.
35 Nation, XXIV, May 24, 1877, p. 302.
36 Ibid., January 25, 1877, p. 54.
opposed the logical extension of white political hedgemony, Negro disfranchisement.

As evidence of the wisdom of southern white political supremacy, the Nation offered what it believed to be the fact, that the security of the black man's economic rights and of his person and property was assured, so long as he accepted the political guidance of the whites. Political rights, it believed, would follow from personal security, industry and education "unless there exists in him [the Negro] a radical and constitutional incapacity for the highest plane of civilization," which only time would tell.37

Without defending the use of intimidation and fraud to reinstate Bourbon control, the Nation viewed it as inevitable that the intelligent classes would dominate the ignorant. The poor and dependent had always been strongly influenced to vote with their betters, Godkin argued, whether English, Irish, Scotch, French or American.38 New England whites, the Nation claimed, would have reacted in the same way southerners did to "Negro rule;" "statute or no statute, ignorance cannot rule intelligence."39 It was, of course, inconsistent to state that New Englanders would have reacted in the same way that southerners did, and to elsewhere attribute the virulence of that reaction to a singularly degraded state of

37 Ibid., XXV, September 27, 1877, p. 190.
38 Ibid., XXIII, September 7, 1876, p. 145.
39 Ibid., XLI, October 8, 1885, p. 290.
southern society.

Godkin's exhortations to southern blacks to divide their votes were based not only on his conviction that this was the way to maximize their influence and ensure respectful treatment from whites, but on his deep dislike of political parties. For Godkin, as well as for other Mugwumps, independent voting was an ideal. The prospect of a southern Republican party, established on racial lines to provide a "brute vote" to perpetuate the power of men like James G. Blaine, was anathema to the New England editor. Reliance on Negro voters and the Negro issue had already destroyed the Republican party's responsibility in Godkin's eyes. Convinced of the necessity that black voters divide the white South, the Nation year after year heralded each election which indicated a movement in this direction as a new era in political relations. While disapproving heartily of the Populist movement, the Nation found it encouraging that blacks divided their votes in 1892 among the three parties that sought their votes.

The 1890's and the defeat of the Populist movement saw the rise of a new movement to ensure white supremacy in the South, Negro disfranchisement. The reason most often given for disfranchisement was election fraud. The extensive cheating which Democrats felt was necessary to preserve white supremacy offended the sensitivities of many southerners, who

40 Ibid., XXVII, September 19, 1878, p. 172.
41 Ibid., CV, November 3, 1892, p. 339.
preferred a legal means. Disfranchisement had another facet, though. It was a compromise in the old struggle for power among two competing white groups, those representing the Black Belt and those from the predominantly white counties. Black-Belt whites gave up the power advantage conferred by an extensive Negro population and the back-country delegations gave up the principle of universal white manhood suffrage. In return for additional representation in state legislatures, delegates from white counties accepted the poll tax and literacy test restrictions on the suffrage.42

Only in a few instances did the disfranchisement qualifications operate against whites to the extent that they did against blacks. The "understanding clause," the "grandfather clause" and the poll tax receipt were usually enough to effectively discriminate between whites and Negroes.

Given Godkin's low opinion of blacks as voters, his early advocacy of literacy qualifications and his avowed faith in the rule of the intelligent and educated class of southern whites, one might expect that the disfranchisement campaigns of the 1890's would have received active support in the pages of the Nation. Prior to 1895, a stance sympathetic to the disfranchisers was adopted, and overt approval given to the principle of disfranchising the less educated, the poor and the black. When discriminatory exclusion became blatant, 42

as it did in South Carolina in 1895, a critical note crept into Nation writings. By 1897, the Nation stood firmly against discriminatory disfranchisement as contrary to the spirit of democratic institutions.

