

John C. Calhoun:
A States'-Rights Nationalist

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“Consolidation and Disunion- the two extremes of our system; they are both equally dangerous and ought both to be equally the objects of our apprehension.”
John C. Calhoun July 4, 1830

John C. Calhoun (1782-1850) has been portrayed by some authors¹ as a nationalist who changed his views because of some change in himself and became a states' rights sectional, secessionist, confederate. Calhoun could be called a nationalist and sectional, but at no time was he a secessionist. In fact, Calhoun was not a confederate, but a confederationist in terms of the first form of government that the United States of America was formed under, the Articles of Confederation². A confederationist is not a confederate, as in those who belonged to the Southern secessionist side during the civil war. Instead it means that Calhoun believed in the contract that the several states had entered into in the time of the countries founding fathers, as they had understood and intended it. It was Calhoun's belief that the federal government was in essence an organizer of the separate states working together in cooperation, as a team, with none greater than another.

Calhoun did not argue for a return to the Articles, but instead believed that the new Constitution was in essence a similar document, a compact between the people and their government. For Calhoun the government was given its validity by the nation, the nation was not given its validity by the Government. As the structure of the relationship between the people and their government changed, so did the view of Calhoun, and his position in it.

¹ Charles M. Wiltse breaks up his biography of John C. Calhoun, into three volumes broken into those views of the periods of his life; *John C. Calhoun, Nationalist, Nullifier, and Sectionalist*, (New York: Russell & Russell, 1968). Margaret L. Coit, *John C. Calhoun: An American Portrait*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1950). And Gerald M. Capers, "A Reconsideration of John C. Calhoun's Transition from Nationalism to Nullification", *The Journal of Southern History*, 14, (February, 1948)

² The Articles of Confederation and Perpetual Union were drafted in June of 1776 by the continental Congress and then submitted to each of the Thirteen States for their ratification, in 1777. The articles provided for a union or partnership for the states mutual defense and international matters, while allowing the States to keep their sovereignty. Each state had their government and legislature that dealt with all of the states governmental duties and law, at the same time each state was to recognize the validity of each other state's own laws and practices, taking care not to interfere.

It was not Calhoun that changed, but the government that changed around him, and thus the popular viewpoint that has since attempted to define him. Calhoun's political career spanned over 4 decades, those years happened to be some of the most formative in the young country's life; it was a time of change, and one when precedents about American law and government were shaped. Calhoun was a large part of this transition from infant union to internationally recognized nation. Calhoun played a role in many of the government transitions of this period.

Calhoun was apprehensive of the growing power and centralization of the government and its branches over what were originally separate sovereign countries³, much the same as the founding fathers, who had also been wary of the power of a strong central government from experience with the crown of England. In the Articles of Confederation the central government was quite weak in comparison to the model of government that we know today. It had only one house of Congress, with one representative from each state with only one vote, the executive was not a separate branch and was voted into office, from the Congress, for a term of one year, the President also had no veto power. The Congress had the ability to set up a post and to estimate the cost of government and ask for donations from the states to finance an army for protection and advancement into the west.

During his time in various elected and appointed offices, Calhoun developed a reputation as a man who believed deeply in logic and reason while trying to keep emotional feelings out of his actions, being the ideal of a Southern Republican gentlemen, with a strong Calvinist upbringing. John said of himself and his great work *Disquisition*

³ The states were not separate countries as much as separate regions. The notion of Nations was a somewhat abstract term at this time, nationalistic ideas, although present here, would not fully develop, as we now know them, until later in the 19th century.

on *Government*, “I have written, just as I thought, and told the truth without fear, favor or affection”⁴

Calhoun’s political philosophy was, owed in part to his father and grandfather who, like so many American immigrants, had fled tyranny and struck out on their own to make their own life through their own hard work. The work of his forefathers was of great influence. The experiences of the family would shape their view of the world, and thus the raising of John. Calhoun received from the family a sense of self worth and independence that allowed him to act in office as his logic and principles guided, not by what some group interests might want.

The independence that Calhoun was raised with comes also from the cultural group his family belonged to. The Calhoun family originated in Scotland, “descended from the Scottish clan Colquhoun”⁵; the family had moved from Scotland to Ireland as part of the Ulster plantation movement⁶ of King James I. The Scots-Irish, a name coined in America, came from this group of people, leaving Ulster in North Ireland because of political, religious, and economic strife.

Immigration from this area to the Americas had been happening for years in small groups, but starting in 1717 it was greatly increased with close to 250,000 Scots-Irish coming to America in a fifty year period⁷, bringing with them their traditions and heritage, steeped heavily in family and clan unity, and with a distaste for strong,

⁴ John M. Anderson, ed., *Calhoun: Basic Documents* (State College: Bald Eagle Press), 29. John C. Calhoun 1849

⁵ Charles M. Wiltse, *John C. Calhoun Nationalist 1782-1828*. (New York: Russell & Russell 1968) 12

⁶ Ulster Scots, or Scots-Irish, from the area of Northern Ireland originated from the Ulster Plantation movement; a continuation of previous plantation movements. This was a process that intended to displace traditional Celtic and catholic cultural groups with a more English and protestant population with the intent of creating more stability in the British Isles under an English Crown. In the 17th century, by king James I of England brought protestant Scots to the Ulster region of Northern Ireland to live and make a living on land confiscated from the traditional lords of the area.

