The Negro Press - Southern Style Miltiancy: The Atlanta Independent and Savannah Tribune, 1904-1928

William Robert Autrey
Atlanta University

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THE NEGRO PRESS - SOUTHERN STYLE MILITANCY: THE ATLANTA INDEPENDENT AND SAVANNAH TRIBUNE, 1904-1928

A THESIS
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BY
WILLIAM ROBERT AUTREY

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

The story of the southern Negro press has never been told, in so far as its reaction to the age of demagoguery in the South, 1904-1928, is concerned. The birth of Jim Crow and all of its concomitants produced interesting reactions in the Negro community. In the North, the papers of Robert S. Abbott and Monroe Trotter, militant Negro editors of Chicago and Boston respectively, preached radical defiance of lynch law, Jim Crow, and demagoguery. A favorite target of the Trotter and Abbott school was the South in general. While the Negro press in the South was different and in many ways peculiar, contrary to Robert S. Abbott's insinuations and implications, it was not cowardly. Negro newspapermen who lived in the South could hardly discount almost three centuries of first hand experience with the white man and southern institutions. Even such a "yellow journalist" and denouncer of the South as Abbott, himself a self-exiled Savannah, Georgia, Negro, knew the radical conditions in the South. Fully aware that there was a "solid South" against the Negro, the southern Negro press chose to be militant within the framework of the Southern way of life. In so far as advocating race pride, group consciousness, and racial improvement were concerned, the southern Negro press was much the same as its northern counterpart, except that the former appealed more frequently and more poignantly for race consciousness and

group solidarity. Furthermore, in denouncing lynching and demagogues and in criticizing the South, additional care was exercised by southern Negro editors. Almost always, the militancy of the Southern Negro press went virtually unnoticed by the Southern white community in contrast to its open hostility toward northern race publications such as the Crisis, the Challenger, and the Defender.

Recognizing that there were differences in the press reactions from the two sections of the country, it is logical to proceed to an analysis of two of the outstanding Negro papers in the South, the Atlanta Independent and the Savannah Tribune. Both papers preached that the South was the "natural home" of the Negro and both appealed to the conscience of the so-called better element of Southern whites. There were striking similarities in the reactions of the Independent and the Tribune toward the North in general and toward the Northern Negro press in particular. Despite their similarities, there were, of course, some differences in their reactions to day-to-day events. These differences notwithstanding, the Independent and the Tribune often were effective molders of public opinion in the Negro community in the South.

The editor of the Atlanta Independent, Benjamin Jefferson Davis, called himself the "friend of the common people." Regarding his editorial policy, he declared: "We have no higher ambition than to serve the best interest of the race and the community." On the matter of Negro rights in

2Ibid., p. 132.
4Detweiler, op. cit., p. 53.
the South, he announced that "the manhood and the equal political and civil rights of the race will continue to be our shibboleth." Describing himself as a "dipped and dyed in the wool" Republican, Ben Davis openly opposed any Negro quest for social equality.

At least a quarter of a century older than Davis' paper was the Savannah Tribune, which was established in 1875. John H. Deveaux, the founder and first editor of the Savannah weekly, dedicated his paper to "the defence of the colored people, and their elevation to the highest plane of citizenship: all other considerations shall be secondary." Deveaux further dedicated the Tribune to an advocacy of justice for colored people. As was the case with Ben Davis, Deveaux was a product of his era. He endeavored to break down the existing racial prejudice against the race and to establish friendly relations between them. While Deveaux was editor, the Tribune supported no political party.

In 1889, Sol C. Johnson became the editor of the Tribune and adopted a liberal Republican policy. Although the paper was loyal to the machine, it was not as unbendingly Republican as Davis' Independent. As was Davis, Johnson was a lover of the "Southland" and a believer in racial peace and goodwill. He, however, was not as ardent a lover of the South, nor was he as devoted a disciple of the great Negro educator, Booker T. Washington, as Davis.

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1Atlanta Independent, January 30, 1904.
2Ibid., November 4, 1904.
4Savannah Tribune, December 14, 1875.
5Ibid., June 12, 1909.
The Independent and the Tribune were both exponents of a Southern-style Negro press militancy. A careful examination of the papers for the years 1904-1928 reveals three general stages of growth toward an increasingly aggressive militancy. From 1904 to 1915, the major theme was racial peace and friendship. Beginning about 1915, concern about Negro discontent appeared more frequently in an ever more demanding tone. In the third period, about 1920 to 1928, the general theme became even more condemnatory of the white South. Direct appeals were made to the Southern conscience. Yet the papers remained Southern in sympathy.

While remaining Southern in sympathy, editors Johnson and Davis displayed many of the earmarks of the militant Northern Negro press. Both editors condemned the white lawless element and called for full civil and political equality for the Negro in the South. Because social changes were moving with great rapidity, the Negro press moved closer to the DuBois theme of protest. The Negro press attracted nation-wide attention. It championed the cause of the socialists and sharply criticized the American government for deporting socialists and for suppressing the freedom of speech. The Southern Negro press, which from 1895 to 1915 was influenced strongly by Booker T. Washington, finally gave its approval of the N.A.A.C.P. and its work.

Since the Negro press was Southern in sympathy, it gave full support and sanction to those whites who worked for interracial goodwill. To Negro editors, these whites were crusaders against the Southern Way.

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1The Houston Informer was probably the most aggressive Negro paper in the South. (Van Deusen, op. cit., p. 235.)
voice the Negro's love for the South.

As race tensions eased in the South, the Negro press began to once more
CHAPTER II
THE SOUTH OUR NATURAL HOME

A Philosophy of Racial Friendship.—In 1900, events of far reaching significance transpired in the South. In the "Empire State", Populism was in its death throes. The Negro who had been protected before from racism and racist propaganda, was abandoned to the vindictive fury of Georgia White Supremacy. The speeches of Allen D. Candler, Democratic candidate for governor in 1898 and again in 1902, confirmed that White Supremacy was what white Georgians wanted. The jubilation and intense emotions expressed by the whites in the Atlanta riot in 1906, was a terrifying reminder of what the Negro in the South could expect.

In an era of Negrophobia and a "redneck and woolhat" ascendancy, Ben Davis and Sol Johnson preached an editorial gospel of racial friendship and peace. As James K. Wardaman and Jeff Davis, governors of Mississippi and Arkansas respectively, shouted that "God Almighty has created the Negro for the menial," the Southern Negro community heard a confusing gospel from Davis and Johnson. The former declared "that politics is neither the basis nor the fundamental principle underlying the civilization of this great republic." Politics can come later Davis declared. Quoting his mentor, Booker T. Washington, Davis asked the Negro to accept

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2E. M. Coulter, A Short History of Georgia (Chapel Hill, 1933), p. 156.
5Atlanta Independent, April 23, 1904.
the South as his home. While the Tribune did not endorse the Washington position that politics should not interest the Negro, editor Johnson did appeal to the Negro to make friends with the Southern white man. "One of the main purposes of our people," he asserted, "should be the making of friends among our white neighbors and retaining that friendship."2

Booker T. Washington's moderating influence was felt by both editors, but Davis was closer to Washington's ideal. Davis would never offend the white South by advocating anything but the Washington educational philosophy and he sought to keep the friendship of the so-called better whites by declaring:

"Industrial and manual training are the foundation upon which the Negro must develop his civilization. The Negro's education must be at least ninety-five percent industrial."3

Sol Johnson believed that both Washington and W. E. B. DuBois, the more radical Negro leader, were the two greatest statesmen then living.4 He often expressed pride in "Dr. Washington's school,"5 but expressed sharp doubt that industrial education was what ninety-five percent of the race needed. The Savannah editor preached an editorial doctrine of racial peace, but did not endorse industrial training to the exclusion of participation in political affairs. Whereas the Atlanta editor accepted the Washingtonian industrial arts training policy, Johnson thought that those Negroes "who are able should take the classics."6

Davis' varying positions on politics were at best confusing and paradoxical. At times he advocated voter registration. In an editorial on

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1Atlanta Independent, April 23, 1904.
2Savannah Tribune, December 10, 1904.
3Atlanta Independent, June 11, 1904.
4Savannah Tribune, March 10, 1906.
5Tbid., April 7, 1906.
6Tbid., January 20, 1906.
December 24, 1904, he pleaded with Georgia and other Southern States "not to disfranchise the Negro." At other times he asserted that the Negro should eschew politics. Although his well established record as a National Republican Committeeman for Georgia shows that he was not disinterested. One has only to examine his editorials on the disfranchisement of the Negro in Georgia politics and in other Southern States for further examples.

Appeals to the Conscience of the South. — The Independent and the Tribune showed an avid interest in matters of political significance to the Georgia Negro in particular and to the Southern Negro in general. Usually Davis and Johnson appealed to the conscience of the South on purely Southern political matters, but adopted a less pronounced attitude on matters of national import.

In 1908, Georgia officially disfranchised the Negro. During the four years preceding that action, the Independent consistently opposed the elimination of the Negro from Georgia politics. In March, 1904, its editor blasted the South, declaring that the disfranchisement of Negroes was aimed at the Republican party. He noted that, at first, disfranchisement had started in the Black Belt, and at that time had been an undisguised attempt to restore White Supremacy. He expressed impatience with the South and called attention to the disfranchisement of Negroes in Kentucky, Delaware, and Maryland. In these states, he argued, the white man had had nothing to fear from "Negro domination" since he outnumbered Negroes

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1 Atlanta Independent, December 24, 1904.
In 1904, during the closing months of Governor Joseph M. Terrel's administration, there were renewed efforts by some Georgia whites to secure the disfranchisement of the Negro. During the gubernatorial campaign of 1906, Hoke Smith, governor-elect of the same year, resisted all efforts of the demagogues to influence him to advocate the elimination of the Negro from Georgia politics. Nevertheless, there was a growing body of sentiment in Georgia for the disfranchisement of the Negro. By the year 1908, however, this sentiment had become so powerful that Georgia went the way of her sister states in the South.

During this campaign, the Southern Negro press strongly opposed the disfranchisement of the Negro. Negro editors appealed to the Southern conscience not to disfranchise the Negro and expressed the hope that Georgia would refuse to succumb to the demagogues' rantings. Many Negro editors, nonetheless, tacitly and secretly were convinced that the Negro would be disfranchised in Georgia as well as in other Southern States. Despite their personal thoughts, Southern Negro editors, in so far as their editorial policy was concerned, waged a continuous battle with disfranchisement.