In 1878, the Nation took it upon itself to suggest the purification of the southern ballot by attaching a tax-paying or educational qualification. One year earlier, it had approved as one of the better points of Georgia's new constitution "the tax-paying qualification for voters, which, of course, will practically for a time disfranchise a great many of the negroes." When Mississippi's constitutional convention met in July of 1890 to "devise a legal and just system for getting rid of the ignorant negro vote," the Nation confessed that the problem was a perplexing one, and one which called for the sympathy of outsiders. To the Nation,

It is obvious that the negroes cannot be allowed the power in government to which their numerical preponderance would entitle them, but it is hard to see a method of restricting their votes which will not be objectionable to some element among the whites.

The Nation suggested a minimal income qualification and the ability to write one's name and address as acceptable criteria, so that no man who really worked for his living would be excluded.

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43 Nation, XXVII, December 19, 1878, p. 378.
44 Ibid., XXV, August 30, 1877, p. 128.
45 Ibid., CI, July 31, 1890, p. 87.
46 Ibid., CIV, June 23, 1892, p. 459.
Mississippi's new constitution prescribed a poll tax and required that a prospective voter be able either to read or understand the Constitution when read to him. The latter "understanding clause," by which illiterate whites were allowed to register and vote, was an obvious subterfuge. Nevertheless, the Nation naively wrote that the new restrictions were framed so as to apply equally to all men. 47 Since few Negroes "cared enough about the suffrage to pay the poll tax," the Nation predicted a host of benefits from the new white majority: wider discussion of the issues, disintegration of white solidarity, increasing accountability of politicians and a healthy, free political climate which would be an aid to prosperity. 48

In 1895 the Nation awoke to the discriminatory nature of southern suffrage qualifications. At this time the journal not only criticised South Carolina's scheme, but withdrew its approval of Mississippi's solution on the grounds that political discriminations based on color were clearly unjust. 49 The Nation objected to the easily-perverted operational features of Louisiana's proposed constitutional amendment, which was defeated in 1896.

Two other factors led the Nation to consistent opposition

47 Ibid., CV, August 25, 1892, p. 139.
48 Ibid., CIII, October 1, 1891, p 248.
49 Ibid., CX, March 7, 1895, p. 175.
to all disfranchisement plans after late 1897. The rise of imperialism, which gave a substantial impetus to the development of such plans, was accompanied by elaborate justifications based on the doctrine that inferior races had no rights of self-government. This dogma had no place in Godkin's liberal conception of free and democratic government. In the second place, the disappointing results of disfranchisement in Mississippi destroyed the measure's utilitarian appeal for the Nation. The development of the single party system, the continuance of corruption and the increase of white apathy convinced the Nation that disfranchisement had not been enough to secure good government. It was "A pretty bad showing for that 'Caucasian rule' from which so much was promised after the carpet-baggers were expelled and the negroes were disfranchised."  

The Sectional Issue in National Politics

The consolidation of white supremacy in the South continued through the turn of the century and was generally unhindered by the national government. Congress increasingly concentrated its interest on the new issues of the tariff, the currency, civil service reform and the agricultural

51 Nation, CXVIII, January 5, 1899, p. 21
52 Ibid., CXVI, May 26, 1898, p. 395.
depression. The Supreme Court emasculated the suffrage amendment and the Civil Rights Act of 1875. The last support of the southern Republican party was removed as President Cleveland bestowed southern patronage appointments on Democrats. But the southern question remained an important issue in national politics until 1891, largely because many Republican leaders identified the interests of their party with those of southern Negroes. Among the Negro's advocates were men like James S. Clarkson of Iowa, William E. Chandler of New Hampshire, Joseph B. Foraker of Ohio and John C. Spooner of Wisconsin. The most effective opposition to Republican efforts to stress the issues relating to the war and the Negro came from northern merchants and eastern industrialists, who believed that agitation disrupted business relations with the South. Another important champion of sectional reconciliation at the expense of blacks was the northern Independents, of which the Nation was so representative. The Nation's role in promoting sectional harmony is well illustrated by the journal's lenient southern policy, and its opposition to the Blair Educational Bill and the Federal Elections Bill of 1890.