⁷ “Scots-Irish in America,” www.theulsterscotts.com/america print.htm. (accessed May 12, 2009)

oppressive monarchy and government. It was within one of these group migrations that John C. Calhoun's family came to Pennsylvania in 1733, John's father Pat Jr. was the youngest of six children in that family.⁸ Patrick senior then had moved the family from western Pennsylvania to Augusta County, Virginia; and then finally into the highlands of the South Carolina, in the Long Canes Creek area. The Calhoun Clan and the others that traveled with them suffered not only the regular hardships of travel along no more than footpaths at some points, but also the threat and realization of Indian attacks.⁹ His Grandmother was killed in an Indian Massacre¹⁰. Not much detail is written about John's Grandmother's death, or what effect this had on him or the rest of his family, it is certain that it happened before his birth, yet the memories would be in the minds of John's family members that were alive when it happened. Those early family experiences may have had some influence on his support of the Indian Removal Acts passed by the federal government.

While John was an advocate for western expansion, and the removal of the Indian peoples inhabiting the area west of the Appalachian Mountains to the Mississippi River, to areas further west, he was not part of the extreme groups that felt that they should take the land as they wished. In dealing with the nation of the Eastern Cherokee¹¹ Calhoun had believed that it was their right to retain their lands saved for them by treaty with the United States Government, a treaty being in all purposes, an amendment to the

⁸ Wiltse. *Calhoun Nationalist*, 12

⁹ *Ibid.*, 14

¹⁰ Richard N. Current, *John C. Calhoun*. (New York: Washington Square Press 1966) 4

¹¹ The Cherokee nation was founded in 1820 in an attempt to maintain their stake in their traditional homeland. They believed that if recognized as a sovereign nation then all rights as such would be given, this did not stop the white settlers of Georgia from continuing their extreme agitation for Indian removal, offering minimum payments for land, if any payment at all. For further information see W. Edwin Hemphill ed., *The Papers of John C. Calhoun vol. 8: 1823-1824* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1975), xviii-xix. "People and Events: Indian removal, 1814-1858," PBS www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part4/4p259.html (accessed May 22, 2009)

Constitution since a treaty must be ratified by two thirds of the Senate. By recognizing them as a sovereign nation, he attempted to deal with them as such. Calhoun believed as he always did, that the government had to act within the constraints of the Constitution, not however was convenient. The Cherokee, like several tribes, had tried to adopt the styles and culture of the white settlers in attempt to hold their lands; they traded in their traditional hunter-gatherer ways and began large-scale farming, slavery, and European dress.

Not only would Calhoun be influenced by the stories of hardship and success but his own experience working on the family plantation as a young boy into early adulthood would have shaped the man's work ethic and personal ethos. It is with no doubt that the attribute of being a hard worker helped build Calhoun's reputation in government. As Vice president he was constantly at his seat in the senate. Before it had been common for the Vice President to show only when called upon to settle a tie. Richard N. Current draws on this for his argument that John C. Calhoun was a product of his environment. This argument is well founded unless you may be a nature over nurture advocate. The theory of nature over nurture, or the reversal, in basic form means that in nature over nurture, a subject or person is born with certain traits, attitudes, and instincts, that may develop over time, but are not learned. While the opposite, states that a person develops traits, instincts, and attitudes, that are learned through teaching and observation. Calhoun was brought up in a society of self-made men, and a republican way of thought and action. These factors, coupled with the family's moves from the British Isles to the Americas to escape hunger and ill treatment, definitely affected him, especially during his formative years.

The idea of self-made men and republican thought, as part of Calhoun's upbringing would influence his thought process and work ethic which would be part of his legacy later in his life. These traits would manifest within his unionist and states'-rights beliefs. The Jeffersonian¹² concept of republicanism stated that an individual helped another through good deed or action, because it was the right thing to do and it was up to that individual's discretion, not because they were obliged to help, this connects with the self-made man concept. A self-made man is self explanatory, through their own hard work they create a place for themselves within their environment, help may be received, but not in such a manner that the individual would be considered to have been given his place. When looked at from Calhoun's unionist and states'-rights perspective it means that the individual helps their neighbor out of courtesy not obligation, in turn the individual does not cause harm to his neighbor. The government then, stays out of the way, as much as possible, but still offers a helping hand, when needed, and protection, which the individual can pay into through military or government service.