In July, 1904, editor Davis revealed his innermost thoughts and fears. He warned his readers that the "elimination of the Negro from the National life as a political factor is inevitable." Although he appeased the Southern mind by talking of the survival of the fittest, this did not mean that

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1 Atlanta Independent, March 18, 1904.
he favored disfranchisement. It showed that Davis believed that the white South was bent on the elimination of the Negro from political life and that he was merely suggesting a possible alternative to the Southern Negro community which was that the Negro should "begin at the bottom" and "learn the rudiments of responsible government."¹

Despite the Atlanta editor's contention in November, 1904, that "politics can come later,"² in December he asked the white South not to disfranchise the Negro. This appeal was made to the so-called better element of Southern whites and indicated Davis' profound faith in them. In an editorial he wrote: "The sober second thought of the people of Georgia is opposed to disfranchising the Negro." Ben Davis went a step further to dispel the demagogues' "bugbear" of Negro domination and assured the white South that the races "can exist side by side."³

Other Negro editors added their voices to the protest against the disfranchisement of the Negro in the South. The Atlanta Voice of the Negro, another Atlanta Negro paper, cried out:

Will the mind of the South be forever hag-ridden with fratricidal hatred?...It is our duty to counsel moderation, to seek by right living to secure the confidence of the better element of white people.⁴

While Davis was predicting the eventual disfranchisement of the Negro and while the Atlanta Voice of the Negro appealed to the conscience of the so-called better whites, the Savannah editor, Sol Johnson, commended Georgia on her social and political wisdom. "Georgia," the Tribune declared, "unlike many of the other Southern States, have [sic] repeatedly

¹Atlanta Independent, March 18, 1904.
²Ibid., June 11, 1904.
³Ibid., December 24, 1904.
refused to disfranchise its colored voters....For this commendation should be given.¹ Editor Johnson appealed to the white conscience when he declared:

We are demanding no special legislation in behalf of our people....Special enactments of laws in our favor will only sharpen race prejudice....There are a number of our white friends with sufficient backbone to rise against prejudice and make a plea for justice for a people who is the most docile in the world.²

Until 1908, the Georgia legislature, refused to pass any disfranchisement bills. With every defeat of the disfranchisement bills, Johnson expressed renewed hope and faith in Georgia. As late as February, 1905, the Savannah editor was still praising Georgia for exercising what he called political wisdom.² When the second attempt to pass disfranchising legislation "petered out" in the Georgia legislature, the Tribune was profuse in its praise of the state.³

In the meantime, other Southern States rapidly eliminated the Negro from politics. In Florida the Negro was disfranchised in 1907.⁴ Even in Washington, Congressmen Hardwick and Edwards of Georgia loudly proclaimed the need for a national disfranchisement bill.⁵ When Maryland passed its disfranchisement bill, the Tribune took the position that there was more prejudice against the Negro in that state than in any state farther South.⁶

The gubernatorial campaign and election in Georgia in 1908 and their aftermath brought about the realization of the Negro press' worst fear -- the disfranchisement of the Georgia Negro. Hoke Smith, the incumbent, had

¹Savannah Tribune, December 10, 1904.
²Ibid., February 11, 1905.
³Ibid., July 21, 1906.
⁴Ibid., April 20, 1907.
⁵Ibid., December 11, 1907.
⁶Ibid., February 22, 1908.
not resisted the influences of the demagogues. But as the gubernatorial campaign became heated, Smith adopted the tactics of the most rabid demagogues. He not only appealed to race prejudice, but also went on record in favor of the disfranchisement of the Negro. He shouted that the Negro should be put out of politics because Negro votes were bought wholesale and were easily manipulated.

For the most part, the Southern Negro press had only one interest in the outcome of the election. Although Ben Davis declared that there was no choice for the colored people between "Hokus" Smith and Joseph Brown, his opponent, since they both favored the disfranchisement of the Negro, the Negro had more than an interest in the prosperity that might result from Brown's election. Davis had reference to the campaign ditty, "Brown and bread; Hoke and hunger." The Savannah editor did not endorse either candidate, but did make a prior entreaty to whatever candidate was elected not to disfranchise the Negro. He wrote:

> It is sincerely hoped that the administration will do nothing that they will regret in future years.

When Joseph Brown was elected editors Davis and Johnson felt a kind of guarded optimism. The Atlanta editor wrote a poignant editorial which was directed to the new governor. Davis appealed to him not to disfranchise the Negro because to do so would be to commit a crime against humanity.

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2 Savannah Tribune, June 6, 1908.
4 Atlanta Independent, April 18, 1908.
5 Ibid., June 6, 1908.
6 Savannah Tribune, June 22, 1907.
7 Atlanta Independent, June 13, 1908.
Sol Johnson went further than did Davis. He applauded the "white people of Georgia" for Hoke Smith's defeat. The editor's joy over Smith's defeat indicated his thought that "Georgia has set a pace in the direction of rebuking men of that ilk [the rabid race baiting demagogue] that other Southern States should imitate."¹

Four months after Joe Brown took office, the Georgia legislature began to debate another disfranchisement bill. As pointed out above, many Negro editors suspected that Georgia would eventually disfranchise the Negro. During the debate on disfranchisement, Davis of Atlanta audaciously attacked the bill. The amendment, the editor wrote:

Is a cunningly designed subterfuge, not to prevent fraud and manipulation at the polls but a makeshift to disfranchise colored men because they are Negroes.²

Early in October, 1908, the newspapers of Atlanta and Savannah carried the news of the passage of the disfranchisement amendment by the Georgia legislature. The Atlanta editor, Davis, did not express surprise. Instead he showed a sense of profound consternation with Georgia which he believed stood "disgraced in the enlightened conscience of the world."³ Johnson's reaction was one of abject resignation. Faced with the fait accompli of disfranchisement, he expressed a sense of mild disappointment, but did not condemn Georgia or the South. The disfranchisement act, the editor said, had passed by a smaller majority than he had anticipated.⁴ Although the editors of the Independent and the Tribune had entreated the South, especially Georgia, not to disfranchise the Negro, Georgia also had surrendered to the demands of the Negrophobes and the Negromaniacs.

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¹Savannah Tribune, June 6, 1908.
²Atlanta Independent, September 12, 1908.
³Ibid., October 10, 1908.
⁴Savannah Tribune, October 10, 1908.
Georgia's submission to demagoguery, despite the cajolery of Davis and Johnson, strikingly illustrated that Populism was at last "safely dead."\(^1\) Racial demagogues had begun to attack the Negro as early as 1900. From that point on they damned the Negro \textit{ad infinitum}. Instead of the improvement in race relations promised by the disfranchisers, a serious deterioration in race relations occurred all over the South.\(^2\) Riots, lynchings, whippings, and other forms of lawlessness became frequent occurrences. As Dick Gray, the editor of the \textit{Atlanta Journal}, expressed it: "This is a white man's Georgia from now on."\(^3\)

\textbf{In Defense of the South.--} The reactions of the \textit{Tribune} and the \textit{Independent} to the demagoguery which spread throughout the South are both revealing and interesting. While they never condoned white lawlessness and Negrophobe preachments, they scathingly condemned the actual individual perpetrators, not the South as a region. Occasionally a bitter editorial was directed at the South as a region, but that was the exception. The general rule was editorially to prod the South, appeal to the paternalistic sentiments of the Southerner, dissuade the Southern Negro from retaliation, and make a poignant appeal to the small but influential body of conservative white sentiment.

Benjamin Davis and Sol Johnson, undoubtedly, believed that "the patched breeches" demagogues could be safely lampooned. Editor Davis was relentlessly opposed to the Southern demagogues. He devoted more editorial space to lambasting Wardaman, Watson, Jeff Davis, and other Negro haters

\(^1\)Cash, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 201.
\(^3\)\textit{Atlanta Independent}, October 17, 1908.
than did his contemporary Johnson. To Davis, Vardaman was a preposterous slanderer of the Negro race, as well as an ignorant hypocrite. In fact, declared the Independent: "Vardaman is a striking example of how statesmanship has decayed in Mississippi." The Republican editor was shocked that the Mississippi governor could ride into office on a "tidal wave of race prejudice and passion." The Independent never passed up an opportunity to chide the "preachers of hate." While offering his "brethren" in Mississippi "new hope", Davis wished defeat to the Tillmans, Gormans, Vardamans, and Hardwicks.  

The Tribune adopted an attitude similar to that of the Independent. In the words of the Tribune, Vardaman was a "narrow minded" demagogue. The Savannah editor went to great lengths to express his gratitude that "men of Vardaman's ilk are but few in high places and their opinions is not held by a large number of noble-minded Southerners." This mildly caustic attitude, concomitant with an expression of gratitude for and flattery of the so-called better whites, was typical of Johnson's reactions to Southern demagoguery.

Ben Davis, on the other hand, was more vocal and obviously caustic toward the Southern demagogues. While bitterly condemning the demagogues, the Atlanta editor received a kind of savage delight from spelling their names in mockingly comical manner. He frequently called Hoke Smith "the Honorable Hokus Smith" and derided Tom Watson by describing him as "Tom

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1Ibid., January 30, 1904.
2Ibid., February 27, 1904.
3Savannah Tribune, January 23, 1904.
4Ibid.
Essau Watson." "Hokey," Davis declared, was a hypocrite.

Both Benjamin Davis and Sol Johnson often exhibited the Booker T. Washington approach in order to cope with the demagogues' contentions that there was a threat of Negro domination. "The negro people of this country have neither the character or inclination to dominate in governmental affairs," Davis wrote. Both editors called the South's attention to their contention that the only domination which the white man had to fear was the mental domination which came from his constant fear of the Negro. In nearly every editorial which castigated the demagogues, both editors called the Southerners' attention to the racists' ravings about a mythical Negro domination, social equality, and the Negro's alleged criminality. "The good whites of Georgia are waking up," wrote Ben Davis, "and are everyday showing a disposition not to be fooled by the political demagogues." He added:

"They are finding out everyday that the 'niggers' equality is simply the howl of the crafty demagogues for the purpose of riding into office."3

Until 1915, the Atlanta and the Savannah editors generally voiced a theme of love for the South. Davis called the South "our natural home,"4 while Johnson editorialized that the Negro is "a part and parcel of the South."5 Both editors vigorously opposed the protested riots and lynchings. One of Davis' favorite methods was sometimes to heap condemnation on the South, but also to point out that the North was just as bad.

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1Atlanta Independent, July 4, 1908.
2Savannah Tribune, November 14, 1906.
3Atlanta Independent, June 30, 1906.
4Ibid., March 12, 1910.
5Savannah Tribune, December 4, 1904.
Johnson did not use this mode of attack as frequently or as effective as did Ben Davis. In fact, during this first stage of militancy, editor Davis was particularly vituperative toward the North and professed a profound love for the South while Johnson, on the other hand, was seldom highly critical of the North and in general did not express as profound a love for the South as did his contemporary, Davis.

Although Benjamin Davis expressed a deep love for the South, he was often extremely acrimonious in his criticism of it. At times Davis labeled mob laws "a menace to our civilization"; recommended that every Negro who voted for Governor Atkinson, who strongly urged the enforcement of Georgia's 1896 anti-lynch law, be given a pension; and, excoriated the South because it had a preponderance of race prejudice, riots, and lynchings. Whenever he could, he pointed out to the North that the South had no monopoly on lynching. When there were particularly violent outbursts of lynching in the South, the Atlanta editor made it a point to imply that the South was merely imitating the North. When the April, 1904, Arkansas outburst occurred, Ben Davis indicated that the mob action in that state resembled the Springfield, Ohio, riot which took place earlier in the year.

On September 22, 1906, Atlanta erupted in a bloody four day race riot. Much of the blame for the riot has been placed on John Temple Graves, the editor of the Atlanta News who deliberately circulated false

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2Atlanta Independent, September 4, 1904.
3Ibid., December 24, 1909.
4Ibid.
5Ibid., April 12, 1904.
stories of Negro attacks on white women. The interesting thing, however, is that, a few days before the riot, editor Davis appeared to agree with Graves. On September 15, 1906, he was particularly harsh in advocating that Negro assaulters be punished. He did not repudiate any of the anti-Negro rumors. Davis was, however, in complete agreement with some whites and many of his readers that something should be done to clean up the "dives" where the Negro crimes, such as the ones mentioned by Graves, were bred. When the riot did occur, Ben Davis expressed deep regret and surprise. He castigated the lawless white element but did not mention John T. Graves as a possible factor contributing to the riot. Nor were his criticisms of the city government of Atlanta severe. He called on the leading whites and Negroes to appoint a commission to study the riot so that similar outbursts could be prevented in the future. His editorial for September 29, 1906, was entitled: "Among Our Enemies We Are In The Midst Of Friends And They Predominate." That editorial summed up his feelings as he acknowledged that there were enemies of the Negro in Atlanta, but pointed out glowingly that the "good" white people were the Negro's friends.

