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President Arthur and the Independent Movements in the South in 1882

By VINCENT P. DE SANTIS

WITH THE FAILURE OF NEGRO SUFFRAGE, REPUBLICAN hopes of gaining permanent success in the South were considerably dimmed, and the Republican high command, after Reconstruction, resorted to new tactics to “crack” the Democratic South.¹ Rutherford B. Hayes worked to spread Republicanism among southern whites by conciliating them with the plums of patronage. James A. Garfield partially supported the Readjuster movement in Virginia in the hope of capturing control of one southern state. Chester A. Arthur charted a course in the South as startling as that which Hayes had launched when he removed the troops in 1877.

In the wake of William Mahone’s success in 1879 and 1881, in which he defeated the regular Democratic party in Virginia with his Readjuster organization, other disgruntled Democrats in the South hastened to attempt to duplicate his victory in their states. While Arthur was President an Independent Democratic movement sprang up in nearly every southern state. Not since 1865 had Republicans been so optimistic about splitting the white vote in the South, thereby permitting their party to regain the advantage it had enjoyed during the early years of Reconstruction. Surrounded by a group of advisers, chief of whom was William E. Chandler, Republican leader from New Hampshire, urging full recognition and support of the Independents, Arthur took the

¹ See Vincent P. De Santis, “Republican Efforts to ‘Crack’ the Democratic South,” in *Review of Politics* (Notre Dame, Ind., 1939-), XIV (1952), 244-64.

plunge and embraced these politicians as the new leaders of the Republican party in the South.

Upon taking office Arthur's immediate concern in the South was Mahone. Hayes, and to a lesser extent Garfield, had not assisted the Virginia leader owing to a fear of countenancing repudiation. The Mahone forces sought a readjustment of the state debt in Virginia and called themselves Readjusters. Their opponents, the Funders, called Mahone's plan outright repudiation of the state debt and labeled the new element Repudiators. Fearful of losing the support of the conservative financial interests of the Northeast, Hayes, and Garfield at first, had repelled Mahone. Yet on August 10, 1881, while Garfield hovered between life and death, the Virginia Republican state convention approved the Readjuster state ticket for the November election and entered into a formal alliance with Mahone. Leading northern Republican newspapers sanctioned this merger,² which also won the praise of ex-President Ulysses S. Grant, who told the Virginia Republican chairman, "I regard the success of the Readjusters as greatly to be desired."³

Arthur looked upon Mahone's venture as a departure from sectional politics and therefore worthy of aid and encouragement. Although he was strictly a party man, the President committed himself wholly and irrevocably to the policy of granting full recognition and wide assistance to the Readjusters. While Garfield had attempted to divide the spoils between Mahone and the Republicans, Arthur worked solely with the former Confederate in the hope that "anti-Bourbons" would win control of a southern state. Mahone gratefully acknowledged Arthur's help. Following his victory in 1881, the Readjuster expressed complete satisfaction with the lift he had received from the administration. In fact, Mahone pointed out, so promptly had Arthur lent a hand, that "straightout" Republicans in Virginia were surprised and many of their leaders ultimately came over to the Readjuster side.⁴

In spite of the apparent success of Arthur's policy of throwing full support to Mahone, there were rumblings of dissatisfaction

² *New York Times*, August 11, 1881; *New York Tribune*, August 11, 1881; *Philadelphia Press*, August 12, 1881; *Washington National Republican*, August 11, 12, 1881.

³ Grant to James D. Brady, October 4, 1881, quoted in *Washington National Republican*, October 17, 1881.

⁴ *Ibid.*, November 25, 1881.

within the Republican party in the North. Withdrawing its earlier endorsement of the Republican-Mahone coalition, the *New York Tribune* in the fall of 1881 questioned the justification of the price that the party had promised to pay for Mahone's co-operation. It called upon Republicans in the Senate to consider whether they were purchasing Mahone or selling out to him. Commenting on the nomination of two of Mahone's associates, Harrison H. Riddleberger and George C. Gorham,⁵ by the Senate Republican caucus for sergeant at arms and secretary of the Senate respectively, the *Tribune* declared:

But they say these two men must be carried because the balance of power, Senator Mahone of Virginia, demands it. Is it he who ties these heavy deadweights to the party? Is this indeed so? And is this Mr. Mahone's price for—for—what? We really do not know. The largeness of the price is plain, but we fail to see any adequate consideration. There has been some talk about bargain and sale in this matter, but all as though the Republicans were buying Mahone. Isn't there some mistake about it? Isn't Mahone buying the party? And isn't he getting it very cheap? On the whole would it not be well, before any further steps are taken in this transaction, for Republicans to consider all the circumstances and decide whether this is a purchase or a sale?⁶