Calhoun was born March 18, 1782 and was only fourteen when his father Patrick died, in January of 1796. Charles M. Wiltse describes this time as the foundation of what would become the social and political philosophy of John. Wiltse describes Patrick's political beliefs to be based in states'-rights and liberty in resistance to the tyranny of monarchy and Republicanism.¹³ Patrick saw the Constitution as another form of restrictive governing, believing it was not right that other states had the power to levy

¹² Jeffersonian Republicanism is the term used for Thomas Jefferson's political Philosophy that countered Alexander Hamilton's Federalist Party and Philosophy. The Federalists advocated a strong central "federal" government. Jefferson's philosophy in response advocated a small central government, small or no standing federal army, states'-rights, as well as a loose construction of the United States Constitution. The base of this Philosophy believed in the primacy of the Yeoman Farmer as opposed to the banker, merchants, industrialists and other moneyed interests. This party would become the Democratic-Republicans and would split to eventually become the Democratic and Whig parties.

¹³ Wiltse, *Nationalist* 23

taxes on the state of South Carolina.¹⁴ This is one of the reasons that he voted against ratification in the South Carolina Legislature. John would have been six when his father was involved with the ratification debate, not old enough to speak with his father about it but he surely overheard it in discussion with his older brothers and uncles. In the South Carolina state legislature, the topic of the new Constitution, and its possible ratification, was hotly debated; as it was through out the country. A legislature from Prince Frederick's parish voiced the concerns of his constituents when he addressed the convention; relaying their fear of the loss of liberty that many had fought for during the Revolutionary war, which they had hoped for "its continuance to their posterity".¹⁵ He would continue: "They say it is with political mischiefs, and pregnant with greater variety of impending woes to the good people of the Southern States, especially South Carolina, than all the plagues supposed to issue from the poisonous box of Pandora".¹⁶

Both Wiltse and Current, also respect the work ethic that John developed by first working with his father on the plantation and after his father's death. Calhoun left the care of the preacher Moses Waddel (1770-1840) after his father's death, whose tutelage John had been under. John had returned to the family plantation to help with its running and to care for a younger brother and several other cousins and family members while two older brothers left the plantation for the business world. Patrick Calhoun, Jr. died when John was only 14. This might seem like a young age to many of us in the 21st century, but in Calhoun's time he was well on his way to manhood and his personal sacrifice and efforts show what a man he would become. Again, through the actions of

¹⁴ Ibid., 23

¹⁵ Bernard Bailyn ed., "Patrick Dollard Fears corrupt, despotic Aristocracy, May 22, 1788", *The Debate on the Constitution: Federalist and Anti-federalist Speeches, Articles, and Letters during the Struggle Over Ratification. Part 2*, (New York: Viking Press, 1993), 592-94.

¹⁶ Ibid., 592

Calhoun, in reference to his sacrifice for his family's needs, it can be seen the position in which he places himself for the needs of others. For John it was family first and himself second. The same approach and selflessness would be shown in John's work in government, where it was his constituents in South Carolina, and the Nation at large, depended on him to do what he thought proper. His work, was based in the needs and wants of the people, according to the constitution. Most importantly, it was Calhoun's protection of the minority against the whims of a powerful majority that separated the man from others, and would lead him into The Nullification Crisis and his label of sectionalist. This not only speaks of his character, but also that of the larger cultural group in which he draws his heritage.

As a people the Scots-Irish based their scheme of loyalty in, first, the family, the clan (in his case the community), and finally the government. In Calhoun's case, the government, or the right to rule, started in the community then the state and finally the national or federal government. Many of Calhoun's ideas of government came from Jeffersonian and Lockean ideals that would have been in practice and in the learning that Calhoun received from his teacher and mentor Moses Waddel¹⁷, with whom Calhoun kept a friendship for many years. Waddel was not only Calhoun's mentor but also his brother in law, he had married Calhoun's only sister, Catherine. Unfortunately Catherine, passed only two months after her and John's father. Calhoun lived with Waddel for another four years before returning to the plantation; during this time he impressed Waddel as an eager and curious student; from Waddel, Calhoun learned, and read about history in many works, including John Locke's *Essay concerning Human*

¹⁷ Moses Waddel also was an instructor to William H. Crawford of Georgia, Monroe's Secretary of the Treasury and George McDuffie, Governor and Senator of South Carolina.

*Understanding.*¹⁸ John Locke would continue to be an influence on Calhoun, as he had been for many founding fathers during the Enlightenment period. Kermit L. Hall uses part of Locke's essay, *Two Treatises on Civil Government* (1690) to illustrate his effect on Republican Constitutionalism.¹⁹ In the first paragraph of the excerpt [number 95] the basis for Constitutional government, in Calhoun's point of view, can be seen. In it, Locke states "Men being by nature all free, equal, and independent, no one can be put out of this state and subjected to the political power of another without his consent".²⁰ Locke's statement goes hand in hand with Patrick and John Calhoun's view that the constitution is a contract entered into by multiple parties and in which each much work in mutual respect to each other. "The Consent of the people", this is possibly the greatest theme in American Government, if, at times it is nothing more then propaganda. Calhoun believed the consent of the people was the basis for all government.