Although the Savannah editor rose to the defense of the South and believed that it was the best place for the Negro, Johnson, unlike Ben Davis, was less imbued with the Booker T. Washington social philosophy. He never hesitated to warn the South that it could not consistently reckon without the Negro. Referring directly to the Theodore Roosevelt-Booker

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2 *Atlanta Independent*, September 15, 1906.
3 Ibid., September 29, 1906.
4 *Savannah Tribune*, December 10, 1904.
T. Washington dinner incident, which took place when President Roosevelt
offended the white South in 1901 by inviting Washington to dine with him,\(^1\) the Tribune warned the South that "it is out of place for the assertion
to be made whenever the President recognizes a colored man, that it is a
stab at the South."\(^2\) Further evidence that Johnson's Tribune was less pro-
Southern than the Independent can be obtained from noting Sol Johnson's
tirade against Ben Davis for attacking Henry Rucker, the Republican Negro
Revenue Collector for Georgia. Editor Johnson expressed his complete
agreement with the New York Age that:

> Because Mr. Rucker wrote during the campaign of the
1901 presidential campaign a political article in which he took sides with Roosevelt, the Independent has attacked him tooth and nail. What if Mr. Rucker did attack the South? Is the South so virtuous and holy as to be above criticism?\(^3\)

Mr. Johnson was especially sarcastic when he pointed out that John Temple
Graves and others of that ilk had been profuse in their commendation of the
Independent's editorial policy which espoused the "safe and sane" ideas of
Booker T. Washington.\(^4\)

On occasion Sol Johnson was acutely critical of the so-called better
element of the white South:

> The white South has loudly proclaimed that the colored man's best friends are in this section. Let this be proven by the white man becoming more fair in his treatment and broad-minded in his actions.\(^5\)

\(^{2}\) Savannah Tribune, December 10, 1901.
\(^{3}\) Ibid.
\(^{4}\) Ibid., December 17, 1901.
\(^{5}\) Ibid., April 22, 1905.
The Tribune carried an article on April 16, 1906, that again reflected Johnson's deepest feelings. During that month, the English lecturer and writer, Jerome R. Jerome, told an Atlanta audience that "unless the South becomes more conservative in the matter of lynching, Europe will look upon her as it now does Russia." He added: "The civilized world is shocked by the brutal abandonment to passion which some of the mobs in Southern States have shown."¹

Editor Johnson expressed no sympathy for the South when mob actions and lawlessness spread there and over the nation. Unlike the Atlanta editor, he did not draw parallels between violence in the North and Southern lawlessness. When mob action occurred in the North, he reported it candidly and did not use Davis' "I-told-you-so" approach. The editor's criticisms of Southern violence was especially pungent. On September 1, 1906, for example, he expressed sincere hope that John T. Graves would not fan the fires of hate in Atlanta. He upbraided the Atlanta dailies and denounced the Klan for circulating false reports about Negro attacks on white women.² When Atlanta did erupt on September 22, 1906, the Tribune expressed its profound regret. The editorial read:

"The affair in Atlanta is regrettable.... We regret the mob spirit. While the mob was composed of the reckless element, yet the penalty has to be paid by the better element.... The good colored people and the good white people must join hands and put down lawlessness in every community."³

During the three years prior to 1913 (fiftieth year since Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation) Negro race relations worsened in the South. James McBride Dabbs wrote that it was a common opinion among thoughtful Southerners and observant visitors that race relations were then growing

¹Ibid., May 5, 1905.  
²Ibid., September 29, 1906.  
³Ibid.
steadily worse. Lawlessness had broken out anew in the South, wrote Johnson in February, 1909.

Nearly every day an account of the lawless action of the white South is observed. If these lynchings of men had occurred so frequently in some isles of the seas, the people of this country would arise with indignation and in loud protest. They have done so in many cases but at their own door, their lips are sealed, and the lawless ones are permitted to carry on their heinous work.

The Negro press' reaction to the deterioration in race relations was one of ambivalence and frustration. Davis thought that it was incumbent on him to rise to the defense of the South. During the years immediately preceding the Jubilee Year, he either avoided castigating the South, excused it, or pounced on the North and Northern Negro leaders. While the patterns of violence swept the South, the Atlantan urged wisdom and modernation on the Negro. The Tribune on the other hand, carried very few editorials which were favorable to the South during the period 1909-1913. Most of its editorials were rather bitter in their lament on the "bloodthirstiness" of the South. Instead of urging moderation, Johnson, in 1909, conducted a relentless editorial campaign against the racist South, while always appealing to the so-called better whites.

As the scope and intensity of racial violence increased, many Negroes who did not share the political and social philosophy of Booker T. Washington began to make specific plans in their demand for the Negro's rights. W. E. B. DuBois, one of those Negroes who rejected much of the Washington philosophy, resigned from his teaching position at Atlanta University in

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1The Southern Heritage (New York, 1958), p. 54.
2Savannah Tribune, February 13, 1909.
3Atlanta Independent, June 25, 1910.
1910 to head the Niagara Movement, which later became the NAACP. Davis, who had never loved DuBois, wrote a mocking editorial on him entitled "On The Passing of DuBois." Although he blasted DuBois for acting in an exclusive fashion, he expressed gratitude to Atlanta University for rendering a favor to the community and to Negro education in the South.

Both editors expressed contempt for those Negro leaders and editors who "breathe fire water while enjoying the protection of their Northern homes." Expressing his contempt toward the Negro leaders who left the South, Davis called them "theorists who work a thousand miles from the stage of action" and informed them that the North was a land of hypocrisy and misunderstanding and that the Southern white man was a rugged and stalwart character who could not be coerced. While Johnson on the other hand did not go as far as his contemporary, he did denounce the Chicago Defender and Monroe Trotter of the Guardian for implying that Southern Negro editors and leaders were cowards.

Both editors deeply admired the South. They extolled the "beautiful Southland" inspite of the many denunciations of its racial patterns. Neither editor seemed able to escape the fact that they were Southern Negroes who did love the South as their home. While Davis informed his readers that the Southern white man was not the Negro's worst enemy, Johnson urged the Negro to "stick right to the good old Southland."

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1 Woodward, Origins of, p. 368.
2 Atlanta Independent, September 3, 1910.
3 Savannah Tribune, August 17, 1910.
4 Atlanta Independent, November 3, 1910.
5 Savannah Tribune, August 17, 1909.
6 Ibid., January 22, 1910.
7 Atlanta Independent, July 13, 1913.
8 Savannah Tribune, April 1, 1911.
Not only was the year 1913, the Year of Jubilee, it was the Tribune's year of hope for the Negro in the South. As the year dawned both editors urged the Negro to make friends with the white man and praised the South. As the year unfolded and with the coming of summer, the Tribune's note of optimism faded, as once again the South stained its escutcheon with the blood of the Negro. Johnson lamented, "If our Southland, the land of promise, the real Eden of American, ever hopes to come into her own, then she must stop this outlawry."¹

Maverick Politicians.-- In their acquiescence in the Southern way of life, the Independent and the Tribune reflected their Southern background and thus usually appealed to the Southern conscience on matters which were purely Southern. In national politics, however, editors Davis and Johnson were mavericks. In partisan matters, "dipped-in-wool" Republican Ben Davis was uncompromisingly a one party man and his Independent was loyal to the party machine. Sol Johnson's Tribune was described by authority as "conservative in tone and liberal in politics, though leaning toward the Republican party."²

The maverick politicians brooked no compromise with the Democratic white South. Through their castigations of the Democratic party, both Davis and Johnson safely and conveniently poured out their invective on Dixie. On February 13, 1904, Davis wrote that the South would not receive nor did it deserve any considerations in the nomination for the President. A New York National Committeeman of the Republican party, was quoted as saying that the South stood for nothing but bigotry and prejudice. Davis

¹Collins, op. cit., p. 12.
²Atlanta Independent, February 13, 1904.
editorialized that:

It is equivalent to saying that the South is so steeped in its sin of injustice and oppression that it would vote for a dog before it voted for statesmen who stood for equality of political and civil rights. Davis noted that the Democratic objection to Theodore Roosevelt "is that he has been fair to the Negro," and thus all Negro voters should "take notice and govern yourselves accordingly on election day." Editor Sol Johnson did not go as far as did Davis with upbraiding the Democratic South, but he did plead with the Negro voters to "qualify themselves for the coming election" of 1904. Johnson held that under the existing conditions it was mandatory to have "a man of backbone like Roosevelt in the Presidential chair." The Tribune was opposed to the Democrats because the editor believed that a Democratic victory would be a calamity for Negroes. The Democrats, the Tribune noted, used the twin threats of Negro domination and social equality to drive their less informed followers into line. As election time drew nearer the Tribune's appeal to the Negro voter became more urgent. Colored voters were asked to "arise early and record their votes for Roosevelt and Fairbanks." When Roosevelt's victory was announced, the Independent and the Tribune expressed jubilation over his triumph and over the defeat of the "solid South." Davis termed the Republican victory a repudiation of the solid South while the Tribune noted that:

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1Atlanta Independent, February 13, 1904.
2Ibid., September 24, 1904.
3Savannah Tribune, October 22, 1904.
4Ibid.
5Ibid., October 29, 1904.
The Democrats, especially those of the South, made their fight on the Negro question. We know that they did the wrong thing, but the people of the country have demonstrated it by giving them the worst drubbing they ever had, thus proving that this country will treat the Negro right and that the Southern Democrats should leave this dead issue and extend to the Negro his constitutional rights. That's all.¹

Roosevelt was popular with both Georgia editors in 1905. His advice to the South, while attending the Republican Lincoln Day Dinner in New York City, was highly praised by the Negro press in Georgia.

The Tribune declared:

President Lincoln is known as the physical emancipator of the race and President Roosevelt will go down in history as an emancipator of a different kind. In his recent speech he has demonstrated his excellent intentions of bringing to a clearer understanding the feeling against the Negro.²

Johnson concluded that the Lincoln Day speech would do more to alleviate racial tensions than anything had which had been done in recent years. Davis expressed the same sentiment and reported to the white South that the President did not have to apologize or offer any explanation of his racial policies. On the celebrated Booker T. Washington dinner incident, the Atlanta editor said that the President need make no apology if he were "sincere in his pretensions of a square deal."³

Indeed, Davis and Johnson expected Roosevelt to do more for the race than McKinley had done. As Davis expressed it: "He is loved more than any of his predecessors by the race. Yet he has done less."⁴ The Savannah

¹Savannah Tribune, November 12, 1904.
²Ibid., February 18, 1905.
³Atlanta Independent, January 21; February 18, 1905.
⁴Ibid.
editor reasoned that of the eleven million Negroes, the vast majority were Southerners and 90 per cent were Republicans and for that reason they "should have a larger representation in high places of importance than they now have." The Tribune also desired that the President would not "close the door of hope" on the Negro.\(^1\) Editor Davis thought that this "door of hope" policy could not be maintained if the President shifted Negro office holders from the South to the North "out of deference to Southern prejudice."\(^2\)

Although Davis was especially concerned about the President's Negro policy and advised him to resist the demands of the white South, when the positions of some Negro officeholders in Georgia were at stake Ben Davis vociferously demanded their removal from office. One month after the 1904 Presidential election, Davis launched a bitter tirade against Henry M. Rucker, the Negro Collector of Internal Revenue for Georgia. Davis was still bitter over the Collector's indictment by a Federal grand jury for alleged illegal activities while he was serving as a gauger in Athens, Georgia, during McKinley's administration. Although the case was eventually dropped, Davis blamed Rucker and developed a deep dislike for "the big three," Henry Rucker of Atlanta, Judson Lyons of Augusta, and John Deveaux of Savannah. Shortly after Roosevelt's election the embittered editor began to work for the ousting of "the big three."\(^3\) When Davis blasted Henry Rucker for alleged disloyalty to the party because of Rucker's campaign article which castigated the South, the Tribune for its part

\(^1\)Savannah Tribune, January 21, 1905.
\(^2\)Atlanta Independent, March 25, 1905.
\(^3\)Bacote, op. cit., pp. 9-10.
soundly berated Davis for his unwarranted attack on Rucker as well as for his consistent opposition to the Tribune, Captain Judson W. Lyons, and Colonel Deveaux.

The New York Age, Booker T. Washington's official mouth piece, noted that Ben Davis was offensive when he degraded Henry Rucker:

> It is disgusting to see the Independent, which professes to be the organ of a people to which liberty is denied, denouncing one of that people for using his constitutional right of liberty of speech.

Other Negro editors expressed their contempt for Ben Davis. The Freeman denounced Davis and upheld Rucker's position. The Freeman thought that President would back the Collector of Revenue because "the chilvaric man at the White House...admires manly courage above all else."