53 Lawinson, Race, Class, and Party, pps. 58, 59.
54 Hirshon, Farewell to the Bloody Shirt, p. 252.
55 Ibid.
Consistent with the Nation's lack of faith in the efficacy of legislation, and its conviction that blacks ought not be the objects of exceptional legislation beyond the usual guarantees of citizenship and legal equality, the journal advocated the rigid, impartial application of the Constitution and the laws by the Administration. This, it believed, was what Hayes' policy was.\textsuperscript{56} Unless Republicans could come up with specific, workable guarantees of justice for southern blacks, which the Nation felt was impossible short of martial law, there was no point in their bloody shirt oratory and in "weeping over the poor negro."\textsuperscript{57} How the Republicans could use their failure of twenty years to secure black rights as a reason for re-electing them, the Nation could not understand.\textsuperscript{58}

Southern progress towards a satisfactory solution of the race question through natural influences was adequate by Godkin's standards, and bloody shirt rhetoricians were advised to "discard as useless baggage—useless as the plumes and knightly tomfoolery of the late canvass—the Southern issue."\textsuperscript{59}

The Federal Elections bill of 1890 represented a departure from Hayes' policy of winning southern conservative whites over to Republicanism through conciliation. President Harrison, motivated both by political considerations and a sense of duty, saw a way to regain Republican support in the South by ensuring

\textsuperscript{56} Nation, XXIX, July 31, 1879, p. 70.
\textsuperscript{57} Ibid., XXV, July 5, 1877, p. 4.
\textsuperscript{58} Ibid., XXXIX, December 4, 1884, p. 466.
\textsuperscript{59} Ibid., XLII, September 17, 1885, p. 227.
the right of blacks to vote. It was with strong Presidential support that Henry Cabot Lodge introduced the measure into the House. Although the bill was dubbed the "Force bill" by its detractors, including the Nation, it embodied little coercion and had no provisions for the use of troops. The bill sought to deter intimidation and corruption of voters by permitting the presence of bipartisan federal supervisors at Congressional elections, and to make the federal circuit courts, rather than state agencies, arbiters of contested elections. While the fight revealed the disunity among Republican ranks, the measure received the active support of prominent Negro leaders, North and South. W. E. B. DuBois, however, believed the bill would merely increase race agitation. At first put off so that the tariff issue could be resolved, the controversial measure was shelved in early 1891 when eight insurgent silver Republicans voted with the Democrats to remove the bill from the legislative calendar.

The Nation's denunciation of the Lodge bill was unyielding. By 1890, its position on the issue was already well established,

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63. De Santis, Republicans Face the Southern Question, p. 212.
as it had long criticized the Enforcement Act of 1870 and opposed the precursors of the Lodge bill, namely Governor Foraker’s advocacy of a similar measure in 1887 and Senator Sherman’s 1889 bill to achieve what the Lodge bill hoped to. According to the Nation, the bill, if enacted, would revive disorder in the South, stir up racial animosity and sectional tensions, involve the judiciary in politics, centralize government and divert attention from the more important reform issues. It provided the Nation with another example of the Republican party’s willingness to sacrifice good race relations to political ends. There was some substance in these claims. Southern reaction to the bill was extreme, as southern newspapers solidified white opposition by raising the spectre of Negro domination. The bill would have involved the federal circuit courts in political disputes; this was one of its virtues, replacing corrupt state certifying boards as the arbiters of election returns. The measure was inspired in part by partisan considerations, but not to the extent that the Nation claimed. A desire to validate the principles of national citizenship and the Fifteenth Amendment formed an equally important source of motivation.

64 Nation, XIX, September 10, 1874, p. 161; Ibid., October 19, 1874, p. 278; Ibid., XLV, August 4, 1887, p. 82; Ibid., XLIX, September 5, 1889, p. 185.