Calhoun was a nationalist [unionist] from the beginning of his career until its end. When he saw attacks on the honor and economy of the country he acted. A large part of Calhoun's political career includes time spent in the cabinet or as Vice-President in the terms of four separate presidents. He served in the Senate and House of the United States Congress. He entered the United States House of Representatives in 1811 and became associated with the "war hawks"²¹ that year. Calhoun's association with the war hawks is a large reason for his nationalistic identity. In the Nation a debate raged around,

¹⁸ Ibid., 26

¹⁹ Kermit L. Hall ed., *Major Problems in Constitutional History Volume one: The Colonial Era Through Reconstruction*, (Lexington: D. C. Heath and Company, 1992), 64-66.

²⁰ Ibid., 64.

²¹ War Hawks is a term coined by John Randolph of Roanoke, Congressmen from Virginia, who was opposed to the war with Britain in 1812. The war hawks consisted of members of the 12th United States Congress, coming predominately from the South and western frontier states, these men also included Speaker of the House Henry Clay of Kentucky, William Lowndes and Langdon Cheeves of South Carolina, Felix Grundy of Tennessee and most probably several more. The full amount is not known do to lack of record or scholarship.

not only, if war should be declared, but also, on whom. Great Britain and Empirical France were at war on the continent of Europe. The United States involvement was limited to the injustices they felt they received in their attempts to do legal trade in Britain and the rest of Europe. Both parties had been courting the United States for an alliance. Though the courtship was not a kind one, George Dangerfield refers to the two powers as “belligerent”²². Calhoun believed that the impressments of United States’ sailors and blockade tax²³, constituted grounds for war. On the French side, Napoleon had closed all the ports of Europe and her colonies to British or neutral nation traders with ties to the British, he would also confiscate any ship he fell within his grasp. Since the battle of Trafalgar, Britain ruled the seas it was almost impossible for any trader to work without an association with Britain²⁴. The carrying trade was a huge part of the U.S. economy, with its agrarian products being sold to Europe and the need of manufactured goods that were not readily available from home manufactures. Also, there was the issue of British Canada, and the supposed agitation of the northwest Indian tribes by British agents.²⁵ The problems faced in those frontier battles would help lead Calhoun to his realization of a need for a national transportation network, another feather in his nationalist cap.

²² George Dangerfield, *The Era of Good Feelings*, (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World Inc., 1963), 42

²³ Blockade tax is a term used here to represent the British Orders-in-Council rule that stated that no neutral ship could trade with Europe or her Colonies without a license from England.

²⁴ On Oct. 21, 1805, Admiral Nelson and his British fleet met the combined fleet of Spanish and French ships under the command of Admiral Villeneuve. Nelson was victorious, negating his smaller numbers by using a radical plan of attack that divided the French and Spanish fleet and using the British superior experience and guns to cut the French and Spanish apart. The battle ended any hopes Napoleon Bonaparte had in crossing the English Channel and invading the British Isles. “Trafalgar” *Napoleonic Guide*, www.napoleonguide.com/battle_trafalgar.htm. (accessed May 28, 2009)

²⁵ It is more likely that the Indian attacks were done in large part to an influx of white settlers into Indian treaty lands.

After the War of 1812, Calhoun was vocal in his support of the federal government's involvement in building a national infrastructure of roads and canals. In Calhoun's words "Let us then, bind the republic together with a perfect system of roads and canals. Let us conquer space"²⁶. This is a clear illustration of his determination to connect and expand the union, though a distinction should be made that he wished to connect, not constrict the union. President James Madison (1751-1836) believed in the idea of internal improvements, but believed that it should be done at a state level, he had no authority given him in the constitution²⁷. Calhoun answered: "I am no advocate for refined arguments on the Constitution. The instrument was not intended as a thesis for the logistcian to exercise his ingenuity on. It ought to be constructed with plain, good sense; and what can be more express than the Constitution on this very point"²⁸.

There was an ongoing debate about the interpretation of the constitution at this time, between loose or strict construction. Strict constructionist believe that the government can not do any thing not specifically stated with in the Constitution, the loose constructionist believe that the government can do what ever it wants to, as long as the Constitution does not say that it can not. Madison and Calhoun, both believed to be interpreting the Constitution in a strict sense, they just could not agree on what was the proper interpretation. Calhoun believed that the Government could intercede or interact in such projects as the internal improvements because, the constitution said it could if it were for the greater good. The subject of internal improvements has been used to show

²⁶ Current, *Calhoun*,7.

²⁷ James Madison is considered the Father of the Constitution, as a federalist he had helped write the Constitution and push for its ratification, though he switched sides, to the Anti-federalists, because he saw the problems contained within the constitution and its lack of declaration of rights for the people. In his dissent he became a strong advocate, along with Jefferson for the adoption of an amendment to the constitution, the Bill of Rights.

²⁸ George Dangerfield, *Good Feelings*, 7-8... see also W. Edwin Hemphill ed., *The Papers of John C. Calhoun*. Vol 1.(Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1958 [double Check]), 403.

Calhoun's nationalism, though it does not support it to the extent that he has been placed. He was nationalistic up to the point that the government helped the people but did not infringe upon them.