The *Tribune's* attack, instead of separating Arthur and Mahone, only served to draw the two closer together. In the Senate Republican leaders indignantly denied the charge of a bargain with Mahone,⁷ while the President displayed even greater reluctance to cut loose from the Readjuster, despite the opportunity which presented itself in the election of a senator from Virginia to join Mahone. Democrats circulated the story that Arthur did not desire another Readjuster, Riddleberger, in the Senate. Through Gorham, editor of the *Washington National Republican*, Arthur erased all doubts, if there were any, of his readiness to work with the Readjusters. In an open letter to Mahone, Gorham

⁵ The Democrats had successfully blocked the election of George C. Gorham and Harrison H. Riddleberger in the special session of the Senate in the Forty-Seventh Congress by preventing a vote. See *Cong. Record*, 47 Cong., Special Session of the Senate, 41-454.

⁶ *New York Tribune*, October 19, 1881.

⁷ *Washington National Republican*, October 21, 1881. Republican Senate leaders included Eugene Hale and William P. Frye of Maine, George F. Hoar of Massachusetts, Justin Morrill of Vermont, Joseph R. Hawley of Connecticut, John Sherman of Ohio, and John Logan of Illinois.

declared: "The President expressed no desire as to the political antecedents of the man who should be elected, nor did he say one word, which correctly stated, would in the slightest degree embarrass you or call in question your course. On the contrary," added Gorham, "he desires it understood that he has no views which in any manner conflict with the friendly sentiments hitherto expressed to you by him."⁸

Arthur had supported Mahone because the President hoped to break up the Democratic South. Many Republican leaders in the South believed that the best way to accomplish this in their states was as Harrison Reed, former carpetbagger governor of Florida, suggested: to place control of the federal patronage in his hands.⁹ Others, mainly native whites, thought that Arthur should build a lily-white party in the South and thus abandon the Negro, for as a newspaperman from Louisiana wrote, "Negro leaders are worthless, their own people will not follow them."¹⁰

Arthur rejected both proposals. As he saw it, the one chance for rejuvenating the Republican party in the South lay in a split within Democratic ranks. The President and his chief adviser on southern affairs, Chandler, Secretary of the Navy, looked upon the Readjuster victory as the first step in the direction of dividing the white vote in the South. They maintained this opinion in the face of opposition from Republican financial interests in the North who had labeled the Readjusters as repudiators. Chandler even went so far as to censure James G. Blaine for expressing in public his disapproval of the coalition between Republicans and Mahone. "To join the repudiation wing of the Virginia Democracy," was, in Blaine's opinion, "the last degree of folly for the Republicans."¹¹

Blaine's remarks greatly disturbed the administration, and Chandler set out to do some conversion work. In a long letter to the "Plumed Knight," Chandler stressed the necessity of saving the House for the Republicans in 1882 through co-operation with southern Independents. The party needed twenty congressmen from the South to secure control of the House, and, according to Chandler, they could only be had by fostering the "independent

⁸ Gorham to William Mahone, December 8, 1881, *ibid.*, December 8, 1881.

⁹ Harrison Reed to William E. Chandler, April 16, 1882, in William E. Chandler Papers (Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress).

¹⁰ James E. Richardson to Chandler, August 1, September 24, 1882, *ibid.*

¹¹ Washington *National Republican*, September 29, 1882. Blaine made this statement in an interview in Chicago.

democratic coalition movements in the southern states.” The real question “cannot be evaded by cavilling about Mahone and the readjustment of the Virginia debt . . . nor about [James Ronald] Chalmers and his Fort Pillow record,” maintained Chandler, for they were only incidents of a great popular revolt in the South against the regular Democratic party.¹²

Chandler argued that every Independent Democratic or coalition candidate in the South had pledged himself in favor of a free ballot and an honest count and the obliteration of race distinction, while regular Democratic aspirants for office had sworn to resist these reforms. “Shall we fail to follow our principles when they are so vital?” he asked Blaine. “Our straight republican, carpet-bag, negro governments, whether fairly or unfairly, have been destroyed and cannot be revived. Without these coalitions or support of independents,” continued Chandler, “we cannot carry Southern votes enough to save the House from Bourbon democratic control, and carry the next presidential fight. Beyond that, the safety of the colored race while exercising the suffrage depends upon the new departure.”¹³