When "the chilvaric man at the White House" came to understand the South following his triumphant tour of the South in the fall of 1905, and when he came under the influence of Booker T. Washington, charged the Tribune, he adopted a new and disappointing policy of rigidly enforcing no third term rule for Negro officeholders. Roosevelt sought to avoid any further controversy with the white South. The Tribune spoke acidly of the new policy and was shocked over Judson W. Lyons' loss of the position of Register of Treasury to W. T. Vernon of Quindaro, Kansas. Editor Johnson pointed out that Vernon had Booker Washington's endorsement. Davis, who

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1 Savannah Tribune, December 31, 1904.
2 Ibid., December 17, 1904.
3 Quoted in Savannah Tribune, December 31, 1904.
4 Ibid., January 7, 1905.
5 Ibid., January 20, 1906.
6 Bacote, op. cit., p. 20.
7 Savannah Tribune, January 20, 1906.
described the Negro office holders as arrogant and intolerant, was in complete accord with Roosevelt's so-called "Two-Term Yardstick" policy. He heartily approved Washington's alleged advocacy to Roosevelt that the distribution of patronage should be where it would best serve the party. Although Washington, in an article in the New York Herald, denied that he had proposed this policy to the President, the Tribune made no comment about that denial.

The Brownsville, Texas, riot of 1906, caused much concern in the Southern Negro community. A few members of a Negro regiment, who, while absent without leave and on provocation from some of the townspeople, allegedly shot up the town of Brownsville, Texas in November, 1906. Roosevelt's abrupt dismissal of the Negro troops from the army caused a nationwide controversy. The white South was delighted, while the Northern press was generally sharply critical of the President. The Abyssinian Baptist Church of New York wrote that Roosevelt was "once enshrined in our love as our Moses. Now he is enshrouded in our scorn as our Judas." The Tuskegee machine was silent because "[in Tuskegee] it was brutally painful."

In Savannah, Sol Johnson termed the dismissal "unprecedented in the history of the army" and extended his sympathy to "the innocent men of the batallion" because a "grave injustice has been done them."

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1 Bacote, op. cit., p. 10.
2 Atlanta Independent, January 6, 1906.
3 Savannah Tribune, February 3, 1906.
4 Franklin, op. cit., p. 116.
5 Atlanta Independent, January 6, 1906.
6 Ibid., pp. 304-305.
7 Savannah Tribune, November 10, 1906.
From Atlanta, Ben Davis' voice of protest was added to the mounting Negro tirades against the President. With bitter sarcasm Davis editorialized in his "The President's Love for the Negro,"

In our opinion the President acted without authority, precedent, or law... Had Roosevelt announced his dishonorable actions before the Tuesday midterm elections, no self-respecting Negro man would have voted the Republican ticket.

The Tuskegee machine's silence was more than compensated for by Davis' continued vitriolic attack on Theodore Roosevelt. He was obviously disillusioned with Roosevelt and not with the party. Two able, acid editorials on November 17, 1906, indicated the extent to which Ben Davis had lost faith in Roosevelt. One editorial labeled Roosevelt's action as "An Executive Lynching." Davis wrote that:

Neither the hand of Ben Tillman nor of Vardaman never struck down humanity as savagely as did the iron hand of Theodore Roosevelt... The President advances a new and strange doctrine. His dictum is lynch-law, bold and heartless.

While he kept a deep seated party loyalty, Davis skillfully related his faith in the party with Americanism.

But we must not retaliate... we cannot afford to fall beneath our opportunity, desert the flag, or relax in our devotion to everything American. The nation needs our services. The Republican party must not be rebuked and deserted for the short comings of a president.2

By 1908 Davis and Johnson's ire toward Roosevelt had perceptibly cooled. As the election year of 1908 drew near and as political solidarity became more a necessity for Southern Negroes, Davis began writing

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1Atlanta Independent, November 10, 1906.
2Ibid., November 17, 1906.
that"we must not forget that it is human to err and divine to forgive."
After all reasoned Davis, "Theodore Roosevelt is nothing more than a
man, subject to every vice and virtue the human family is heir to." 1

Johnson's Tribune carried many articles which indicated a con-
tinuing interest in the Brownsville matter as a political issue. Senator
Forakers' inquiry and Ben Tillman's reviling of Roosevelt were headline
news items. 2 Despite Forakers' attempt to make political capital of
Roosevelt's actions and despite Ben Tillman's accusation that Roosevelt
"makes a mess" of the race question, the Tribune refused to denounce the
President. In fact, neither newspaper made editorial comment about either
Forakers' or Tillman's comments.

As election Tuesday in November, 1908, drew nearer, the maverick
politicians closed ranks. In March 1908, Johnson urged Negroes to register
because "in the coming campaign the Negro vote will cut quite a figure
and will undoubtedly have to be reckoned with." This message was decipher-
ed by Johnson's March 28 editorial to mean that:

Those who have been harping the loudest against
the Republican organization are only doing so from
a selfish standpoint. They want to stir up and ride
on whatever sentiment they arouse. 3

Davis did not relish the idea that Hoke Smith and others of that
ilk favored the Republican William Howard Taft. In an editorial entitled
"Governor Smith Has Placed His O.K. On Taft's Back," Davis chided Taft
for having "declared his love and admiration for Tom Watson, the chief
among Negro haters." 4

1 Ibid., September 27, 1907.
2 Savannah Tribune, January 7, 19, 26; February 16, 1907.
3 Ibid., March 7, 1908.
4 Ibid., March 28, 1908.
5 Atlanta Independent, February 1, 1908.
Despite their strenuous efforts to ease the pain in the Negro community caused by the "Brownsville matter," there are indications that many Southern Negroes were dissatisfied with the Republican Party and were willing to take their chance with the Democratic Party. Both editors were aware that a serious political rift had occurred in the Negro community in the South. W. E. B. DuBois left the party and invited other Negroes to bolt with him. "It is high noon for the Negro voters of the United States," DuBois proclaimed. The Negro scholar implied that Taft was a "dough face" because he approved of the disfranchisement laws of the South. "What are you going to do," queried DuBois. "I have already made up my mind. You can do as you please." The Tribune admonished Negroes, such as DuBois, that they were entitled to their voices, but were "jumping out of the frying pan into the fire."2

Davis and Johnson chose to remain loyal although maverick Republicans in Dixie. By July 1908, the Independent and the Tribune switched to become dedicated to the Taft Bandwagon. Johnson wrote disparagingly about "that alleged terrible Negro revolt against Secretary Taft for the Presidency." Comparing DuBois and Trotter to the "Terrible Turk," Johnson added: "DuBois and Trotter may beat their tom toms and gesticulate as much as they desire, and even split the air with their denunciations, but the fact remains that Negro Republicans cannot be lead by Negro Democrats."3

From printing glowing editorials on Taft's letter of acceptance,4 to predicting that Taft's administration would be a great and glorious

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1Ibid., July 11, 1906.
2Savannah Tribune, April 18, 1908.
3Ibid., July 28, 1904. 
4Atlanta Independent, August 1, 1908.
Davis exemplified the eternal fidelity to the Republican party which won him the sobriquet "dipped-in-wool." Taft's Negro policy was always defended by Davis who boasted that the Republican Party was a party of principles and not of men, which recognized no color line. Johnson, on the other hand, did not defend Taft's Negro policy as vigorously as did Davis, but he did describe Taft as "one of the greatest factors in making Mr. Roosevelt's administration, next to Lincoln's the greatest and most conspicuous in American history." When Taft announced that he was opposed to Negro disfranchisement, the Tribune expressed its approval. A similar tone of approval and elation was expressed when President Taft said the Negro ought to be as highly educated as any other people. "Some of our Southern friends," Johnson wrote, "whoop up the President until he speaks out for equal and exact fair play for the colored citizens, then they back out." On the point of Taft's Southern policy, Ben Davis agreed with Johnson. Although the Independent expressed doubt concerning the wisdom of Taft's having a Southern policy, it refused to be critical of him because of the so-called high moral and economic grounds on which his policy was based. Davis had possible reference to Taft's April, 1906, Tuskegee speech, in which he urged Negroes to accept the discriminatory legislation enacted against them by Southern legislatures and to prepare themselves economically and

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1 Ibid., March 16, 1909.
2 Ibid., April 12, 1910.
3 Ibid., January 6, 1912.
4 Savannah Tribune, November 7, 1908.
5 Ibid., September 18, 1909.
6 Ibid., March 19, 1910.
7 Atlanta Independent, May 1, 1909.
educationally so that they would be accepted at the polls on the same basis as Southern whites.

Nothing could shake Davis' and Johnson's loyalty to the party machine in the election of 1912, Roosevelt's "Bullmoose" split with the party notwithstanding. Yet an atmosphere of dread enshrouded the Tribune. On October 19, 1912, Sol Johnson lamented that with less than three weeks before the national election was to take place, less enthusiasm had been expressed in this election than ever before.

Two months after the official month of Jubilee, September, 1913, Woodrow Wilson was elected President of the United States. To many Negroes, especially some Northern Negroes, an era of the New Freedom commenced. To the vast majority of Southern Negroes, who had been led to expect a calamity, Wilson's election seemed about to usher in an era of unbridled Southern Democratic ascendancy and all of its feared con-commitants.

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2 Savannah Tribune, June 29, 1912.
3 Ibid., October 19, 1912.
Dissident Mavericks.--- Woodrow Wilson's election seemed to be a portent of disaster to the maverick politicians. Johnson's admonition about "jumping out of the frying pan into the fire" seemed to have become a stark reality.¹ He had repeatedly warned that:

Some of the Negroes that [sic] want to see the democratic [sic] party in power should ask Mr. Tillman if he is willing to take back some of the things he has said about their mothers and sisters.²

Some Negroes and whites, on the other hand, believed Wilson's New Freedom.

DuBois and Trotter beat their tom toms for the Democratic party.³ Wilson's campaign for the Negro vote drew many "spokesmen for the cause of racial democracy" into the folds of the Democratic party. Oswald Garrison Villard, W. E. B. DuBois, and William M. Trotter -- Northerners -- accepted Wilson's promises and worked for his election.⁴

The Southerners, Ben Davis and Sol Johnson, had not been beguiled or lulled, however, by Wilson's platitudinous "New Freedom." They suspected that the much vaunted "New Freedom" was for whites only and would only be a kind of official recognition of that with which the Southern

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¹Savannah Tribune, April 18, 1908.
²Ibid., July 26, 1908.
³Ibid.
section of the Democratic Party had always been associated.

One month before the election of Wilson, Josephus Daniels, then in charge of the publicity bureau of the Presidential campaign and soon to become a member of Wilson's cabinet, published an editorial in his North Carolina paper in which he said that the South would never feel secure until the North and West had adopted the whole Southern policy of political proscription and social segregation of the Negro.1

On November 9, 1912, the Tribune declared editorially, that "with no desire to jump on the band wagon at this time, we do not hesitate to express our disappointment."2 The Tribune noted that the Republican Party had been humiliated but was not dead. Instead of openly declaring war on the Democratic Party, Johnson sincerely urged that all Negroes, regardless of party affiliations, unite to make America great. Johnson appeared to be primarily interested in creating a strong sense of racial solidarity in the face of Democratic political ascendancy. This was his method of coping with the status quo.3

In Atlanta, Ben Davis launched a series of tirades against what he called "the Democratic Negro goats."4 He made no effort to express any sympathy for black Democrats and he was especially venomous and resentful toward those in the South.

As Southern racial concepts gained ascendancy in Washington, some Southerners, in power for the first time since the Civil War, demanded segregation and the dismissal of all Negro civil servants.5 Believing in

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2Savannah Tribune, November 9, 1912.
3Tbid., January 14, 1913.
4Atlanta Independent, June 14, 1914.
social and official segregation, Wilson allowed post office and treasury offices to downgrade and discharge Negroes.¹ In Davis' Atlanta, thirty-five Negroes were discharged. The white Collector of Internal Revenue in Georgia, expressing a sentiment shared by many other Southerners, warned the Negro that "there is no governmental positions for Negroes in the South. The Negro's place is in the corn field."²

Sol Johnson attempted to work out his new problem caused by Wilson's election and policies. In January, 1913, Johnson urged the new President to "recognize our claim to such offices in and around Washington that have been so long held by our people until they are now regarded as heirlooms by thems."³ He expressed optimism and surprise when Wilson did the unexpected. "Alas! The unexpected has happened," wrote Johnson on August 2, 1913. "A Negro has been appointed by President Wilson for Register of the Treasury to succeed J. C. Napier, the incumbent." Editor Johnson suggested that the Southern Democrats were utterly consternated.⁴ The President's refusal to endorse a bill to repeal the statute authorizing the formation of four Negro regiments resulted in Johnson's assertion that:

Since Mr. Wilson's election more and more of us have come to admire him as a man of courage and convictions a high class of gentleman whose ideals are too high to stoop to petty things which are ever present gods of demagogic and Negro hating whites and the notoriety seeking politicians with which it is our misfortune to have our country infested. We are, at the present time, very much inclined to the belief that our people are going to get a square deal at the hands of President Wilson.⁵

¹Ibid., pp. 246-247
²Link, Woodrow Wilson, pp. 64-65.
³Savannah Tribune, January 18, 1913.
⁴Ibid., August 2, 1913.
⁵Ibid., February 8, 1913.
In his office on Auburn Street in Atlanta, Ben Davis, who had been conspicuously silent, waited for what he considered to be the inevitable -- the publication of Wilson's segregation policies. As soon as the news of Capitol Hill's segregation was released, the Atlantian issued several "I-told-you-so" editorials.