65 Ibid., L, May 1, 1890, p. 343.

66 DeSantis, Republicans Face the Southern Question, p. 211.

The defeat of the Federal Elections bill made it clear to the South that the North and the Republican party desired sectional reconciliation and would accept further Negro subjugation in the South. By revealing northern indifference to the cause of civil rights, it accelerated the evolution of Jim Crow. 68

The most politically promising effort to aid southern blacks of the period was the Blair Educational bill, which would have appropriated large sums of federal money for public schools over an eight year period. Appropriations were to be divided among the states in proportion to their illiteracy rates. Consequently, seventy-five per cent would have gone to inadequately funded southern schools. The bill required matching of federal grants, which in every case were larger than existing southern school budgets. Segregated schools were allowed by the measure, but free schools for all children had to be provided. 69 The bill thus represented on of the black man's chief hopes for social and political advancement. 70

The Nation's Reconstruction plan placed a premium on education for the freedmen. The Nation had accepted the responsibility of the North for aid to education. 71

68 Ibid., p. 526.


70 Hirshon, Farewell to the Bloody Shirt, p. 200.

71 Nation, V, July 25, 1867, p. 70.
As late as 1872, the journal expressed its support for a bill to establish a national fund for education from the sale of public land;

if they[public schools] cannot be secured in the reconstructed States without the exercise of national encouragement, we are in favor of that.\footnote{Ibid., XIV, January 25, 1872, p. 52.}

An earlier editorial on George Peabody's endowment to public education in the South, however, foreshadowed the outline of later arguments against the Blair bill;

Mr. Peabody might have rested assured that the Southern States would build up a school system for themselves, by taxation, just as the Northern States have, in time, without extraneous help.\footnote{Ibid., IX, November 11, 1869, p. 406.}

The Nation believed\footnote{Crofts, "The Black response to the Blair Educational Bill," p. 44.} had unwittingly impaired the southern disposition towards self-reliance, as his contribution was likely to give people the idea that the work had been done, when it was actually just a beginning.

The Blair bill was an issue for several years, passing the Senate in 1884, 1886, 1888 and 1890, only to be bottled up each time in the House.\footnote{Ibid., XIV, January 25, 1872, p. 52.} When it was first introduced in 1884, the Nation hardly noticed the issue. In 1885, however, Edward P. Clark joined the Evening Post and the Nation as an editorial writer. His pamphlet, "A Bill to Promote Mendicancy," was published as an editorial, and unmercifully flailed the measure. Clark's determined opposition made the Evening Post the bill's most important enemy by the late
1880's. 75

Clark's attack was three pronged. First, he asserted the bill would lead to federal control of education. This represented a grossly unconstitutional interference with states' rights. 76 Secondly, the bill would weaken the spirit of self-reliance, "the most important thing in the world." The man who worked his way to an education is more valuable for having done so, Clark stated, and the same principle applied to the state, he added. 77 Thirdly, he denied the necessity of the subsidy, repeatedly citing progress supposedly made in southern education. The South wants to and is capable of improving its educational system on its own, was the constant theme. 78

The Nation's early advocacy of federal aid to education and its subsequent reversal mirrors its Reconstruction policy in general. For the Nation, the educational problem should be solved in the way of the race problem; by southerners and without outside interference.

75 Hirshon, Farewell to the Bloody Shirt, p. 194.
76 Nation, XLV, July 21, 1887, p. 42.
77 Ibid, XLII, January 21, 1886, p. 51.
78 Ibid, passim; XLIII, July 1, 1886, p. 3. XLVI, January 5, 1888, p. 5. XLVIII, January 31, 1889, p. 83. XLIX, August 1, 1881, p. 84. LV, August 18, 1892, p. 118.
Consistent with its liberal democratic outlook, the Nation reacted extremely negatively when the imperialistic fervor heightened in the 1890's. The idea of a democratic nation imposing its government by force was anathema to men like Godkin. Both the annexation of the Hawaiian Islands and the Spanish American War were opposed as destructive of American democracy. While the Nation allied imperialism with the equally repugnant protectionism and class legislation, the key issue involved was perceived as that of race.

The thrust of several editorials on the subject was that the United States had failed miserably in its responsibilities to the "inferior races" already within its borders: Asians, Indians and Negroes. The Nation warned that efforts to impose our will on new subject races could only lead to disaster by exacerbating race tensions. The United States, the Nation observed, already exhibited an appalling amount of race-hatred; why add to it? it asked. If this country had to spread its influence, it should be through knowledge and trade, law liberty and brotherly kindness, not violent conquest of darker races, wrote the Nation.