In much of the internal improvements, Calhoun also oversaw the allotment of funds to various projects, mainly from his position as Secretary of War in President Monroe's Cabinet. Calhoun saw the roads and canals as beneficial to the union in two ways; one was from the point of defense, which was his area of government, as President Monroe's Secretary of War, and as a southern planter whose life and lively hood revolved around the transport and selling of agricultural products. The intent was to enable the better movement of troops and supplies during times of war and better interstate trade during times of peace.

Most roads up to this point had been built by the state, private business or corporations that would then charge a toll, or were not much more than livestock trails and footpaths. The new roads and canals would help increase the wealth of the nation and offer better protection. This was not a centralizing attempt; better roads would allow separate state militias to move in defense of each other with greater speed and efficiency. As a planter himself, Calhoun knew the need for good roads to move his produce to market. He also had family experience behind him. Patrick Calhoun, Jr., along with several of his brothers, had built a road by themselves, with help from their community, between the Long Canes settlement and others so as to improve their connection to the market²⁹. It is unclear as to Calhoun's involvement, or if he had been born yet, though the knowledge of this roads project was most likely passed onto him.

²⁹ Current, *Calhoun*, 4.

In 1817, Calhoun became President Monroe's (1758-1831) Secretary of War. This is a period where the centralist and nationalist opinions about Calhoun began to emerge. Calhoun always believed in the abilities of government, its appointees and appointers. He also knew that any of these groups were capable of great good or great evil. Like Lockean theory, Calhoun believed that power could be corrupting. Calhoun ran for President in two different elections, he withdrew both times; although during a period early in Monroe's first term, Calhoun acted as President, due to the absence of Monroe, Vice President Daniel D. Tompkins (1774-1825), Secretary of State John Quincy Adams, and much of the rest of his cabinet. Monroe had joined Adams on a tour of New England, and Tompkins had fell ill.

This was not a great coup for Calhoun, although, it did reaffirm his belief in his own leadership qualities, nor did he take it for granted. He did not slink away from the duty, he approached what would be a very difficult situation with eager professionalism, and without complaint. He was in constant contact, through the mail, with Monroe, acting as a mediator and messenger. Many questions and instructions from Monroe to other Cabinet members and the Vice-President were sent first to Calhoun, and then to the intended parties.

During his time in Monroe's administration, Calhoun became one of the President's most trusted advisors and friends. Their friendship continued for years as is evident in their correspondences seeking friendship or advice. Though a strong point in Calhoun's political career, this period is where the seeds were laid for the eventual battle of wills and wits with General Andrew Jackson (1767-1845).

Jackson was a hero of the War of 1812, with his staunch defense of New Orleans³⁰ and his victory over the greatest military force in the world at the time, Britain, which Jackson had done with only a small group of regulars and local militias³¹. The problem came when, in 1817, General Jackson was given the charge of putting down an uprising in the area of southern Georgia, of Seminole and Creek Indians, as well as preventing Spanish Florida from becoming a haven for runaway slaves. Jackson's orders were to "terminate the conflict". For Jackson, the best way to do this was to invade and capture Florida, creating a strain between the Spanish Empire and the United States. This was not what Monroe and Calhoun had in mind, and discussions between the two men focused on what sort of disciplinary action was merited.

A copy of one of these correspondence letters fell into Jackson's hands while he was the President of the United States, adding to disagreements already transpiring between Jackson and Calhoun. The said letter essentially stated that Jackson had believed that his orders had "left him free" to adopt that course if he found it necessary. Monroe was concerned that he might be required to give an account to Congress of the actions of Gen. Jackson and that Calhoun should review their given orders and make an account that this was not how they had understood said orders³². Calhoun was just doing his job as the Secretary of War. Jackson acted as he often did, he let his emotions get the best of him and show through, Calhoun always was able to control his temper in public.

³⁰ *Battle of New Orleans* on January 8, 1815, Jackson's 5,000 soldiers won a victory over 7,500 British. At the end of the day, the British had 2,037 casualties: 291 dead (including three senior generals), 1,262 wounded, and 484 captured or missing. The Americans had 71 casualties: 13 dead, 39 wounded, and 19 missing.

³¹ It may be important to note that a peace treaty had been signed with Great Britain before the battle but news had not arrived yet because of the great expanse of the Atlantic ocean with which the news had to travel by boat.

³² W. Edwin Hemphill, Ed. *The Papers of John C. Calhoun vol. III 1817-1818*. (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press 1967) 114, President James Monroe to Secretary of War John C. Calhoun.

The Presidency of John Quincy Adams (1767-1848) was filled with strife and in fighting among politicians and political parties. Adams was not really a surprise in winning the election of 1824³³, though Adams was running against four other, strong, opponents, he was by tradition, the next in line. He had served as Monroe's secretary of state, which was a position that had lead to the highest office of the Executive; Monroe Madison and Jefferson had all served as Secretary of State prior to their election to that high office. Yet, because of the turmoil in the country at the time it was difficult for anyone to truly predict the next president. Adams won, under protest by General Jackson, who had won the popular vote, yet in a Senatorial tiebreak Adams came out on top. This less than smooth transition of the new president lead to questions of conspiracies and also added to the fears of southern farmers who felt that the next president should have been a slave owner or at least a state's-rights advocate; Adams was neither. There had been a growing number of abolitionist fervor which was causing some fear of the possible loss of this "peculiar institution" and also of an ever-growing government.