It is the hope of the Independent, that the Democratic party will follow the Smith, Tillman, Vardaman and Bulson idea and appoint no Negroes to any kind of office....It seems that the Democratic Congress at Washington has gotten the Ashley distemper and wants to segregate the races in the departments. We would like to know how the "Democratic goats" feel now, who bleated so loud and long before the November election of Mr. Wilson.¹

The "Democratic goats" were shocked and confused, bitter and discouraged. The new segregation policies on "Capitol Hill" were "bitter cup" which dashed the hopes of Negro leaders, many of whom, had "hopefully supported the man they thought would surely deal with them compassionately."²

Wilson was shocked at the furor which the racial policy of his subordinates had caused. Almost pathetically Wilson spoke of the segregation policy as having been instituted in the best interest of the Negro. When the editor of the Guardian W. M. Trotter, and his delegation confronted the President to protest they were unceremoniously shown the door. Yet, because of the severe criticism from the North, the Treasury Department later began to eliminate segregation.³

The Tribune welcomed the changes which took place. Editor Johnson had not lost faith in the President. He wrote:

¹Atlanta Independent, June 14, 1913.
²Link, op. cit., p. 65.
³Ibid., pp. 65-66.
That the "For Colored signs /in the U.S. Treasury building in Washington/ have been removed shows that the much talked of complete desegregation of the Negro under the Democratic regime is not yet at hand.¹

It should not be inferred that Sol Johnson had ceased to be a maverick politician. On the contrary, he still was a dissident maverick. His faithful adherence to a "watchful waiting" policy was due to his high regard for what he considered to be the best moral, intellectual, and spiritual qualities possessed by Woodrow Wilson. To the Republican machine he remained loyal, dedicated, and hopeful. Two weeks after his editorial on the removal of the "For Colored" signs in the Treasury building, he wrote that we are:

Jubilant over the success of their...special election in Maine on Monday. This election is only an indicator of how the congressional election of next year will go and the turning of the tide in 1916. The people will repudiate Democracy.²

While the Savannah editor wrote commendatory editorials about Wilson and his Democratic regime, "dipped-in-wool" Davis continued to berate Negro Democrats. His Independent took no editorial notice of the changes in the segregation policy on Capitol Hill. Instead, Davis redoubled the fury of his fulminations against Wilson and all Democrats. "President Wilson has bowed to the threats of the 'crackers' who represent the South in Congress,"³ he stated. The embittered editor both attacked and comforted Negro Democrats "who are receiving cold comfort from the Wilson administration, which they helped to elect as a rebuke to the Republican party."⁴ Davis was fond of pointing out that the "Negro Democratic Politicians are finding [their] paths strewn with thorns and thistles rather

¹Savannah Tribune, August 30, 1913.
²Ibid., September 13, 1913.
³Atlanta Independent, August 30, 1913.
⁴Ibid., June 21, 1913.
than with roses,¹ and that "the Democratic party is beautifully consistent."² With its segregation policies. If Davis lampooned the Wilson administration, he called attention to the fact that the Republican party needed reorganization. Davis wrote that "This is a progressive age and unless the Republican party progresses with time it is done for. The party must rid itself of [its] old fossils."³

Throughout the closing years of Wilson's first administration, Johnson continued to "wait-and-see", while Davis remained unalterably opposed to anything "Democratic". Because of his rantings against the Democrats, especially Negro Democrats, Davis was placed in a precarious position by the Trotter-Wilson incident. In November, 1914, W. M. Trotter of the Boston Guardian led a delegation of Negroes to protest the segregation policies in Washington and to renew Oswald G. Villard's appeal for the creation of a National Race Commission to study the race problem. Trotter was thrown out of the White House and a country-wide furor was produced. Davis could not directly sanction "Widemouth Trotter" nor could he condone Wilson's behavior. He displayed consummate skill by criticizing Trotter's language and manner, while remaining silent about his motives and objectives:

The Independent deplores the whole affair....We cannot say who was wrong....The whole affair is exclusively a family quarrel.⁴

Sol Johnson was plastic enough to applaud Oswald Garrison Villard for his unrelenting campaign "in behalf of our people." This was something Davis would never do. Of Villard, Johnson wrote:

¹Ibid., July 19, 1913.
²Ibid., October 4, 1913.
³Ibid., January 31, 1914.
⁴Ibid., November 21, 1914.
Even President Wilson has not escaped the fury of his wrath and indignation over the manifest sanction of the national administration of the segregation policy now in vogue in many of the departments at the national capital.1

Still exemplifying his usual liberal ideas, the Savannah editor wrote a favorable, but guarded editorial on Wilson's reappointment of Judge Robert H. Terrell to one of the municipal courts in the District of Columbia. Describing the appointment as "a rather sudden but pleasant surprise," Johnson wrote that "perhaps President Wilson...is giving the country his real interpretation of his new freedom."2

Davis editorially behaved as if he could influence the Southern Negro to vote against Wilson in the election of 1916. He even made Booker T. Washington's death a political matter to be exploited for political gain. On December 11, 1915, he wrote:

The President is generally criticized and justifiably so, because of his failure to take either personal or official cognizance of the death of Booker T. Washington....Many Negroes of this country have understood the President's failure to appreciate Dr. Washington's services by recognizing his death as did former Presidents Roosevelt and Taft, as a characteristic of the Democratic party.3

However, neither Davis' allegations that Wilson ignored Washington's death nor his other protests were sufficient to insure a Republican victory in 1916. They were sufficient to help cause many Negroes to return to the Republican party and vote for Hughes.4 In 1920 and 1921, the mavericks finally got their revenge on the Democratic party.

The Southern Way and Uneasy Negroes.-- Before World War I, Negroes were concerned with the growth of the Southern viewpoint on race. In

1Savannah Tribune, January 17, 1914.
2Ibid., March 7, 1914.
3Ibid., December 11, 1915.
4Van Deusen, op. cit., p. 133.
1913, Booker T. Washington, in reference to the New Freedom, commented:

"I have never seen colored people so discouraged as they are at the present
time."¹ Although Washington referred to one series of events, his words
are useful in characterizing the feelings of the American Negro community
from 1913 to 1918. Thomas P. Bailey, author of Race Orthodoxy in America,
observed in 1914 that the North had surrendered to the Southern way,
(which Bailey and others thought was rapidly becoming the American Way).²

The Negro press was not prepared, however, calmly and stoically
to acquiesce in the Southern Way. The Tribune delightedly pointed out
the instances in which the Southern Way was soundly defeated. Its jubila-
tion in 1914 over the defeat of South Carolina's archsegregationist
Cole Blease, is typical of its reaction. Nonetheless, extreme naivete was
displayed when the Tribune expressed its belief that Blease's defeat sig-
nalled the beginning of the end of that class of Southern statesmanship.³

From Atlanta, Davis warned the South that:

There was a time when Negroes had a place. It was
common to hear some folks say "I like a nigger as
long as he stays in his place." Today the Negro
is found in every clime. His place is society and
in walks of life everywhere.⁴

Throughout 1914, Davis showed an increasingly militant tone as he admon-
ished the South that "The Wages of Sin Is Death."⁵ Some of the Atlantan's
editorials had titles which could have served as subjects of sermons (e.g.

¹Link, op. cit., pp. 248-249.
³Savannah Tribune, June 20, 1914.
⁴Atlanta Independent, May 31, 1913.
⁵Ibid., February 14, 1914.
World War I turned American minds to matters of international concern, but the race problem still remained. In the summer of 1914, when Europe erupted into the flames of war, Davis related race prejudice and the "Great European War" in a cause and effect manner. On August 22, 1914, he wrote:

It is the consensus of opinion of the enlightened world that the cause of the great war, in which seven nations are engaged, is religious and race prejudice dating far back into the past....This is the fiercest race conflict of the world....He concluded that in demagogue ridden Georgia the same restrictions which caused the European War are being practiced. God only knows what will be the outcome.2

While Sol Johnson did not try to relate race prejudice to the cause of the "Great European War," in 1915 he was more ambivalent in tone and attitude. Johnson commended Alabama Governor O'Neal for his inaugural address in which he took the position that mob law "does not check but increase crime;"3 denounced the South for the January lynching of four Negroes near Monticello, Georgia;4 and agreed with Ben Davis that Negroes were cowards—the "moral and intellectual kind because we submit to indignities."5 Despite the lynchings, the editor of the Tribune wrote in a fashion reminiscent of Booker T. Washington:

Georgia with all thy faults we love thee still, even though our lawless whites lynch us and others take advantage of us in various ways.6

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1 Ibid., July 25, 1914.
2 Ibid., August 24, 1914.
3 Savannah Tribune, January 9, 1915.
5 Ibid., February 13, 1915.
6 Ibid.
Throughout the year 1915, the Tribune editor continued to combat the Southern Way from his Savannah home. He thought that Southern Negro editors were the real race heroes because "it takes a brave man to remain on the line of battle." Although this particular editorial was directed against Northern Negro editors and race leaders, especially those who had left the South, Johnson, at times expressed sympathy for some of their protests. When the Guardian editor, W. M. Trotter, led a group of Boston Negroes in protest over the showing of the racist movie, "Birth of a Nation," the Tribune was wholly sympathetic. When the Savannah editor was not berating the Northern Negro press and castigating the "lawless whites", he applauded a Negro domestic who lost her job because she maintained that there were ladies in the Negro race.

The year 1915 was a year of hope and of sadness for the Southern Negro. The Supreme Court's decision outlawing the Grandfather Clause was heralded as a signal of hope by Southern Negroes. "HOPE SHINES BRIGHT FOR NEGROES WHOSE POLITICAL AND CIVIL EQUALITY WITH ALL MEN IS DECLARED" screamed the Independent's headlines. In February, before the Court ruled on the Grandfather Clause, hope had come when Atlanta's residential segregation ordinance was declared unconstitutional. That ray of hope, however, quickly vanished when segregation in Atlanta and other Southern cities affected by the decision remained unchanged.

1Ibid.
2Ibid., April 24, 1915.
3Ibid., February 20, 1915.
4Atlanta Independent, June 26, 1915.
5Savannah Tribune, February 20, 1915.
6Atlanta Independent, October 16, 1916.
Despondency enshrouded the Southern Negro community when its mentor and social architect, Booker T. Washington died in 1915. Amid the newspaper accounts and eulogies on his passing an interesting and ironic note was detectable. Although the Tribune extolled Washington for his service to humanity, the nation, and the race, it did not praise him as highly as did Davis. The Atlanta editor's reactions were interesting and ironical. Davis was long a devoted disciple of Washington. He wrote that

Mr. Washington made no effort at race leadership; he sought to lead the world in his line and succeeded. He literally spent himself in an earnest and sincere effort to love the races into peace....And it might be said without contradiction or question, that he died literally loving the races into peace.2

Yet Davis had declared eight months earlier that race hate was stronger than it was against any other race.3

Journalistic Ambivalence.—The death of Booker T. Washington removed one of the greatest influences that might have made for a continued conciliatory approach to the Southern Way among Southern Negro editors. In fact, a more aggressive note appeared when the Great War erupted in Europe.1 The Southern Negro press reflected these changes, but in a less decisive, less perceptible, and in a more gradual manner than did the Northern Negro press.