The Nation questioned the sincerity of those who professed to be concerned with the elevation of the conquered. They ignored outbreaks of virulent racism in the South, while

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79 Ibid., LVI, February 9, 1893, p. 93.
80 Ibid., LXV, December 16, 1897, p. 468.
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thrusting "benevolent assimilation on unwilling colored men on the other side of the globe," the Nation trenchantly observed. In an unequivocal criticism of such white hypocrisy, the journal charged, "Concerning the negro problem, the word 'shirked' describes the situation accurately." In direct violation of the Constitution, state governments often denied blacks equal rights, and fraud and violence accomplished this where the states failed to, noted the Nation. The prevalence of lynching indicated that blacks did not even enjoy the right to trial by jury, it commented;

We do not regard this kind of civilization as admirable, and as something that we ought to extend to other communities...[Americans should instead heed] the plain call of duty to remedy our own scandalous abuses rather than to extend the system under which they have arisen to other peoples.

The issue of imperialism placed the country's racial ideas in new perspectives. In the South, disfranchisement and Jim Crow segregation received a critical push, bolstered by the approval expressed in northern pleas for the right of Caucasians to rule inferior races. To the Nation, however, the trauma of imperialism brought the harbingers of a new attitude, sympathetic to the interests of blacks. In late 1898 and early 1899, the Nation, at last vitally aware of the disparity between ideals and performance, adopted a stance that was highly critical of America's past treatment.

81 Ibid., LXIX, August 31, 1899, p. 163.
82 Ibid., LXVII, August 25 1898, p. 142.
83 Ibid.
of its Negro problem. 84

To the negroes we made the necessary gift of the suffrage, but not another thing. Not the slightest organized effort has been made by the white community, as a whole, to lift this huge negro population out of degradation, though we know well that their ignorance and barbarism threaten our future. the sole thing we do with alacrity for the negro is to burn him alive when he does very wrong. 85

Seeing the failure to solve the Negro problem as a denial of responsibility and of God, the Nation urged a united, heartfelt effort of the whole community, on the scale of the Revolution or the Civil War. 86 Yet the new direction proposed here clashed with the very real legacy spawned by the Nation's years of an unsympathetic, condescending attitude towards American blacks. It was several years before the Nation, under new leadership (Oswald Garrison Villard), once again took up the cause of the Negro in our democracy. 87

84 Ibid., LXVIII, April 27, 1899, p. 306.
85 Ibid., LXVII, November 17 1898, p. 362.
86 Ibid., LXVIII, May 11, 1899, p. 347.
87 Alan Pendleton Grimes, The Political Liberalism of the New York Nation 1865-1932 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1953), p. 12; Nation, LXXVII, September 3, 1903, p. 182. This editorial re-affirms the right of black men to political power. The theme is that behind efforts to deny the black man his political rights is the intention to deny him his human rights.
CHAPTER IV

THE NATION'S COHERENT PHILOSOPHY AND THE BLACK MAN

The Nation's Negro policy was conditioned by three major elements: its own aristocratic brand of democratic theory, its unswerving faith in laissez-faire economics and an assumption of Anglo-Saxon racial and cultural superiority independent of scientific or pseudo-scientific racial theories.

The Nation upheld representative democracy as the best form of government, but its own variant smacked of elitism. Democratic government offered the strongest safeguards against the abuse of power, Godkin believed, because it distributed political power among all classes. The fundamental element of a political voice was the vote. However, this did not mean that everyone should vote. Godkin wanted the suffrage restricted to those who would use it wisely. This group he equated for practical purposes with the educated. Democracy was thus reinterpreted to mean the distribution of political power among the classes who were able to use it correctly, conditioned on the assumption that nearly all classes were capable of doing so. Godkin favored a limited version of universal suffrage:

For ourselves, we believe in the justice and expediency of universal suffrage, in its broadest sense, subject only to such qualifications as the unanimous sense of mankind imposes, and in this country at any rate, where inability to read implies a voluntary degradation, to a reading qualification. In other wa
words, we hold that it is best to allow every human being to vote, when a permanent citizen of the State, of sufficient age to enable him to enter into contracts, of sound mind, having means of support independent of the charity of the State, unstained with crime, and able to read, which means with us what ability to hear meant in an ancient Greek Republic.  