The New Hampshire Stalwart believed that the country was misinterpreting Blaine’s interview concerning Mahone. “You want such . . . men as Mahone . . . Wm. E. Cameron, Riddleberger . . . J. M. Leach, and dozens of others . . . to be successful as much as I do,” he told Blaine. “Do not let yourself be misunderstood, do not shirk of yourself or your prejudices; do not be narrow minded, or hesitating but place yourself unmistakably on the side of progress in the South,” Chandler urged Blaine. “You do not think that we can accomplish anything there without more white votes?” inquired Chandler. “How are we to get them if not by the practical movements now in progress?”¹⁴

When Blaine refused to relent in his opposition to Mahone, Arthur and Chandler accused him of making an alliance with the “Bourbons” in Virginia against Mahone and the administration.¹⁵ Then other northern Republicans joined forces with Blaine. Whitelaw Reid publicly voiced skepticism of the party’s strategy to garner electoral votes through a coalition with Mahone. He

¹² Chandler to Blaine, October 2, 1882, in Chandler Papers.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ Washington *National Republican*, June 4, 1883.

believed that the Republicans must look for their votes in the North. "At the utmost a few electoral votes at the South might be gained," observed Reid, if Mahone openly espoused the cause of Republican candidates, "but it would be at the risk of losing many more in the North."¹⁶ Reid's paper, the *New York Tribune*, said Arthur's policy lacked "moral strength" and was "inherently and inevitably bad."¹⁷

Grumbings were also heard from other Republican quarters. George William Curtis, editor of *Harper's Weekly*, charged that the administration's coddling of the Independent movements had not bettered the lot of the Negro in the South, nor had it enabled Virginia to become a Republican state.¹⁸

These statements troubled the administration. Chandler told Reid that on the basis of his proposition the next Republican President could not hope to have a Republican House. "We must have at least twenty Southern Representatives and we cannot elect them if we formally surrender everything else. Do you not see this?"¹⁹ The *Washington National Republican*, official organ of Arthur's administration, met Curtis' accusation by pointing out that the Negro in Virginia was better off than in any other state in the Union. The *Republican* maintained that the Readjusters treated the Negro like a man; they educated him in fifteen hundred schools; they had secured a free ballot box and had abolished the whipping post. As for Virginia becoming Republican in the same sense as "Mr. Curtis and his dough-faces are Republicans," countered Chandler's paper, "God grant that Virginia may never become Republican."²⁰

Earlier the *National Republican* had assumed the responsibility of stating Arthur's policy in the South to dispel any confusion in the minds of Republicans concerned about it. According to this account, the President warmly and unreservedly encouraged the co-operation of southern Republicans with Independent Democrats. He believed that wherever in the South there were native whites of Democratic and Confederate antecedents making a political departure involving a genuine acceptance of all Con-

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, December 17, 1883.

¹⁷ *New York Tribune*, October 26, 1882.

¹⁸ *Washington National Republican*, May 26, 1883.

¹⁹ Chandler to Whitelaw Reid, December 17, 1883, in Chandler Papers.

²⁰ *Washington National Republican*, May 26, 1883.

stitutional amendments, they should have the co-operation of the Republicans in their state, forged by an alliance having the blessing of the national Republican party.²¹

With few exceptions Arthur carried out the policy outlined by the *National Republican* and by Chandler's letter to Blaine. In general Arthur strove to unite Republicans, Readjusters, Greenbackers, Independents, and "Liberals" under the banner of his administration for the overthrow of the Democracy and for the political and material regeneration of the New South. In pursuing this goal Arthur was at variance with orthodox Republicanism which on occasions placed him in conflict with certain elements of the party.

For example, he courted the favor of economic radicals like Mahone in Virginia, G. W. "Wash" Jones of Texas, Hendrix McLane of South Carolina, James C. Streffield of Alabama, and Rufus K. Garland of Arkansas. These men had been Democrats, but economic distress and resentment over conservative control of their party had led them to become Independents. There was a radical flavor to their economic policies, for they espoused the financial program of the Greenbackers and the coinage of silver dollars. They attacked the vested interests in general and the national banks in particular. Indirectly they championed the cause of the Negro by calling for free elections, free opinion, free speech, an honest count, and an enforcement of federal laws in the South.