A President of the people, Adams was not. He was an elitist who did not see such a view, as being, untruthful or unwanted. The people had their say through the House of Representatives while the Senate, Judiciary, and Presidency belong to the elite³⁴. Calhoun and Adams had worked well together in President Monroe's cabinet and shared some similar goals, but Calhoun's view of the place of government and its officials differed from that of Adams. It was not Adams intention to create or support a class structure, he believed, much like some Jeffersonian adherents, that his position of wealth

³³ Gerald L. Baliles, Dir., "American President, An Online Reference Resource"
<http://millercenter.org/academic/americanpresident/jqadams> (accessed May18, 2009)

³⁴ David A. Smith, *Presidents From Adams through Polk 1825-1849: debating the Issues in Pro and Con Primary Documents*. (Westport; Green Wood Press, 2005), 14.

put him in a position where, he was not dependent on his employer, which would make him susceptible to pressure from his employer. His wealth allowed him a superior education and the time necessary to be a leader of men.

When Calhoun thought about running for the presidency in 1824 it created a rift between the two. Adams had it on good authority that Calhoun would not be running, believing that it was just himself, Clay and Crawford from Monroe's cabinet. Adams believed that this move was intentional to draw power and support away from him. The actuality was that Calhoun was absolutely staunch in his opinion that Crawford would not win the presidency, and thought Adams too weak to carry the task. As Wiltse put it: "Calhoun made up his stubborn Scotch mind that as long as he could prevent it, William H. Crawford, should not be president of the United States."³⁵

Calhoun believed that he had as good a shot as anybody and that with the support of the South, along with the high population centers of New York and Pennsylvania. He also saw that he was as strongly educated, and experienced as any of the other candidates. But when Gen. Jackson entered the election backed by the state Tennessee, Calhoun saw his window close.

Calhoun then ran for the office of Vice President, running on a double ticket, he ran on both Adams' and Jackson's ticket. None of the candidates for president won a majority of the electoral votes. Gen. Jackson received more popular and electoral votes than Adams, since there was no majority winner the vote was decided in the House of Representatives where Adams received the winning vote; thanks in large part to the

³⁵ Wiltse, *Calhoun, Nationalist*, 241... See also Hatfield, *Vice Presidents*, 87

support of Clay. The election results would become known as the “Corrupt Bargain”³⁶. It was not the election results so much as what happened after word, Clay was given the post of Secretary of State in Adams’ cabinet.

This outcome incensed Jackson and his supporters, it even angered Calhoun. He saw it as a blatant display of partisan politics and the growing effect that a small privileged group could have on the outcome of a nationally important election. The election had effectively taken the will of the people out of the election for president and placed it in the hands of politicians. Although the house is considered the closest to the people of all the branches of the national government it was still not the voice of the people.

Calhoun was elected Vice President without any question to the integrity of the results, easily receiving the majority of votes. Which, he took to show the mandate of the people. He took to his office with great vigor, a trait that he would be show often through his life. Calhoun Worked hard in his position as Vice President, he believed that of all the branches of government the Senate had the greatest responsibility. He also believed that the senate was the best example of the union at work since no state, no matter how great or small a population, had any greater power over the others, each state only had to Senators

The nullification crisis of the early 19th century is the period where Calhoun separated himself as a states’ rights activist and advocate, for secession. President Jackson went so far as to call him an agitator for disunion and a southern confederacy³⁷.

³⁶ Mark O. Hatfield, U.S. Senator, U.S. Senate Historical Office, *Vice Presidents of the United States 1789-1993*. (Washington: GPO, 1997), 83.

³⁷ Richard B. Latner, “The Nullification Crisis and Republican Subversion,” *The Journal of Southern History*, vol.43, no. 1 (Feb., 1977),20

Yet Calhoun's personal involvement with the secessionist comes only from his support of the nullifiers and their constitutional argument.

Part of the nationalist switching to nullifier argument comes from the fact that Calhoun had been in support of Protective Tariffs of 1816, because he saw them as a means for internal improvements, for the founding of the projects, and also for the advancement of American manufacturing.

At the time the British had a much more advanced industrial system and were able to flood the American market with cheaper goods than could be produced at home. What caused Calhoun to change his mind, was that by this time the "American System"³⁸ had advanced in size and technology. The "American system" had been given its prod from the government in 1816, by allowing American manufactured goods the opportunity to compete with the cheaper English goods through tariffs.

Now Calhoun believed that they were unnecessary and an attempt by industrialists and bankers to get money from the government and, more importantly an example of the powerful north exerting power over the smaller South [based on population]. The new tariffs created a sectionist atmosphere pitting to types of economy against each other. Calhoun's response was "Spending lead to debt, which justified unjust taxes, which provided bribes for selfish interests and the funds as well, out of which executive tyranny could be financed"... "Burdens were all on one side and the benefits on the other".³⁹ Calhoun along with his constituents believed that the burden of the taxes was placed to heavily on the south. It was unconstitutional in much the way

³⁸ The American System of Manufacturing refers to the use of semi-skilled labor for the manufacturing of goods on a way that resembles a modern assembly line; it is also credited with the beginning of the division of labor.