The Nation's elitist assumptions were exemplified by its proposal for a literacy test for all voters. Blacks were not the only groups affected. It was equally important to the Nation that illiterate immigrants and ignorant whites be excluded from the franchise. Soldiers, it felt, also should not vote as their votes were likely to be influenced. The Nation favored ballot reforms, some of which were used in a discriminatory fashion. The Australian secret ballot was endorsed by the Nation, as was the notorious eight-box system implemented in some southern states. However, the Nation opposed the unequal application of all laws, including those relating to voting qualifications.

Besides ignorant voters, the Nation saw the other great threat to democracy as class legislation. Class legislation was defined as the use of governmental power to further the interests of one group at the expense of others. It could be secured through two methods: minorities could employ

1Nation, III, November 18, 1866, p. 371.

2Under this system, voters were required to place eight separate ballots, one for each office, in eight different labeled boxes. Any ballot in an incorrect box was not counted. This system effectively negated the vote of illiterate blacks, while illiterate whites were usually helped to find the correct boxes.
corrupt influence and manipulation to further their interests, and majorities, when misled by demagogues, could simply misuse their power. Class government, or rule in the interests of a specific group, Godkin saw as the logical extension of class legislation and as a total negation of democracy.

As examples of class legislation, the Nation opposed excessive veterans pensions, railroad subsidies, Granger legislation, tariffs and labor legislation for minimum wages and maximum hours. The Nation also identified legislation to ensure equal treatment of blacks and whites as class legislation. In objecting to the formation of the Afro-American League, the Nation quoted the Supreme Court's Civil Rights Cases decision, that Negroes must cease to be the special favorites of the government. On the same grounds, the Nation opposed legislation to end discrimination in public accommodations and to guarantee black voting rights. The Nation seems to have been oblivious, after the Reconstruction era, to arguments that special attention to black interests would have benefited the nation at large, or that legislation was necessary to make possible Godkin's ideal of equal treatment before the law.

In addition to defending its elitist conception of

3Nation, L, February 13, 1890, p. 122. The Afro-American League was founded in Chicago in January of 1890 under the leadership of T. Thomas Fortune. Fortune articulated the goal of the short-lived league as political pressure on a local level for race purposes. The League directed its opposition at discrimination in taxation, distribution of school funds, jury trials and in transportation facilities. Leslie H. Fischell, "The Negro in Northern Politics, 1870-1900," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, LXII (December, 1955), 474.
democracy, the Nation was a consistent exponent of limited government, and drew on both the liberal political tradition of Locke and Mill and laissez-faire economic theory to reinforce its position. The proper functions of government, it held, were limited to: administration of justice (law and order), taxation, popular education, protection of individual freedom, maintaining foreign relations, defense and the maintenance of public credit and sound currency. Consequently, the Nation vehemently opposed governmentally administered welfare, regulation of hours and wages, regulation of railroads and tariffs. This habit of minimizing the role of government contributed to the Nation’s opposition to efforts to secure economic and social justice for American blacks. Measures to distribute land among the freedmen, and to protect political and civil rights were opposed, partly because they necessitated an expansion in the functions of government.

Liberal political and economic thought prescribed limitations for government: Government should not extend itself beyond certain functions. In addition to these, the Nation added descriptive limitations: that is, government was, by its nature, unable to do certain things. Government, it held, was powerless to solve social problems, whether they be those of prejudice and discrimination, Mormonism or alcoholism. The two major problems facing black Americans, namely hostility from whites and the blacks’ own inferior social and economic

4Nation, XXII, May 25, 1876, p. 330.
state, were held to be amenable only to the influences of time and education and the growth of population and commerce.

