

Florida Historical Quarterly

Volume 12
Number 2 *Florida Historical Quarterly*, Vol 12,
Issue 2

Article 3

1933

The Secession Movement in Florida, 1850-1861, Part II

Dorothy Dodd



Part of the [American Studies Commons](#), and the [United States History Commons](#)

Find similar works at: <https://stars.library.ucf.edu/fhq>

University of Central Florida Libraries <http://library.ucf.edu>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by STARS. It has been accepted for inclusion in Florida Historical Quarterly by an authorized editor of STARS. For more information, please contact STARS@ucf.edu.

Recommended Citation

Dodd, Dorothy (1933) "The Secession Movement in Florida, 1850-1861, Part II," *Florida Historical Quarterly*. Vol. 12: No. 2, Article 3.

Available at: <https://stars.library.ucf.edu/fhq/vol12/iss2/3>

THE SECESSION MOVEMENT IN
FLORIDA, 1850-1861

By DOROTHY DODD

PART II

FROM the very inception of the Republican party Florida radicals had watched its progress with alarm. In his message to the legislature, November 14, 1854, Governor Broome had recounted the grievances of the South, not the least of which was the existence in non-slaveholding states of "fanatical organizations" that had elected a House of Representatives "purely and wickedly sectional in its character" on a platform of restoration of the Missouri Compromise line, repeal of the Fugitive Slave act, and admission of no more slave states into the Union. "In view of all this," he had said, "the South is calm and unmoved. She is prepared to abide by the Union, made by the Constitution, with equal rights under it. Beyond this, she will be forced to act upon the sentiment, 'A union of the South for the protection of the South.'"⁵⁴ The possibility of Fremont's election in 1856 had been the occasion for threats of secession. Broome had seen in his defeat only a respite from Republican ascendancy. The South "should let fanaticism know that she has made her last submission to unconstitutional exactions," he had told the legislature in his message of November 24. "Her watchword should be read of all men, 'Equality in the Union, or independence out of it.'"⁵⁵ And now, in his message of November 22, 1858, Governor Perry, in view of "the

⁵⁴ Florida House *Journal*, 1854, 29-30.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 1856, 36.

largely increasing strength and influence of the abolition element," recommended a thorough reorganization of the state militia. "He would be a false sentinel," Perry said, "who, under the present aspect of affairs, would cry peace."⁵⁶ Perry repeated this recommendation the next year, and excitement incident to the John Brown raid secured passage of a measure such as he desired.

Indeed, the John Brown episode and publication of Helper's *Impeding Crisis of the South* with the sanction of northern congressmen gave new force to enunciation of political doctrines that had been common enough during the last ten years. Governor Perry had also recommended in his 1859 message that Florida declare herself unmistakably in favor of withdrawal from the Union in the contingency of Republican success in the approaching presidential election.⁵⁷ Acting upon this advice, the legislature adopted resolutions authorizing the governor, in the event of the election of a Republican president, to cooperate with any or all of the slaveholding states for the maintenance of their rights, and to convene the legislature in extraordinary session, should the necessity occur.⁵⁸ Opposition to these resolutions was so weak as to have been negligible.

During the spring of 1860 reorganization of the militia vied with politics for space in Florida papers. Volunteer companies were organized, young ladies presented them with flags sewed by their own fair hands, and elections of militia officers were held in every community. At the same time county meetings passed resolutions condemning, explicitly or implicitly, Stephen A. Douglas and his squatter

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 1858, 27.

⁵⁷ Florida Senate *Journal*, 1859, 35-36.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 115.

sovereignty "heresy." There is reason to believe that Douglas had been the choice of the state until his Freeport debate with Lincoln, but now, of the entire Florida press, only the Jacksonville *Republican* favored his nomination.⁵⁹ The Democratic convention which met in Tallahassee, April 9, to appoint delegates to the Charleston convention adopted resolutions condemning the Douglas doctrine of slavery in the territories, but expressed no preference for candidates.⁶⁰ When the Florida delegation withdrew from the convention, the action met with general approbation at home. Indeed, some radicals hailed the split in the party as the signal for immediate secession. A Democratic meeting in Nassau county, presided over by former Governor Broome, unanimously called upon the state convention to send delegates to the Richmond convention, "unless indeed it should be deemed advisable for the State of Florida, immediately to dissolve her connection with the present confederacy, without waiting for the action of her sister States of the South."⁶¹ And the editor of the Fernandina *East Floridian*, seeing dismemberment of the Union as only a matter of time, believed that "the South is as well prepared for that grave issue now,⁶² as she will be one or ten years hence." One fire-eater advertised for recruits for a cavalry company whose services would be offered to the first southern state to secede from "a Union which exists only in name," while the Sumter county grand jury declared in its presentment that the questions of social progress which underlay the political strife between North and South would have

⁵⁹ Fernandina *East Floridian*, Feb. 16, 1860.

⁶⁰ Tallahassee *Floridian*, April 14, 1860. Delegates to the convention were T. J. Eppes, B. F. Wardlaw, John Milton, C. E. Dyke, James B. Owens and G. L. Bowne,

⁶¹ Fernandina *East Floridian*, May 10, 1860.