³⁹ Clyde N. Wilson and W. Edwin Hemphill, Ed. *The Papers of John C. Calhoun vol. X 1825-1829*. (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1977), 247.

that his father had worried, where another state or region could tax another. And the tariff allowed American manufacturers a higher floor cost since the British goods had a higher price tag.

A popular theory is that Calhoun was disgusted with the cities and what ugliness that industry compounded on top of that. There is some truth to this but only some, Calhoun's personal feelings about city life are unfavorable. He viewed cities as places of excess and temptation. Calhoun was from an agrarian society and enjoyed the country lie immensely. But he was not a sectionalist, no more than a New England merchant. But this was not his reasoning for siding with the nullifiers, he believed in their constitutional argument. His own time spent in cities left him longing to return to his own plantation and the country, this was the case since he first practiced law in Charleston, until his final days in Washington. What disturbed Calhoun the most, was that the factory worker was in fact enslaved to the factory owner and investors, because of their dependence on the owner to provide a living wage, and the inability to complain or agitate for better wages because the population of the workforce was such that a worker could be easily replaced with another that was ready in the wings as it were.

Theodore R. Marmor explains that Calhoun's perspective the wage labor has been compared to that of Marx or the Tory Socialists [citation needed] of England. These were personal feelings that mirrored those of Jefferson, yet Calhoun was not against industry or scientific advancement, he saw value in each. He was enthusiastic to chemical and mechanical advancements in agriculture; they would be very beneficial to a country that was predominately rural.⁴⁰ Also Calhoun's label as anti-industrial is off the

⁴⁰ Theodore R. Marmor, "Ant-Industrialism and the Old South: The Agrarian Perspective of John C. Calhoun", *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 9 (July, 1967),383

mark, somewhat, he was not against industry or industrial workers, nor the industrialist, to a point. Calhoun was afraid of what a small amount of vested individuals could influence the government⁴¹, he saw the [a convention of vested interests, citation lost] as an evil influence on the government.

Even though Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826) and Jackson would not have considered themselves partners or friends by any means; Jackson had become the inheritor of Jeffersonian Republicanism, in addition his view of states' rights differed somewhat from Jefferson's in that he did not view nullification⁴² as a viable and legal path for the states to take. Jefferson had helped draw up *the Kentucky resolution*, in which it stated that the state of Kentucky would not adhere to the *Alien and Sedition act*, believing it was unconstitutional. The state of Vermont would attempt the same thing in reference to the *Fugitive Slave laws*⁴³. Jackson believed that the issue of states' rights was broken into two groups, states'-rights advocates those that were for states'-rights as for the preservation of the union, and nullifiers, those who were for disunion and power, the later being illegal, ill-advised, and unconstitutional. Jackson also believed that nullification was in direct conflict with the Federal Government and its union of states, seeing it as an attempt to "dissolve the union by destroying the constitution by acts unauthorized by it"⁴⁴. This is somewhat hypocritical of Jackson; Jackson was well known for using a "loose construction" approach to his defining of the contents of the

⁴¹ This would come from the Lockean theory of power, being corrupting. Groups with a vested interest could influence those who made and enforced the laws through bribery and other forms of interest. It necessarily wouldn't take outside influence, those in office themselves might have interest, in this case factories, so as to influence them, not from their constituents.

⁴² Nullification is a constitutional theory that gives an individual state the right to declare null and void any law passed by the United States Congress, which the state deems unacceptable and unconstitutional.

⁴³ Horace K Houston Jr., "Another Nullification Crisis: Vermont's 1850 Habeas Corpus Law," *The New England Quarterly*, 77, no. 2 (June, 2004), 258.

⁴⁴ Robert Hayne to Jackson, February 4, 1831, with Jackson's endorsement, John S. Bassett, *Life of Andrew Jackson* (Hamden Conn., Archon Books, 1967), 561.

Constitution. Strict construction was used only when it met Jackson's needs. In this aspect Calhoun was closer to the original Jeffersonian Republicanism than Jackson, he was a strict constructionist, Calhoun's family had a history with "loose construction" and its federalist supporters, both his father and Grand father had voted against the ratifying of the United States Constitution as members of the South Carolina legislature in March of 1788, on the grounds that it centralized too much power and that the Constitution did not carry enough protection for the state and its citizens from the power of the Government

Both sides, Jackson and Calhoun, saw their efforts as protection of the constitution and of the Union. Jackson believed that the nullifiers were attacking the Constitution, while Calhoun viewed nullification as the sovereign state exerting its right as interpreter of the Constitution, not as attackers or as a threat. It was his belief that he was protecting the means and intent of government, which through nullification South Carolina was protecting the constitution from a growing power struggle that was taking place within the government through the majority. It was protection of the small groups and individual that Calhoun was fighting for, not an attempt to seize power that he believed should be his after an unsuccessful run for the office of president.