Fearful of losing the support of the northeastern business community, Hayes had resisted the temptation to utilize the rise of the agrarian and economic radicals in the South, although an enticing opportunity had confronted him in 1878. Garfield had partially yielded to the attraction of capitalizing on the Readjuster victory in Virginia, because it represented a test case of a Republican administration propping up an independent movement in the South. With Arthur it was a matter of accepting a chance that held out the hope of recovering the South for the Republican party. Mahone's success in 1879 and 1881 had detached a southern state from the Democratic column. Expecting to extend this result throughout the South, Arthur gathered the Independents around him as the nucleus of a new southern Re-

²¹ *Ibid.*, March 17, 1883.

publican party. He not only assisted the economic radicals, but he threw his full support behind ex-Confederates like James R. Chalmers of Mississippi and James B. Longstreet of Georgia. This particular part of Arthur's policy dismayed and angered the Negroes who had expected more fruitful days under him.²²

Strangely enough, many northern Radicals who had worked to enfranchise the Negro and who had charged Hayes with forsaking the freedmen fell in line with Arthur's plan to aid the Independents. Chandler, George Boutwell, Grant, and others who had firmly stood up for the rights of the Negro believed that the time had come when native whites, Republicans or Democrats, should lead the Republican party in the South. This was a strange aftermath to the rough road that Hayes had to travel when he suggested the same idea in 1877.

Republicans in the South looked to Arthur to use the tactics of a spoilsman and Stalwart in destroying Democratic majorities in their states. A native white Republican from North Carolina expressed an opinion held by white and colored Republicans alike in the South, that the advent of Arthur had given the "Ohio idea" in politics its death blow.²³ This Republican was sure that the Arthur administration would be one in which Democrats would know they had lost in 1880, and which could find enough honest and competent Republicans to fill the offices in the South.²⁴

This prediction seemed fulfilled when Arthur appointed Chandler Secretary of the Navy in 1882. Chandler, who had been the main critic of Hayes's policy, was on friendly terms with many of the old southern Republican leaders. They considered the New England Stalwart as their representative in the cabinet and their main refuge in the administration. Chandler, they believed, had a particular interest in their affairs, for as a native white leader in South Carolina told him, "You . . . are credited with a special interest in Southern Republicanism."²⁵

²² See Vincent P. De Santis, "Negro Dissatisfaction with Republican Policy in the South, 1882-1884," in *Journal of Negro History* (Washington, 1916-), XXXVI (1951), 148-59.

²³ A reference to the southern policy of Hayes and to the sentiments held by some northern Republican leaders that all the vices were found in southern Republicans.

²⁴ *Wilmington (N.C.) Post*, November 20, 1881.

²⁵ E. M. Brayton, Collector of Internal Revenue, Columbia, S. C., to Chandler, August 14, 1883, in Chandler Papers.

The President had assigned Chandler two specific tasks. One was to conduct the 1882 congressional elections in the South. Letters from Republican leaders in this section clearly reveal that Chandler had assumed such a responsibility.²⁶ Chandler was also given the job of rounding up southern delegates for Arthur at the 1884 national convention. The Washington correspondent of the *New York Age* reported that it was an open secret that Arthur had taken Chandler into the cabinet for this express purpose. According to this reporter, Chandler had full authority to barter away federal patronage and to use southern offices where they would do the most good in picking up delegates for the President.²⁷ To appreciate the departure that Arthur and Chandler took in their efforts to break up the Democratic South, the circumstances that gave rise to some of the Independent movements they supported must be examined in brief.

A successful Independent movement in 1882 occurred in Mississippi under the leadership of James R. Chalmers, an ex-Confederate general, whom the "bloody shirt" orators of the Republican party had always described as the villain of the "Fort Pillow Massacre." Chalmers had been elected for three successive terms to Congress on the regular Democratic ticket from the second district of Mississippi. In the 1880 election, John R. Lynch, Negro Republican leader from the same state, had successfully contested Chalmers' seat. Chalmers published a long manifesto against L. Q. C. Lamar, Mississippi Democratic leader, in which he accused Lamar of departing from the true Democratic faith and of throwing him overboard as a "Jonah to the Republican whale," and charging his defeat by Lynch to Lamar's connivance with the Negroes. Chalmers then left the Democratic party and announced his candidacy in 1882 on an Independent ticket that attacked the national banks, advocated the coinage of silver dollars, and called for a free ballot and a fair count.²⁸ White Republicans in the state joined Chalmers and persuaded Chandler to try to make Chalmers the Mahone of Mississippi.