The final aspect of the Nation's outlook which influenced its Negro policy is the class and race biases which pervaded its pages. That the elite intellectual class which the Nation represented believed in Anglo-Saxon superiority few will dispute. They believed themselves to be socially, morally and intellectually the best race, divinely destined to save the world and rule the earth.\(^5\) The Nation consistently reflected this viewpoint, except that it saw no divine mission for the race. Focussing as it did on the issues of the day, the ultimate destiny of any race was not treated directly. The lack of a global vision of Anglo-Saxon dominance partially accounts for Godkin's vehement opposition to all forms of American imperialism. That Anglo-Saxons comprised the best race was a devout conviction of the Nation. They comprised:

the shrewdest, wariest, most energetic race on earth, that which has carried the political art to the highest perfection, and which is most skillful in its use, whether for offence or defence.\(^6\)

Although, or perhaps because, the Nation worked from the start with assumptions of white superiority, the journal was unconcerned with defining mental or physical race differences. Its attitude towards the many pseudo-scientific


\(^6\)Nation, VII, October 15, 1868, p. 304.
studies of cranial capacity and cephalic index was primarily one of indifference. Lack of interest did not mean disagreement, as one 1870 editorial demonstrated. It explained that African and Mongolian types possess little capacity to adapt, and tend to revert back to the ancestral type, whereas the Aryan type was the most flexible, easily accommodating new conditions. The implication of this, the writer concluded, was that if caste-like stratification was to be avoided, everyone must be educated to the highest possible point, and each race should be given access to all of the jobs for which their capacities fit them.\(^7\) This formulation of the "A leopard can't change his spots" doctrine ran against the Nation's unending exhortations to blacks to educational and material progress as a means of achieving complete equality with whites.

Another of the infrequent direct references to scientific race theorizing was equally unrepresentative of the general position taken by the Nation, although this editorial was consistent with the considerably more sympathetic attitude which characterized the last few years of Godkin's editorship. The editorial denounced the "sanctimonious and condescending attitude of Anglo-Saxons towards the races they are pleased to call inferior" and the sophistic "comfortable generalities" of pseudo-scientific theorists Demolins, Le Bon and Fouillée.\(^8\)

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\(^7\)Ibid., XI, July 21, 1870, p. 39.

\(^8\)Ibid., LXIX, December 28, 1899, p. 481.
Scientific theories were unnecessary to document what the Nation felt was obvious; that the freedmen, emerging from the degrading effects of slavery, were inferior in almost every aspect to whites. The average intelligence of rural South Carolina Negroes the Nation appraised as "very low—so low that they are but slightly above the level of animals." The Nation believed it difficult to find Virginian "negroes mentally and morally qualified to sit on juries." But the Nation saw reason for hope. It pointed to such civilized qualities as temperance and the capacity to bear hardship, which Negroes had evidenced under slavery. Blacks, it wrote, were quite capable of understanding political and social ideas and of effective political participation, and had shown themselves good soldiers:

He has proved himself capable, if not of the highest order of civilization, of a very high degree of civilization.

Again illustrating the tentative nature of the Nation's conclusions about race differences is the following:

we believe it is admitted that negroes mount the first steps on the ladder of knowledge more readily than whites, though their comparative ability to reach the highest heights, in as great numbers, is a matter of dispute.

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9Ibid., XVIII, April 16, 1874, p. 247.
10Ibid., XXIII, March 25, 1880, p. 223.
11Ibid., I, September 14, 1865, p. 325.
12Ibid., I, August 17, 1865, p. 198.
13Ibid., VIII, February 18, 1869, p. 125.
Black Americans, the Nation believed, had a significant, if undetermined potential for improvement. Education, it felt, would raise their level of intelligence, and material progress would develop character traits such as self-reliance and industry. Negroes were, in the first place, human beings subject to the common laws of humanity, and the same influences beneficial to whites were bound to improve Negroes. The ultimate question of how far blacks could rise the Nation was willing to have time decide.