The Jackson Faction used this claim of a disenfranchised, scorned man in their attacks on the nullifiers, not on Calhoun alone. It is Richard B. Latner's argument that Jackson and the "administration's newspaper, the *Washington Globe*" used a picture of Calhoun as a power hungry dissident that sought secession as a means to grab power, in that if successful Calhoun would hold the reigns of power in a confederate South, and if there later came a peaceful re-unification that Calhoun would again have gained power as

a broker of such a deal⁴⁵. This crisis offers an interesting look at the Medias' play in politics. The directors of the Globe were sympathetic to Jackson's vision as well as being "key"⁴⁶ members of Jackson's Kitchen Cabinet⁴⁷ which had grown more influential during Jackson's purge of his advisors after the Eaton Affair of 1831, which drew scandal upon the White House because of the questionable actions of Margaret O'Neil –Eaton⁴⁸. There is little evidence of John C. Calhoun's actual participation in the snubbing of Mrs. Eaton, yet much is said about Floride Calhoun's involvement; John was very fond of his wife, so there may have been some support on his part, but most likely this snubbing, was done through the social circles that these elite women would have ran in, when they were in Washington and not at their own homes in their respective states. The Jackson and Calhoun standoff or disunion can more easily and less sensationally be attributed to their political competition and differences as well as the issue stemming from the first Seminole War and the question of Jackson's orders.

While Jackson and Calhoun went head to head in the nullification controversy it was truly Calhoun and some of his fellow South Carolinians against the protective tariffs and those who stood to gain the most out of the Tariffs. Calhoun Stepped down from office, only two years into the term. He latter accepted appointment to a vacant seat in

⁴⁵ Latner, *Republican Subversion*, 20-23.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 20.

⁴⁷ "Kitchen Cabinet is the term given to members of Jackson's inner circle of advisors and supporters who were not members of the traditional executive cabinet. Several were not in a government position so they carried little actual power within the government. The Kitchen Cabinet was coined by some of Jackson's adversaries, several of who had been members in his government cabinet.

⁴⁸ The Eaton Affair stems from the supposed inappropriate actions of Margaret O'Neil Timberlake-Eaton who had a miscarriage while her husband, a sailor had been at sea, for a period over nine months making it impossible to have fathered said child; the news, it is speculated, had an effect on that moved Timberlake to take his own life in grief. Margaret married John Eaton, Jackson's Secretary of war. Mrs. Eaton was snubbed by several wives of politicians, including Floride Colhoun Calhoun, Vice president Calhoun's wife. This incensed Jackson who felt very strongly on this based on the attacks of Jackson and his deceased wife Rachel morality [there is a question about the timing of Rachel's divorce from her first husband and her marriage to Andrew Jackson. Leading to some claims of Jackson living in sin. Jackson did not take well to attacks on his honor.

the senate. Calhoun continued to work in government in the way he saw best, but the tides of government were moving and Calhoun slowly became less of celebrity. Though he continued to be an advocate for the union and states'-rights.

Calhoun's legacy is that of both an inspired thinker and of a stubborn man unwilling to change with the times. As one of the last American Statesmen to have had a connection to the Revolutionary period he was, perhaps outdated. Yet when he has been called an anti-union Confederate, it is undeserved. We must not pass judgment on his advocacy for slavery as that coming from an evil man, for in the context of his time he was not that different from many other men of his generation, his views come from an earlier period when slavery was deemed important as either a necessary evil or, even as a good deed. Calhoun was wrong in his belief that slavery was too intricate to the agrarian south to lose. Calhoun was only there in the end of the Plantation tradition of America, not just the South, and the beginning of the abolition movement. Though the American system of manufacturing that was advocated by Calhoun helped build slavery as an institution in America. Margaret L. Coit describes Calhoun's upbringing and the rest of his life as it dealt with slavery; it is her belief that Calhoun was a good slave owner⁴⁹, in the context that he treated his slaves with respect, the way you would treat any farm animal⁵⁰. Yet it was not Calhoun who brought up the question of slavery as a point of debate, it was only in defense of larger questions, slavery was part of the argument not the main issue. Calhoun's dislike of Crawford developed partially from Crawford's view of slavery which Calhoun viewed as too extreme. His notoriety as a statesman and political philosopher made him an ideal target from the guns of those who claim that

⁴⁹ Margaret L. Coit, *John C. Calhoun: American Portrait*. In *John C. Calhoun: A Profile*, Edited by John L. Thomas (New York: Hill and Wang, 1968), 89-97

⁵⁰ Slaves were considered property in the same way as the beasts of burden on the farm.

slavery is evil and always was. While that statement can't be refuted, nor would I want to, it has only been in the last 160 years that this stance has become popular and widely accepted, yet still not by all.

Calhoun should be remembered for what he believed in both good and bad, no man is perfect. But Calhoun was always a unionist, and lamented that he was sure that the union would fall, he died over a decade before it would happen.

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