The state Republican convention of 1882 endorsed Chalmers'

²⁶ For example, see N. Martin, United States Surveyor General of Florida, to Chandler, September 26, 1882; A. W. S. Smith, member of the Texas Republican state executive committee, to Chandler, September 11, 1882, *ibid.*

²⁷ *New York Age*, September 1, 1883; L. B. Richardson, *William E. Chandler, Republican* (New York, 1940), 335, 347-49.

²⁸ *Washington National Republican*, May 15, 1882.

candidacy,²⁹ but powerful northern Republican newspapers like the New York *Tribune* and New York *Times* were hostile to him. Arthur quickly supported Chalmers and took to task those Republicans who looked with disfavor upon the ex-Confederate, maintaining that he was not an enemy of the Republican party.³⁰ In Mississippi Chalmers' candidacy brought into the open the feud between the white and colored factions of the Republican party. For years the Negro wing, under the leadership of Lynch, James Hill, and ex-Senator Blanche K. Bruce, had controlled the party in Mississippi. The white faction, led by George C. McKee, a "carpetbagger" and a former Union general, resented Negro domination and made an open fight for control of the party in 1882. Chalmers aided the white faction and there began a lively contest between it and the Negro wing for recognition and support from Arthur. White Republicans accused Lynch, Hill, and Bruce of reaching an agreement with state Democratic leaders whereby the Negro chieftains advised their Republican followers to vote Democratic in state and local elections in exchange for the support that Democratic senators gave in Washington to Negro claims for federal offices.³¹

In North Carolina an Independent movement in 1881-1882 came in the form of opposition to prohibition legislation. The Democratic legislature had passed a bill prohibiting the manufacture and sale of liquors in the state. Democratic leaders supported the measure and pressed North Carolina citizens to ratify it at a referendum in 1881. The Republican state committee fought the legislation, and with the aid of much anti-prohibition sentiment brought defeat to the proposal by more than 100,000 votes.³²

Because of the aroused hostility on the part of thousands of Democrats to the prohibition measure, there was much talk in North Carolina about "liberal" as opposed to regular Democrats. Democrats who had joined the Greenback party in 1880 were available, and a considerable number of them seceded from the regular party organization and formed an Independent move-

²⁹ *Ibid.*, August 29, 1882.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, September 4, 1882; Willie D. Halsell, "James R. Chalmers and Mahoneism in Mississippi," in *Journal of Southern History* (Baton Rouge, 1935-), X (1944), 37-58.

³¹ Willie D. Halsell (ed.), "Republican Factionalism in Mississippi, 1882-1884," in *Journal of Southern History*, VII (1941), 84-101.

³² *Wilmington (N.C.) Post*, August 28, 1881.

ment. Among the leaders of this new party were William Johnson of Mecklenburg, Charles Price of Rowan, Frank Wooten of New Hanover, Thomas Clingman of Buncombe, and J. M. Leach of Davidson. Their platforms called for equal rights for all men regardless of color. They were anti-prohibition, anti-monopoly, and they advocated local self-government and a national education law.³³

In the spring of 1882 the North Carolina Republican state committee endorsed the Independent movement, and that summer the Independent Democrats chose a state ticket to oppose the regular Democratic nominees. Both white and colored Republican state conventions endorsed the Independent candidates. In Washington there was approval of the coalition when Arthur labeled the Independent ticket as the Republican slate and urged every party member in North Carolina to vote for it.³⁴

In Texas Congressman "Wash" Jones, a Greenbacker, revolted against the regular Democratic organization in 1882 and hoped to repeat Mahone's performance. The Texan's platform advocated a variety of measures: free schools, free ballot boxes, free opinion, free speech, and free press; enforcement of federal laws in the South; and promotion of national patriotism and the material interests of Texas. Jones regarded northern enterprise as something to emulate, not to despise, and therefore encouraged immigration and investment in the South.³⁵ The Greenbacker wanted Republicans to merge with him, and even though Jones was an economic radical, Arthur advised the party to take this step and called upon Texas Republicans to vote for him.³⁶

Independents took to the field in South Carolina under the leadership of J. Hendrix McLane, who supported the financial program of the Greenbackers. The Republican state convention endorsed McLane, and Arthur quickly followed suit.³⁷ In Alabama the Independents led by James C. Streffield, a Greenbacker,

³³ *Ibid.*, February 12, 1882; Joseph G. de Roulhac Hamilton, *History of North Carolina* (6 vols., Chicago, 1919), III, 207-209.

³⁴ *Wilmington (N.C.) Post*, April 9, 23, June 16, 18, October 8, 1882; *Washington National Republican*, September 27, 1882.