As the New Year 1916 dawned and unfolded, Davis reflected as he had in 1914 and 1915, some of the aggressiveness of the war period. On January 1, he wrote that the Independent had always stood and pleaded for

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1Savannah Tribune, November 20, 1915.
2Atlanta Independent, November 20, 1915.
3Ibid., March 13, 1915.
4Detweiler, op. cit., pp. 61-62.
cordial relations between the races. Friendly relations must prevail, he warned, or there will be bloodshed. He insisted that the Negro had always been friendly to the white man, but that the white man had been antagonistic toward the Negro.\(^1\) Despite the new aggressiveness that was reflected in his *Independent*, Ben Davis, in the same editorial that accused the white man of animosity toward the Negro, wrote in a vein reminiscent of Booker T. Washington that the old type of Negro -- bred in slavery, contrary to what many Southern whites were thinking,\(^2\) was not being replaced by a new type of Negro. The Atlanta editor insisted strongly that "it is all tommyrot about the Negro being so different from his fore-fathers."\(^3\)

The South was not quieted by such overtures. Lynching increased in fury and in volume. "We are being branded as barbarians" cried the *Independent*.\(^4\) Although Davis did not say how the waves of lynchings should be stopped, he wrote that "lynching must stop; it will stop, and it shall stop."\(^5\)

Indeed some Southerners were disgusted with the Southern Way. In Atlanta, the Inter-Racial Commission, established there in 1907 after the 1906 riot, quietly sought to modify the Southern Way.\(^6\) In Durham, North Carolina, the University Commission on Southern Race Questions planned a vigorous "crusade against lynching."\(^7\)

In 1916, Johnson retained his ambivalence toward the South, although it came later and was of shorter duration than that of Davis. In January,

\(^{1}\) *Atlanta Independent*, January 1, 1916.
\(^{3}\) *Atlanta Independent*, January 1, 1916.
\(^{4}\) Ibid., January 29, 1916.
\(^{5}\) Ibid., February 26, 1916.
\(^{6}\) Van Duesen, *op. cit.*, p. 332.
\(^{7}\) *Savannah Tribune*, January 8, 1916.
because of the rampant lawlessness in Georgia, the Savannah editor deri-
sively referred to the state as the "cracker state."¹ Three months later
he printed a glowing report on the Republican convention's Macon, Georgia
denunciation of mob law in Georgia.² When the Baltimore Commonwealth casti-
gated Georgia for its lawlessness and asked "where is Georgia.... Is
Georgia in the United States of America?",³ the Tribune did not answer nor
did it seek to defend Georgia. Johnson's only remark was that "despite
its faults we love our Georgia."⁴

By the early summer of 1916, the ambivalent tone of the Southern
Negro press was being abandoned. From the summer of 1916 to 1928, the
general editorial theme adopted by the Negro press can be described as of
the Moton-DuBois type. The leadership vaccum, created by Booker T. Wash-
ington's death, could never be filled by Robert R. Moton, his successor
at Tuskegee. Moton's approach, while similar to Washington's was not
as conciliatory as that held by Washington. The latter had been unalter-
ably opposed to the "exodus" which took Negroes out of the South, while
Moton did not actively oppose the movement of Negroes to the North.⁵ Be-
fore Washington's death, there had been indications that the mood of the
Southern Negro was changing. Had Washington lived, it is conceivable
that counter-Washington movement might have developed in the South. As
it was, there was no organized anti-Washington drift in the Negro communi-
ty. Instead, the Southern Negro press gradually entered into another part

¹Ibid., January 22, 1916.
²Ibid., April 29, 1916.
³Ibid., May 6, 1916.
⁴Ibid.
⁵Van Duesen, op. cit., p. 320.
of its history (1914–1916) when there was no single source of undisputed leadership in the South which could set a single dominant theme for the press to follow.

The Moton-DuBois Period.—— The mildly conciliatory gospel of the Moton school was not alone strong enough for Southern Negro editors. Yet the DuBois brand of defiance was too militant. Consequently, Southern Negro editors, in general, combined the two approaches and emphasized now one and then the other according to the circumstances.

Lynching and the great Negro migration to the North during the War illustrated this development. Sol Johnson's Tribune expressed the point of view that the lynching of Negroes in the Southland emphasized the reason for the exodus of thousands of Negro workers from South of the Mason and Dixon line. ¹

"GIVE US A SQUARE DEAL" demanded Davis on June 30, 1916. He boldly told the South that Negroes were going North because their white neighbors were unwilling to give them a square deal.² With a newly found boldness, the Independent announced unequivocally that lynching was due to race prejudice.³ In a caustic editorial entitled "The South's One Sided Suicidal Policy," Davis wrote that "if there was ever any doubt as regards the unfair and unjust policies of our white neighbors against the black man, all doubts are removed."⁴ Davis was no longer under the delusion that the South was as good as any other section. Elsewhere than in the South, said the Atlanta editor, "all the people have a square deal.

¹ Savannah Tribune, September 30, 1916.
² Atlanta Independent, June 30, 1916.
³ Ibid., July 22, 1916.
⁴ Ibid, August 12, 1916.
and the rights of all classes are respected." In the South the color line was drawn. Black men were practically excluded from any voice in civil and political affairs. This exclusion was described by Davis as "unnatural and un-American." In December 1916, Davis made a complete statement of the Independent's position on the "exodus." Revealing the Moton influence, he did not categorically condemn the Negro exodus but he opposed a stampede to the North. In the main, however, the editor was mildly critical of any exodus, foreign or otherwise:

The Independent's position on this question is plain. We are not in favor of wholesale immigration anymore than we are in favor of wholesale immigration to foreign lands. So far as we are concerned, we are going to stay in the South, for the reason it is our natural home and we have faith in its possibilities and the final triumph of our rights as citizens....We believe that the Southland belongs as much to the Negro as it does to the white man.2

On January 13, 1917, Scl Johnson took his final stand on the exodus. He was not conciliatory nor did he express any faith in the South in so far as Negro citizenship was concerned. At this point, Johnson displayed more of the DuBois influence than that of Moton.

One has only to contemplate the barren and hopeless outlook of the Negro farm and city laborer to come to the ready admission that there is nothing unusual about the tidal wave of migration toward the North.3

Johnson added that the additional protection of life and limb and the opportunity to enjoy security in civil and political rights there was especially appealing to the Negro. The Southern Way kept these things from the Negro; because Southerners had steadily treated the Negro wantonly.

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1Ibid., September 16, 1916.
2Ibid., December 2, 1916.
3Savannah Tribune, January 13, 1917.
In fact, he declared, there had been only a few isolated instances of fair and humane treatment of Negroes in the South.¹

Amid editorials which applauded the Negro's patriotism, the Southern Negro editors continued to wage a relentless war on the Southern Way. So relentless was their attack that, the help of the Yankee-formed NAACP was heralded. The NAACP had once been anathema to Davis because of its identification with DuBois. While Sol Johnson had never been antagonistic toward DuBois and the NAACP, nevertheless, he had made a few editorial comments on the work of the organization. Faced with an increase of Southern race hatred, both editors came finally to support the NAACP in glowing terms of praise. Davis wrote that.

The Association is national in scope and is capable of doing the race and country a great service....The Independent has not always thought well of the Association or of the integrity of the men who headed it, but we are now of the opinion that personal feeling should not affect a public good and we are willing to join with all men...to promote the general welfare and uplift all Negroes.²

The Tribune described the NAACP as that "excellent organization" which was working to secure fair and just treatment for the Negro at home and abroad.³

While Davis and Johnson never wrote a caricature on Southern psychological types, Davis at least had the courage editorially to agree in the main with Julian Street, a Northerner who toured the South. The Atlan-tan reported that Street had stated that there were three types of

¹Savannah Tribune, January 13, 1917.
²Atlanta Independent, February 3, 1917.
³Savannah Tribune, January 15, 1918.
Southerners: (1) the misguided Yankee-type who disregarded scornful criticism and worked for improved race relations; (2) the paternalistic class who were humane and friendly, but who had a distinctly superior attitude; and, (3) the third class was composed of the more ignorant whites. "From this stratum of society almost exclusively, spring the mobs which in many Southern States lynch Negroes for offenses."¹

As the world was being made "safe for democracy" by shedding American blood in Europe, the South and the nation were unsafe for democracy-seeking Negroes, whose blood flowed in the streets of American cities and towns. Southern Negro editors, in their reactions, became more DuBois-like in their tirades against the Southern Way. Sol Johnson poured invective on the South for its detestable "keep the nigger down, keep the nigger satisfied" policy.² He cried out against the insincerity of Wilson's patriotic utterances while Negroes were being lynched and intimidated in the South. When the Southern Negro soldier returns to the South, "will he be accorded the rights of a free citizen," Johnson asked.³ The mob of the South had an answer. The outbursts of intense racial violence in 1918 and 1919 revealed what the Southern Negro veteran could expect on his return. Hunting Negroes had become the white man's pastime and had replaced the fox hunt,⁴ lamented Sol Johnson in the spring of 1918.

¹Atlanta Independent, May 25, 1918.
²Savannah Tribune, January 10, 1918.
³Ibid.
⁴Ibid., May 25, 1918.
CHAPTER IV

THE SOUTHERN CONSCIENCE

The New Negro and the South.-- World War I aroused in the minds of many Negroes a new hope for the restoration of their rights and a new militancy in demanding first-class citizenship.¹ A result of the series of war time experiences and influences was the creation of a "New Negro," i.e., one who was less inclined to tolerate unjust conditions.²

Before the Negro troops returned to America, a group of Negroes considered the possibility of forming a Negro peace delegation to petition the Paris Peace Conference, which convened on January 18, 1919. The idea was to get the conference to hear their grievances and possibly make some decision which would cause America to put an end to the violence committed against Negroes. In some quarters this proposal was heralded while in others it was harshly denounced. The two Southern editors, Davis and Johnson were adamantly opposed to the idea. The Tribune expressed its concurrence with the Independent's position that a Negro peace delegation was unthinkable because "it will prejudice our case at home."³

As late as one month before the first Negro military units disembarked on American soil, Southern Negroes were still being assured by their leaders that they could expect some of the fruits of democracy. In his emancipation day address, later published in the Independent, even Davis almost promised another Jubilee.⁴ For his part, Johnson gave

¹Woodward, The Strange Career, p. 100.
²Van Deusen, op. cit., p. 315.
³Savannah Tribune, January 11, 1919.
⁴Atlanta Independent, January 4, 1919.
prominent publication to a speech made by Emmett J. Scott, Secretary of Tuskegee Institute. In January, 1919, at the Tuskegee annual conference, Scott spoke on the subject "The Negro and the South After the War." Asking little of the South, he promised it much. It need not fear the Negro's return because "this is the Negro's natural home and here the masses will continue to reside." With the old Booker T. Washington charm, Scott assured the "golden Southland" that the Negro would return to the Southland with a broader vision and appreciation of American citizenship. Scott's final assurance, ironic as it was, was precisely what the white South feared and wanted to stamp out.

In February, 1919, the first Negro units, the 8th Illinois and the 15th New York reached the shores of America. The Tribune noted that these troops, all northern Negroes, were welcomed by cheering throngs as they marched down the streets of New York. Knowing that Southern Negro veterans would soon be on their way to the South, Robert R. Moton, issued a poignant plea for interracial goodwill. From Atlanta, Davis informed the South that a new era had dawned and that it brought new opportunities for Christian conduct. "This new period brings a greater opportunity than ever before in the history of the world for God and his Christianity."

But the opportunity was not taken. Although the government temporarily controlled the railroads, Negroes returned to find themselves herded

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1 Savannah Tribune, January 25, 1919.
2 Ibid., February 22, 1919.
3 Atlanta Independent, February 22, 1919.
4 Ibid., February 15, 1919.
into Jim Crow cars. Southern cities refused them admission to public parks and free libraries just as in pre-war days. Davis sounded the alarm. Colored troops, he said, should have been welcomed as warriors, but this was not done. In many places in the South, the colored soldier was given a cold reception; in fact they had been mistreated. He cited the snubbing that the citizens of Richmond, Virginia, gave a colored regiment. Neither the Croix de Guerre, nor an officer's commission, nor wound stripes were sufficient to cause the South to be persuaded by Emmett Scott or converted by Ben Davis. The Atlanta editor made a last attempt at conciliation with the white Southerner. He pleaded with the South to:

let justice be done and the problem between the races is solved, and this Southland of ours with the two races working side by side, will become the garden spot of the world.