Black improvement, of course, meant increasing conformity to white standards: educational achievements, monetary success, political independence and influence, and the development of personality traits such as self-reliance, determination and drive. The changes, the Nation felt, were the only way to bring about acceptance by the white community of blacks. The same was true of the Nation's expectations for Indians and immigrants. A firm and consistent critic of America's Indian policy, the Nation was an early advocate of the acculturation policy later adopted in the 1880's. In 1867, the journal urged that

14 From the 1850's to the 1880's, Federal Indian policy was mainly concerned with removing Indians from their lands to reservations. Helen Jackson's A Century of Dishonor, published in 1885, was instrumental in bringing about a new policy of acculturation, or, trying to bring the Indian into the mainstream of American life by re-educating him. The Dawes Allotment Act of 1887, which attempted to break up tribal structure and make yeoman farmers of the Indians. In accordance with the Nation's earlier instructions for educating Indian children in the East, to ensure their rejection of Indian culture, many Indians, including Jim Thorpe, were sent to Eastern
Indians be made subject to the same laws as whites, and be incorporated into white American life, economically and culturally.\textsuperscript{15} Acculturation should be accomplished by force if necessary, the Nation wrote. In 1876, the journal recommended that Indians be hunted down, rounded up, their tribal organization destroyed and their people scattered to make them amenable to civilizing influences and police supervision.\textsuperscript{16} As harsh as this policy sounded, the Nation believed it was preferable to our disgraceful history of perfidy and murder. The Nation had no vision of cultural pluralism; America, it felt, was meant to be a homogeneous nation.

White Americans also formed the model to which immigrants should conform, the Nation believed. A vacillating, but generally open immigration policy was accompanied by affirmations of the importance of ensuring literate, informed citizens who identified their interests with those of the community at large. Like Negroes, unschooled immigrants were easily manipulated by unscrupulous politicians. The Nation's answer to this was not ethnic or racial disfranchisement, but literacy qualifications and public education.

\textsuperscript{15}\textit{Nation}, V, October 31, 1867, p. 356.
\textsuperscript{16}\textit{Ibid.}, XXIII, July 13, 1876, p. 21.
The Nation of the period under consideration reflected both positive and negative aspects of contemporary racial thought. It ranged from qualified egalitarianism, to paternalism, to expressions of the same kinds of prejudice it elsewhere condemned. But its attitude towards other races was, in general, one of condescension, and was based on an implicit assumption of Anglo-Saxon superiority. Similarly, the Nation's record on political issues of the period revealed a highly unsympathetic approach to legislative efforts to improve the status of black Americans. The Nation, as an exponent of classical liberal ideology, used that ideology against the black man, when the underlying premise of that ideology, the fundamental equality of man, would have dictated a vigorous commitment to social justice for all Americans, including blacks. Although clearly aware of the alternatives to its own course of action, the Nation was unable to transcend its assumptions and carry through the application of liberal values to the problem of the black man's status in America.

The inability of E. L. Godkin and men of his class to cope with this problem, as well as the other changes and problems of an industrializing nation, ultimately stemmed from the fact that they were products of an older order. Outside the main current of American history, they were unwanted aristocrats, unable to fit into the new economic and social order. For Godkin and the men whose views the Nation represented, the times were truly out of joint.
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Most useful to this study, of course, were the volumes of the Nation from 1865 to 1900. Howard M. Jones' Age of Energy and Clinton Rossiter's Conservatism in America provided needed insight into the class outlook which the Nation embodied. Alan Pendleton Grimes' study, The Political Liberalism of the New York Nation 1865-1932 provided a brief summary of the Nation's Negro policy, but was most useful in delineating the classical liberal political framework within which the journal operated. Godkin's dominant role in managing the weekly was well documented by Lester Harvey Rifkin's unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, "Edwin L. Godkin and The Nation." For a general history of American Negroes, I relied most heavily on August Meier's and Elliot Rudwick's From Plantation to Ghetto.

I had hoped to find Rollo Ogden's Life and Letters of Edwin Lawrence Godkin (1907) as well as Godkin's two books Reflections and Comments 1865-1895 and Unforeseen Tendencies of Democracy (1898) useful. However, Ogden's sympathetic biography is largely a chronicle of anecdotes, and only briefly touches on his racial outlook. The latter two books are collections of previously printed Nation editorials.
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Books


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