³⁵ *Washington National Republican*, June 17, 1882.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ E. M. Brayton to Chandler, August 14, 1882; William N. Taft, Postmaster, Charleston, S.C., to Chandler, November 21, 1883; J. Hendrix McLane to Chandler, January 23, March 6, 1883, in Chandler Papers.

found a friend in Arthur who normally would have ignored them, but who in 1882 not only recognized but aided them.³⁸ In Arkansas Arthur urged Republicans to fuse with Rufus K. Garland, brother of a Democratic senator and Greenback leader in the state, who the President hoped would emerge as another Mahone.³⁹ In Georgia Arthur helped that faction of Republicanism known as the "syndicate," headed by General Longstreet, and ignored the regular party organization led by A. E. Buck, a "carpetbagger," and William Pledger, Negro editor of the *Athens Blade*.⁴⁰

Agitation over the state debt led to an Independent movement in Tennessee. Much of this debt had been incurred in support of railroad building before the Civil War. The debt increased during the war as unpaid interest accumulated, and it piled up at a greater pace during Reconstruction by the issuance of bonds for aid to the railroads. Because of the failure of the railroads to pay the interest on the bonds, the burden of meeting these payments fell upon the taxpayer and led to a demand that the debt be reduced or repudiated. This demand became the major issue in the campaigns of 1880 and 1882 and split the Democrats into hostile factions. The State-Credit group, supported by the Republicans, posed as the champion of the state's obligation to pay as much of the debt as should be agreed upon by voluntary compact with the creditors. The Low Tax Democrats appeared as repudiators. In 1880 the coalition between the State-Credit Democrats and Republicans had gained control of the state legislature. After aiding Mahone, Arthur and Chandler gave their support to this alliance in 1882, but in this year the combination was unsuccessful.⁴¹

Not much of an Independent movement developed in Louisiana in 1882. John E. Ellis, Democratic congressman from the

³⁸ George Turner to Chandler, May 25, 1882; J. W. Burke, Collector at Mobile, to Chandler, June 8, 1882, *ibid.*; Albert B. Moore, *History of Alabama and Her People* (University, Ala., 1934), 581-82; *Washington National Republican*, July 15, 1882.

³⁹ *Washington National Republican*, July 15, 1882.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, August 4, September 7, 1882; James Longstreet to Chandler, September 21, 1882; William N. Smythe to Chandler, June 10, 1882; J. E. Bryant, former Republican state chairman of Georgia, to Chandler, August 7, 1882, in Chandler Papers.

⁴¹ Philip M. Hamer (ed.), *Tennessee: A History, 1673-1932* (4 vols., New York, 1933), II, 676-92.

state, aspired to lead a movement and publicly said so, but he found little support. Most Republican leaders in the state were hostile to the idea, for they feared that an Independent party would imperil their own political fortunes.⁴² Arthur ignored Ellis and threw his weight behind William Pitt Kellogg, “carpetbagger” ex-governor and senator, as Chandler assured Kellogg of aid against and protection from opposing factions.⁴³ Recognition of Kellogg frightened away potential Independent Democratic supporters, a source of strength which Arthur had striven to cultivate elsewhere in the South. In an inconsistent manner that contradicted his entire approach to the problem of breaking up the Democratic South, Arthur turned his back on the would-be Independent and chose to favor one of the most unsavory Republican figures in the region. Such action decreased rather than increased Republican chances of detaching southern states from Democratic control.

Florida was another exception where Arthur did not assist the Independent movement. Here the Independents had succeeded in electing many members to the legislature, mainly from Democratic counties. In 1882 the Independents nominated Daniel L. McKinnon for Congress from the first district. J. Willis Menard, Negro editor of the *Key West News* and former congressman from Louisiana, told Chandler that all Negro leaders in the state favored the Independent movement, and only two white leaders, N. Martin, surveyor general of the state, and ex-Governor M. L. Stearns, opposed it. McKinnon’s opponent, E. F. Skinner, was a Republican. Menard asked Chandler to support McKinnon, for, as he said, “The men who aided you in securing this State for Hayes in 1876 are supporting Mr. McKinnon now, and I hope you will also give him your support.” Skinner also sought the aid of Chandler, by writing to D. B. Henderson, secretary of the Republican congressional committee, who in turn asked the cabinet officer to support Skinner. The administration finally decided to assist Skinner, for Henderson advised Republicans in the first congressional district of Florida to take this step.⁴⁴

⁴² Washington *National Republican*, January 5, 1882; J. R. G. Pitkin to Chandler, June 8, 1882; James E. Richardson to Chandler, August 1, 1882, in Chandler Papers.