The Southern Way, in 1919 remained supreme, but not unchallenged. When the Southerners shouted that this is a white man's country, Sol Johnson shouted that it was not and added that a doctrine of this nature "breeds trouble, incites riot, and augments lynching." As spring faded into summer, more Southern Negroes shed blood. In May 1919, Davis' editorials were a series of laments on the "siege of terrorism" perpetrated by "white outlaws and firebugs." Sol Johnson was extremely bitter and used the phrases "an orgy" and "lynching by wholesale" to describe the day-to-day, month-to-month pattern of violence. During the summer, Davis wrote that from throughout the entire South came the

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1 Van Duesen, op. cit., p. 323.
2 Atlanta Independent, March 22, 1919.
3 Ibid., April 26, 1919.
4 Savannah Tribune, April 26, 1919.
5 Atlanta Independent, May 31, 1919.
6 Savannah Tribune, May 17, 1919.
report of the mob spirit, of lynching, and of Negro burning. This was violence without rhyme or reason. ¹

In their editorials for the last six months of 1919, Davis and Johnson showed that the Southern Way was established in the North as well as the South. Those editorials also revealed that the Southern Negro editors were fully aware that the conscience of the South had not been aroused and that the South was firmly dedicated to depriving the Negro of life and liberty.

In the face of increasing Southern violence, despondency swept through the Negro community. With a sense of utter desperation, many Negroes declared their willingness to die for their liberty and their rights. As an editor, Davis made it his duty to console and fortify the Southern Negro's will to continue the fight. He reminded the Negro that although the situation was a grave one for the Negro, "God forbid that he should become despondent and give up."²

Instead of succumbing to the post-war lawlessness, the new Negro continued to agitate for a "square deal."³ The Negro press became militant enough to attract the attention of the Department of Justice. Attorney General Palmer charged the Negro press with "radicalness", filed a report with the Senate, and launched an investigation.⁴ Davis dismissed the charges as "only the figment of the Attorney General's imagination."⁵ Not only did Johnson dismiss the charges against the Negro press, he

¹Atlanta Independent, July 12, 1919.
²Ibid., July 26, 1919.
³Ibid., November 15, 1919.
⁴Ibid., November 15, 1919.
⁵Ibid., December 6, 1919.
lectured America on what was and what was not the proper behavior for a democratic government. The deportation of the so-called socialists during the early phases of the post-war "Red Scare" hysteria was sharply criticized by Johnson. "The Communist party [he held] was no threat to American institutions. If they are unsound they cannot succeed and must fail." Johnson thought that the hysteria and fear in America was unfounded and unwarranted. Deportation and suppression of opinion, he warned, "are not consistent with democracy and free government."  

Crusaders in the Bible Belt.--- The year 1920 marks the beginning of what can be called a crusade in the Bible belt. There had always been crusaders in the South, but in 1920, the crusading activities increased in scope and intensity. In 1920 serious consideration was given to admitting Southern white women into membership in the Interracial Commission. This also was the year in which Negroes were voted into membership, thus broadening its scope tremendously. Yet the racial turmoil that gripped the nation in 1919 continued unabated through out the twenties. Indeed, "in the postwar era there were new indications that the Southern Way was spreading as the American Way in race relations." The Southern Negro press continued its relentless battle against the Ku Klux Klan, outlawry, lynching, and other outrages while at the same time it fought repeatedly to secure equal civil and political rights for southern Negroes. In addition to the interracial commission and the NAACP, it must be listed as

1 Savannah Tribune, January 25, 1920.
2 Wilma Dykeman and James Stokely, Seeds of Southern Change (Chicago, 1962), p. 82.
a crusader in the Bible Belt. Militant in tone, in the DuBois tradition, it attacked the Southern Way with zeal and agitated with conviction.

As the twenties unfolded, a gradual decline in lynching occurred. This, however, should not suggest that the South had become less adamant in its advocacy of white supremacy. Violence continued to flare up throughout the land. Racial conflict and racial tension remained high. The North, for the most part remained silent. Nonetheless, despite the absence of a conscious sectional awakening, there were indications, scattered as they were, that many thoughtful Southerners were appalled by the violence and were dedicated to the end of bloodshed in the South within the framework of the Southern Way of life.

Atlanta, "the typical city of the new south," where contending forces confronted each other, was one of the starting points of the crusade. As early as 1907, Atlanta had an interracial commission, yet in December, 1915, Stone Mountain, only a few miles from "The Gate City," was the scene of the revival of the Ku Klux Klan by "colonel" William J. Simmons one stormy December night. A few weeks before the NAACP met in Atlanta in 1920, Nathan Bedford Forrest, of a famous confederate family, established residency in the city. His ravings against the use of Beard and Bagley's The History of the American People in the Atlanta public schools was a vivid illustration of the confrontation. The history text was labeled socialistic by the General and he charged that it was at variance with the history of the South and "treats unfairly the Negro question."

1Savannah Tribune, May 29, 1920.
2Van Deusen, op. cit., p. 332.
3Dykeman and Stokely, op. cit., p. 100.
5Quoted in Ibid.
When, in May, 1920, the NAACP held its annual conference in Atlanta, The Savannah Tribune welcomed the opportunity to discuss the vexing race problem and pointed out that the leaders of the NAACP were neither radicals nor demagogues. There was

a growing number of progressive white men who are... ready to discuss these issues....The whole South knows that Jim Crowism, mob violence, and disfranchisement are all wrong.1

Yet there were some indications that the crusdae was somewhat more effective in 1920. Although violence and Jim Crow were still widely practiced, a significant decrease in lynching occurred. During the first six months twelve lynchings took place. This was eight less than the twenty for the first six months of 1919, and was thirty-three less than the forty-five for the half year mark for 1918.2 The total number of lynchings for 1920 was sixty-one. Fifty-two took place in the South. Johnson pointed out that there had been forty-six prevented lynchings in the South.3 The prevention of lynchings was prima facie evidence that throughout the South, there were ruling class whites who disapproved of lynchings and other forms of white mob violence.4

The Independent had no editorial comment on the decrease, but pointed out candidly that

Lynching still holds America and particularly the South, where most lynching occurs, up before the world as barbarious, depraved, and lacking in the finer qualities of civilization.5

The Tribune for its part, concluded that oppression overseas was no match

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1Ibid., May 29, 1920.
2Ibid., July 23, 1920.
3Atlanta Independent, January 6, 1921.
4Cash, op. cit., pp. 310-311.
5Atlanta Independent, January 7, 1921.
for the American pastime of lynching and cited Punch's mocking, cynical criticism of America.

What mockery of the law, what blasphemy of justice
What promise of anarchy.¹

On another occasion the Tribune was almost venomous toward the South. Editor Johnson wrote a scathing editorial on "The Negro At The North." The Negro had made his niche in the North, he wrote, while the South had been both asleep and mistaken. That the Negro was embittered was very clear.

Lynch law and mob violence now raging in the South...provide the stimulus to migration and it keeps up, if it does not increase. We have with us a new Negro, and it will be for the nation at large to realize it and undertake to adjust conditions at the South and the North to meet this new order of things. We are twelve millions and increase at the normal rate and it is foolish to expect that we will be suppressed, disfranchised, and overridden forever.²

The crusade continued. In Danville, Kentucky, the Chamber of Commerce announced that discrimination hurts the South.³ The Atlanta Interracial Commission reported that "direct information gathered from several sections of the South indicated that the thinking whites are stirred as never before" and that there was no disposition among the leading whites to hide their feelings. Johnson's editorial comments indicated that the thinking white people were "expressing their opinion with a degree of frankness never before heard here."⁴ The Southern Association of Women Against Lynching became particularly active and did much to destroy the

¹Savannah Tribune, January 8, 1921.
²Ibid., July 3, 1920.
³Ibid.
⁴Ibid.
myth that lynching served to protect Southern womanhood.¹

As the crusading spirit gained momentum, several white daily papers loosed a tide of pungent criticism at the Ku Klux Klan and other forms of demagoguery. Negro editors were jubilant and devoted news and editorial space to the publication and commendation of the view of the crusading white newspapers. The Tribune reported that the Atlanta Constitution, The Georgian, and the big daily newspapers of Augusta, Savannah, and Macon had added their voices to the rising tide of Southern protest. Sol Johnson heralded them for their "relentless editorial battle against the horrors of lynching."²

The Year 1920 was an election year and with it the hopes of Negro Republicans soared. Harding and Coolidge made high sounding promises to the Negro voters.³ To Davis, Johnson, and possibly too many other Negroes, the election of a Republican President appeared to be God-sent. Davis asserted that a great racial awakening was taking place in the Negro race.⁴ Editor Johnson noted that the Negro was more fully aware of his political power than ever before.⁵

Although the Southern Negro Press expressed jubilation over the Republican triumph, it did not blindly believe and proclaim that Harding's administration would be a utopia. Johnson sounded the alarm. In an editorial entitled "WHAT WILL HARDING DO?", he called attention to the fact

¹Cash, op. cit., p. 311.
³Ibid.
⁴Ibid.
⁵Savannah Tribune, July 31, 1920.
that it was natural for the Negro to be concerned because of what was involved and he accused the "Solid South" of having been guilty of side stepping every issue involving the granting of justice to the Negro.¹

As the new year of 1921 opened, on several fronts, efforts were redoubled in the crusade against the Southern Way. The Negro press in the South, through the services of the Associated Negro Press, usually gave front page priority to Southern Negro protest. As the Klan spread and grew bolder, many whites, Northerners and Southerners, expressed their antipathy to it. New York's Mayor Hilan warned the Klan of the South that there were no room for it in his city.² In Atlanta, affidavits were filed with Governor Hugh Dorsey against the Klan's intimidation of Gwinnett County Negroes.³ Kentucky's governor ordered an intensive probe into the night-riding activities of the Kluxers.⁴ In Congress, Representative Seldon P. Spencer and Senator L. C. Dyer, both from Missouri, introduced Senate Bill No. 4262 which would make lynching a federal crime.⁵ The drama continued. In February, President Harding's wife was reported having said that the next President will give the Negro race a square deal.⁶ Bishop Warren A. Candler, an Atlanta contributor to the Independent, warned the "whosoever sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God made He man."⁷

¹Ibid., November 6, 1920.
²Atlanta Independent, January 20, 1921.
³Ibid.
⁴Ibid.
⁵Ibid.
⁶Ibid., February 10, 1921.
⁷Ibid., February 3, 1921.
The Southern Negro press gave wide coverage to the activities and successes of the crusaders. Johnson was profuse in his praise of the anti-Klan activities. On March 12, 1921, he declared that interracial cooperation was growing and warmly applauded the work of the NAACP. Several white dailies added their names to the crusading papers. The Norfolk Virginian, the Pilot, the Chattanooga Times, the papers of Knoxville, Tennessee, and some North Carolina papers began to attack the Klan and other forms of white brutality. The Florida Times Union expressed profound regret "to see Southerners opposed to the Dyer anti-lynch bill" (then before Congress). When Georgia's Governor Hugh Dorsey, in the spring of 1921, spoke out against peonage and lawlessness and urged "pitless publicity" against the Ku Klux Klan, the Independent and the Tribune were sanguine in their commendations.

Especially was any opposition to the Klan dutifully reported by the South Negro press. When Judge Henry C. Hammond of McDuffie County, Georgia, flayed certain county officials for their unwarranted cruelty to some Negro prisoners, Ben Davis applauded. A. Phillip Randolph's forthright stand against the Klan in February, 1921, in New York City, was front page news in Atlanta and doubtless in other Southern cities. Through the efforts of the National Negro Press Association, Nevada's Governor Emmett D. Boyle's

1 Savannah Tribune, March 12, 1921.
2 Ibid., March 19, 1921.
3 Ibid., January 19, 1921.
4 Atlanta Independent, April 28, 1921.
5 Savannah Tribune, May 14, 1921.
6 Atlanta Independent, March 17, 1921.
7 Ibid., February 17, 1921.
endorsement of the Dyer anti-lynch bill was widely circulated throughout the Southern Negro Community.\textsuperscript{1}

Although Harding gave much support to the Dyer Bill,\textsuperscript{2} the Southern Negro press expressed disappointment with him and his popularity with Southern Negroes dropped steadily. Aside from the removal of the segregation signs in the capitol,\textsuperscript{3} the Independent could find nothing for which to commend him.

In 1922 as in the preceding year, the activities of the crusaders were followed avidly by the Southern Negro press. The Tribune declared with satisfaction that there were many Southern white papers which favored the Dyer Bill.\textsuperscript{4} The Independent reported that the Florida Times Union and the Greenwood, S. C. Index favored the anti-lynch bill.\textsuperscript{5} Davis wrote glowing articles about the anti-lynching stand of Georgia's Governor Hardwick\textsuperscript{6} and Massachusetts' Senator Henry C. Lodge.\textsuperscript{7}

The Negro press became increasingly adamant and vociferous as the passing months witnessed a slow, subtle, but encouraging change in the Southern conscience. Johnson probably typified the general tenor of the Negro press in the South, when he caustically assailed the South for its failure to rise en masse against lynching and made a ringing appeal to the Southern white press to denounce lynchers and lynch laws.\textsuperscript{8} In the

\textsuperscript{1}Ibid., September 1, 1921.
\textsuperscript{2}In Congress, furious debate raged over the Dyer Bill. After stormy sessions, it bogged down in the Senate where it was finally killed by fillibustering Southern Senators.
\textsuperscript{3}Ibid., March 16, 1921.
\textsuperscript{4}Ibid., January 19, 1922.
\textsuperscript{5}Atlanta Independent, January 19, 1922.
\textsuperscript{6}Ibid., July 13, 1922.
\textsuperscript{7}Ibid., February 23, 1922.
\textsuperscript{8}Savannah Tribune, January 4, 1923.
same vein he was happy to announce that in February five lynchers received life sentences. 1 Although fifty-one Negroes were lynched in the South in 1922, that number represented a decrease about which the Tribune expressed a note of optimism. It also noted that the Klan, reportedly, had decided to lift its ban on Catholics and Jews. Nonetheless, there was nothing to suggest that the Klan had changed its mind about the Negro or about its plan for world mastery.2

There were indications on the other hand, that the Klan was truly becoming a world wide organization. The Tribune noted that Paris, France warned the Klan that it was unwelcomed there.3 From Cardiff, Wales came a report which alleged that some Americans and British exponents of Anglo-Saxon unity had formed a branch of the Ku Klux Klan.4 But as it spread forces were at work to thwart, frustrate, or eradicate it. Southern white women urged their governors to bring an end to lynching.5 In Arkansas, the NAACP won a distinct victory for human justice when the United States Supreme Court reversed a circuit court and ordered the release of the "Elaine Five" -- five Negroes from Phillips County, Arkansas, who in a mob dominated courtroom atmosphere, were convicted of the murder of a local white man. The Independent expressed its strong approval.6 Ex-Governor Hugh Dorsey continued to lambast the Klan and the lynch mobs. His activities were followed closely by the Tribune.7

Some members of the Southern Negro press were aware that their struggle against the Southern way might be won by soliciting the tremendous

1Ibid., February 6, 1922.
2Savannah Tribune, January 25, 1921.
3Ibid.
4Ibid.
5Atlanta Independent, March 8, 1923.
6Ibid., July 23, 1923.
7Savannah Tribune, January 11, 1923.
potential power of the dormant public opinion of the North. For a brief period in the early spring of 1923, Davis and one of his newspaper associates, H. R. Butler, made a plea for the North to awaken. Davis did not directly call on the North, but he did announce to the nation that in the matter of lynching there should be removal of the "imaginary Mason-Dixon line."\(^1\) Senator Dyer and the NAACP were also aware that there was a tremendous reservoir of latent public opinion in the North. Under the auspices of the NAACP, Senator Dyer, sponsor of the anti-lynch bill, toured New York, New Jersey, and Ohio in an effort to arouse those states in the anti-lynching campaign\(^2\) — although to no immediate avail.

The crusades against lynching gathered momentum. In February, 1923, the Tribune reported that the Roman Catholics in Cleveland, Ohio, had organized to resist the Klan.\(^3\) The Federal Council of Churches added its voice to the protest by proclaiming February 11, 1923, as Race Relations Sunday.\(^4\) The Committee on Interracial Cooperation was confident that the crusade was becoming successful and released a statement that the eradication of lynching was in sight.\(^5\)

The Southern Negro press, while heralding the crusaders, never relented in its own editorial battle with the Southern conscience. The Independent hailed the stand taken by some Southern whites who pointed out that lynching was the cause of the migration of Negroes to the North.\(^6\) Davis told the South that the penalty for race hatred was economic backwardness.\(^7\) In a vicious editorial, Johnson sought to dispel the long

\(^1\) *Atlanta Independent*, May 17, 1923.
\(^2\) Ibid., August 9, 1923.
\(^3\) *Savannah Tribune*, February 1, 1923.
\(^4\) Ibid., February 8, 1923.
\(^5\) Ibid.
\(^6\) *Atlanta Independent*, January 24, 1924.
\(^7\) Ibid., August 7, 1924.
Standing Southern myth that the white man in the South knew the Negro. The Southerner did not know the Negro, Johnson announced. The white man only knew one class of Negro.¹

From 1924 to 1928, the Independent and the Tribune became convinced that the crusade was being won. On December 18, 1924, the Independent commented that the Interracial Commission, organized shortly after the war, had reported that definite progress was being made in improving race relations. Davis called the report "most encouraging,"² Johnson was so certain that things were improving that he thought he saw signs of the disintegration of the Klan into less than a memory.³

The Tribune thought that the record for 1924 was a fine one which should be heartily acclaimed, but added, that it hoped that the coming year would find lynching completely obliterated.⁴ The Savannah editor pointed out that the lynching record has "besmirched our dear Southland" and that "it behooves the leading statesmen of this section to get busy and redeem those records."⁵ In this article, Johnson referred to the South as "our dear Southland" for the first time since the late summer of 1916. As tensions eased in the South, and as the so-called better classes of whites became more articulate, the Southern Negro press began to speak less harshly of the South.

In the meantime, however, the crusade continued. The Independent spoke glowingly of the Interracial Commission's work in Kentucky, and was proud to announce that Negroes were participating fully in its work.

¹Savannah Tribune, February 28, 1924.
²Atlanta Independent, December 18, 1924.
³Savannah Tribune, February 28, 1924.
⁴Ibid., January 1, 1925.
⁵Ibid., January 8, 1925.
By the year 1928, the rising tide of optimism grew stronger as the successes of the crusaders came with a greater degree of frequency. The NAACP reported that its most successful year had been 1925. In 1927, it reported that the Negro's case was being won gradually in the law courts of the land. In Congress, the anti-lynch Champions would not be quieted. Three anti-lynch bills were introduced into the 69th Congress. In the winter of 1927, the *Independent* reported that segregation was being fought in Government offices. In Mississippi, prominent white women organized and drew up a vigorous protestation and condemnation of lynching.

The years 1927–1928, were full of encouraging surprises for many Southern Negroes. The Supreme Court declared the Texas Primary law unconstitutional. The *Independent* was jubilant. Davis reported that a Douglass, Georgia, court had convicted sixteen white men in a lynching case. When two white youths were given sentences of six months on the chain gang for assaulting a young Negro girl, Davis registered utter surprise. He had expected the youths to be freed without penalty.

By 1928, the South had apparently taken its stand. "Year after year spokesmen for the region assured themselves and the world at large that the South had taken its stand, and that its position was immobile, that

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3 *Atlanta Independent*, January 7, 1926.
alteration was unthinkable, come what may.\(^1\) While it is true that there had been no relaxation of the Southerner's stand on white supremacy, it is equally true that there had been significant advances made by various interracial organizations to ease racial tensions in the South. The Southern conscience, that is the conscience of the ruling class whites, had received a jolt, but there were still demagogues in the South.\(^2\) Despite the cynic's ravings, the Southern Negro press thought that "we are making progress....especially here in the South."\(^3\) Editor Johnson's confidence in the South had returned. The South had become the Negro's natural home again. In a light hearted vein, Johnson informed his readers that he was adopting the slogan, "BACK TO THE FARM." "The rural district is the natural environment of our people." Since lawlessness had been reduced in the South, Johnson declared, "the facts impel us heartily to enter into the slogan--BACK TO THE FARM."\(^4\) His conclusion is a fitting finale to the story of Southern style militancy of the Negro press in the South during the period 1904-1928.

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\(^1\) Woodward, The Strange Career, p. 8
\(^3\) Atlanta Independent, January 5, 1928.
\(^4\) Savannah Tribune, January 12, 1928.
CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

The Negro press in the South, in part because it was in the South, has been necessarily different from the Northern Negro press in its attitudes, reactions and editorial policy toward the racial conditions in the South.

From 1895 to 1915, the Southern Negro press used the Booker T. Washington theme, sometimes with important variation, as a frame of reference from which to plead the Negro's case. While it should be remembered that Washington did not use the Southern Negro press as his official mouthpiece, the Atlanta Independent, to a large extent, did function as a kind of un-official publicity bureau for the Tuskegee magnate. During the Washington period (1895-1915), the Southern white man was generally conciliated and appeased. Whenever the Negro had grievances, the press usually sought to obtain the assistance and influence of the so-called better element of whites by cajolery.

Although the "THE SOUTH OUR NATURAL HOME" theme was preached when purely Southern political and social matters were at stake, it was abandoned completely when national politics were involved. The South, then, was severely castigated, denounced, distrusted, and lampooned. Negro editors were generally maverick Republican politicians in Dixie. Some, like Davis, were "dipped-in-wool." Others, like Sol Johnson, were conservative, although leaning toward the Republican party. Throughout Woodrow
Wilson's two terms, Davis never ceased to criticize the Democrats. Johnson while remaining a loyal Republican often made favorable comments about the Democrats and about Wilson for whom he had high regard.

The beginning of the Great War, the death of Washington, the rising tide of white supremacy during Wilson's administrations, and the rise of R. R. Moton and DuBois, caused the Negro press in the South to experience a brief period, 1914 to 1916, of conflicting ambivalence toward the South.

By the late summer of 1916, Washington's influence was cast off. Because of the influence of the war, Moton's diluted "Washingtonianism" was too weak, but DuBois' defiance was too strong. The Negro press in the South, therefore, adopted a generally aggressive theme which reflected both Moton and DuBois traditions. At times the tone was more Moton-esque while at other times it was reminiscent of DuBois. Both the Independent and the Tribune showed variations on the Moton-DuBois complex. As the war wore on, however, the tone of the Southern Negro press became more akin to that of DuBois, more menacing, more challenging.

The tone of the Negro press during the post-war years was also belligerent. The only voice of conciliation was heard in Tuskegee. If there was a "New Negro" in 1922, the Southern Negro press certainly was symptomatic of his existence. With an unending relentlessness, it preached a crusade in the South against the Southern Way. By appealing to the so-called better element of whites, not in the Old Washington tradition, it sought to arouse the Southern conscience in the Negro's behalf. In this it achieved a measure of success. Many white dailies, interracial organizations, private citizens, and Southern womanhood associations joined the rising tide of Southern protest. White supremacy was not what was at stake.
The physical brutalities inflicted on the Negro were what shocked the Southern conscience. Often the Negro press attributed the easings of tensions to the activities of the crusaders, in both the North and South.

Although the return of the Republicans to political power was widely heralded, the Southern Negro remained wary of their Presidents Harding and Coolidge. Southern Negro editors thought it natural to ask what the President's administration would mean to the Negro. Harding's and Coolidge's overtures were critically examined. The Negro press often expressed skepticism about the sincerity of Presidents Harding and Coolidge and of the party and indicated that the Negro was aware fully of his political strength.

By 1928, the lot of the Southern Negro, debased as it was, had improved considerably. Optimism, dating back to Coolidge's entrance into the White House, was general in the Negro community. The Negro press, still wary, however, began to show once again that it had never ceased being Southern. The "dear old Southland" theme began to be heard and slowly the South began to be extolled as "our natural environment."
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