⁴³ William Pitt Kellogg to Chandler, October 4, 1882, *ibid.*

⁴⁴ J. Willis Menard to Chandler, September 13, October 10, November 27,

Because Arthur did support the Independent movements in the South so extensively, Democrats asked the question, "why does not the republican party unfurl its own banner in the South?" The Washington *National Republican* answered this by pointing out that the Republican party had discovered its weakness in the South and thus was forming alliances with Independent Democrats in an effort to overthrow the "Bourbons."⁴⁵ The Republican National Committee had endorsed Arthur's policy at an early date. At an informal meeting of this body in Washington in April, 1882, those present expressed themselves earnestly in favor of an alliance of southern Republicans with Independents fighting the "Bourbons."⁴⁶

Although Arthur openly and energetically aided the southern Independent movements, he opposed all efforts to diminish the size of Republican organizations there, especially in the matter of the number of delegates for national conventions. Some members of the Republican National Committee in 1883 made efforts to push through a new plan of representation in the national convention for 1884 that would have reduced in size the southern delegations. Arthur was a candidate for nomination in 1884, and Chandler was working to control a majority, if not all, of the delegates from the South. Consequently, both fought successfully any attempt to cut back the number of southern delegates.⁴⁷

Arthur's recognition of the Independents led to the second major abandonment of the Negro by the Republican party since it had enfranchised him. The first occurred when Hayes removed the troops in 1877. At that time Chandler had openly scored Hayes for forsaking the Negro. Now his record left him open to the same charge of which he had accused Hayes. The abandonment of the Negro by Arthur and Chandler resulted from their support of ex-Confederates who appeared as Independents. Chandler, who had firmly stood up for the rights of the Negro during Hayes's administration, had experienced a drastic change of heart by 1882. On the earlier occasion he had maintained that to pacify the white South was to degrade the Negro; that to re-

1882; D. B. Henderson to Chandler, October 3, 1882; N. Martin to D. B. Henderson, September 23, 1882, *ibid.*

⁴⁵ Washington *National Republican*, October 24, 1883.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, April 17, 1882.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, December 13, 14, 1883; New York *Tribune*, December 7, 11, 1883, January 18, 1884.

move the troops was to withdraw from the freedman his constitutionally guaranteed voting rights and to destroy the Republican policy of Reconstruction, which in turn would lead to intimidation, violence, and absence of legal protection. In 1877 Chandler believed that since the government had enfranchised the Negro, it must enforce the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments even if all its powers were required in the process. Until full political equality had been given to the Negro, Chandler was willing to go all the way in support of the southern Republican party, regardless of its character. It was for this reason that southern Republicans had regarded him as their champion.

By 1882 Chandler had changed his earlier view about the Republican party and the Negro. He now believed no hope existed for rejuvenating the southern Republican party through its own efforts. The one opportunity lay in a split within Democratic ranks, and Mahone's success in Virginia had led Chandler to conclude that it might be possible to duplicate the victory of the Readjuster throughout the South. It was necessary, however, to subordinate the Negro in order to exploit the Democratic cleavage. The force of circumstances that compelled Arthur and Chandler to abandon the Negro was the need for more Republican congressmen in 1882. Political reform movements of the early eighties in Ohio, New York, and Pennsylvania threatened to split the Republican party in those states and permit the Democrats to increase their representation in Congress. Arthur pinned his hope on winning a majority in the House in 1882 by electing Independents from the South who would co-operate with the administration as Mahone was doing.

A vivid example of Arthur's and Chandler's abandonment of the Negro occurred in Georgia. In this state William Pledger, a Negro newspaperman, was Republican state chairman. Arthur and Chandler continually ignored Pledger's recommendations which had the backing of James Deveaux, Negro Republican national committeeman from the same state. Finally, the administration informed Pledger that he could have a position for himself if he resigned the chairmanship and recognized Emory Speer, an Independent, as head of the party. Pledger resigned and Arthur appointed him surveyor of customs at Atlanta.⁴⁸

⁴⁸ *New York Age*, September 6, 1886; *New Orleans Louisianian*, April 1, 1882; *Huntsville (Ala.) Gazette*, April 1, 1882.

The congressional elections of 1882 provided an opportunity for measuring the success of Arthur's appeal to discontented whites. Measured in terms of increasing the number of representatives from the South over that of 1880 who would co-operate with his administration, the congressional elections of 1882 vindicated Arthur's policy. While only eight Republicans, one short of the 1880 total, were returned to the House, eight Independents were elected, an increase of four over the number sent in 1880. Six of the Independents were Readjusters from Virginia, but since Mahone had worked with the Republicans in the Senate, the President could expect the support of the Readjusters in the House. The other two Independents were Chalmers of Mississippi and Tyre York of North Carolina.⁴⁹

Although Arthur had abandoned the Negro in the South, he had hoped to maintain and possibly increase the Republican vote among the freedmen while adding to the Republican vote among southern whites. Only in this manner could the Democratic South be broken. He had appealed mainly to economic radicals in the South, whereas Hayes had leaned toward southern conservatives, but both had shifted their appeals from Negroes to southern whites. Generally, Hayes's tactics had caused the Republican vote to fall off in the Negro-dominated areas while increasing it slightly in the white counties.

Compared with the results of the congressional elections of 1878 and 1880, there were fewer black belt counties that cast Republican majorities in 1882. But in the latter election Arthur had supported the Readjusters and Independents, and the black belt counties that gave majorities to these political elements when added to those in the Republican column represent a greater voting strength for Arthur than for Hayes in these areas. Yet the Republican-Readjuster-Independent strength in the black belts for 1882 was far short of the Republican strength in those counties in 1876. The most distressing result of 1882 from an orthodox Republican point of view was the great falling off of Republican votes in the black belts. Out of 217 counties⁵⁰ with

⁴⁹ *Tribune Almanac* (New York, 1838-), 1881, pp. 37-38; *ibid.*, 1883, pp. 35-36.

⁵⁰ The figure 217 instead of 294 is used because Georgia with 63 counties and Texas with 14 counties are not included since results for the congressional elections in these states for 1880 and 1882 have not yet been made available to the author.

at least 50 per cent Negro population, 39 cast Republican majorities in 1882 while 76 had returned Republican majorities in 1880. The most noticeable losses of Republican counties occurred in North Carolina and Virginia, where the Independents and Readjusters made heavy inroads. In 1880, 17 out of 22 black belt counties in North Carolina gave Republican majorities. In 1882 not a single black belt area in this state was in the Republican column, but 19 of these counties had cast majorities for the Independent ticket which Arthur had blessed as the official Republican ticket in the state. In Virginia in 1880, 29 of the 43 black belt counties turned in Republican majorities. In 1882 none of the black belt counties in Virginia cast Republican majorities, but 33 of them had given majorities to the Readjusters whom Arthur had supported and who were co-operating with him.⁵¹

In the white counties the Republican strength in 1882, compared with that of 1880, fell off slightly, but this loss was compensated for, as in the case of the black belt areas, by victories scored by the Independents and Readjusters. Out of 49 counties⁵² with less than 5 per cent Negro population, 9 gave Republican majorities in 1882 while 10 had cast Republican majorities in the congressional elections of 1880. However, one must add to these nine Republican counties in 1882 two Independent counties from North Carolina and three Readjuster counties from Virginia.⁵³

Thus, Arthur, aware of the cleavages within Democratic ranks in the South, had attempted to win the dissatisfied over to Republicanism. Primarily he sought the assistance of economic radicals in the South who disagreed with the orthodox economic tenets of Republicanism. His goal was that of replacing Democratic with Republican majorities in the southern states. To reach this objective it became necessary to hold the Negro vote in line and to increase greatly southern white support for the Republican party. Arthur shifted Republican appeals in the South from Negroes to whites in an effort to break down the fear of Negro supremacy as a manifestation of Republicanism. In carrying out his program, Arthur neglected the Negro voter in the hope that

⁵¹ *American Almanac* (New York, 1878-1889), 1883, pp. 198-264.

⁵² The figure 49 instead of 155 is used because Georgia with 8 counties and Texas with 98 counties are not included since results for the congressional elections in these states for 1880 and 1882 have not yet been made available to the author.

⁵³ *American Almanac*, 1883, pp. 198-264.

this strategy would swell Republican ranks with southern whites. At the same time that Arthur was inattentive to the freedmen, he hoped that Negroes would continue to vote Republican. But the outcome was far from encouraging. The harvest of Arthur's endeavors was small. True, his policy did augment administration strength in Congress from the South in 1882, but only through a Republican-Independent-Readjuster coalition at the expense of orthodox Republicanism.