⁶² May 10, 1860.

to be solved by war, for "where logic is powerless, the dominion of lead begins."⁶³

Only one or two persons publicly expressed disapproval of the action at Charleston. E. C. Cabell wrote from St. Louis, Missouri, whither he and his family had removed early in 1860, that the Florida delegates were wrong in seceding and that others should be appointed to represent Florida in the Baltimore convention. He declared that disruption of the Democratic party was mainly the work of politicians desiring to promote their own ends, and that if the break were persisted in it would certainly defeat the Democratic nominee and insure election of the Black Republican candidate.⁶⁴ According to his son, C. W. Yulee, David L. Yulee also was opposed to withdrawal of southern delegations from the convention. The Florida senator had long been a friend, personally and politically, of Douglas, and had come to feel that the West would never join with the East in aggressive abolition legislation.⁶⁵ He publicly advised against sending a delegation to the Richmond convention because a purely Southern party convention would only weaken the South, and against sending one to Baltimore because, having once left the convention, Florida delegates could not with dignity return. He would, however, support the nominee of the Baltimore convention, if nominated by a two-thirds vote, because he did not think it advisable to dissolve the Democratic party.⁶⁶ Yulee seems to have supported Douglas until after the

⁶³ Ibid., May 17, 1860.

⁶⁴ Cabell to Joseph Clisby, May 18, 1860. Tallahassee *Floridian*, June 9, 1860. Cabell seems to have become a Democrat, for he supported Douglas in Missouri.

⁶⁵ C. Wickliffe Yulee, "Senator Yulee," in *Florida Historical Society Quarterly*, II, No. 1, 38.

⁶⁶ Yulee to C. E. Dyke, May 26, 1860. Tallahassee *Floridian*, June 9, 1860.

latter's Norfolk speech in which he denied the right of secession. The *Floridian* then supported Breckinridge as the only candidate who declared his recognition of that right.⁶⁷

In spite of Yulee's protest, the Democratic state convention, which met in Quincy, June 4, took the radical position and appointed delegates to the Richmond convention. John Milton, of Jackson county, was nominated for governor and R. B. Hilton, of Leon county, for congressman. Milton, a member of the seceding Charleston, delegation, had long been a wheelhorse of the state's Democracy. He had campaigned vigorously as a Cass elector in 1848, when on every stump he had stoutly misinterpreted Cass' famous Nicholson letter, which contained the germ of the doctrine of popular sovereignty against which he was to revolt twelve years later. Hilton was a lawyer who for several years in the early fifties had been co-editor with Charles E. Dyke of the *Tallahassee Floridian* and who had opposed "submission" to the Compromise in 1850.

The threat to the Union implicit in the national political situation gave Florida old-line Whigs and Americans common ground with conservatives all over the country, and they rallied to support the Constitutional Union party. Several West Florida counties appointed delegates to the convention which met in Baltimore May 9, and twenty-two counties were represented in the state convention at Quincy, June 27, over which former Governor Thomas Brown presided. The Quincy convention adopted resolutions endorsing Bell and Everett and declaring that extreme measures should be resorted to only if the Supreme Court should uphold the constitutionality of any future anti-slavery legislation by

⁶⁷ Yulee to W. H. Babcock, Oct. 18, 1860. *National Intelligencer*, Nov. 6, 1860.

Congress. Colonel Edward Hopkins, of Duval county, was nominated for governor and B. F. Allen, of Leon county, editor of the Tallahassee *Sentinel*, for congressman.⁶⁸

Constitutional Union men declared that disunion was the issue of the campaign. Some Democratic papers sought to laugh off the charge of disunionism while others, less politic or more bold, declared that if Breckinridge were defeated by Lincoln they would advocate "with all the force God has given us the immediate formation of a separate confederacy of the cotton States."⁶⁹ Several prominent Democrats declared that they would not hold office under a Black Republican. Allen, knowing such a course could only lead to disruption of the Union, when asked if Florida men should accept office under Lincoln, replied that election of the Republican would not be sufficient cause to dissolve the Union.⁷⁰ The election gave Milton a majority of 1,742, four times that of Perry over his Know-Nothing opponent in 1856, while Hilton's majority was 1,550. This result was interpreted by Governor Perry as conclusive evidence of Florida's readiness to secede should Lincoln be elected. Governor William H. Gist, of South Carolina, approached him and other southern governors on the subject early in October with the design of arranging for concerted action on the part of the South. Perry replied that Florida would follow the lead of any single cotton state which might secede.⁷¹

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, July 11, 1860.

⁶⁹ St. Augustine *Examiner*, Oct. 13, 1860, quoted in N. Y. Herald, Oct. 24, 1860.

⁷⁰ Fernandina *East Floridian*, Sept. 20, 1860.

⁷¹ Both letters are in John G. Nicolay and John Hay, *Abraham Lincoln: a History*, II, 306, 313.

The presidential campaign called out a record poll in Florida; 2,000 more votes were cast in November than had been in October or in any previous election. Though the state press was overwhelmingly Democratic,⁷² Bell and Everett ran well. It was said that they received the votes of most of the Douglas Democrats.⁷³ Certainly Douglas polled only 376 votes. The Breckinridge vote was 8,543, as against 5,437 for Bell, or a majority of 1,369 over Bell and Douglas combined. Three-fourths of the extraordinary vote proved to have been cast for Breckinridge. It cannot be asserted, however, that every vote for Breckinridge was a vote for secession, though it seems safe to assume that a vote for Bell or Douglas was a vote for the Union under the Constitution. Of twenty-nine counties which gave Breckinridge a majority, six sent firm cooperationist delegations to the secession convention and three sent delegations which wavered between cooperation and immediate secession. The nineteenth senatorial district, containing four counties which together gave a large Breckinridge majority, also sent a cooperationist delegate to the convention.

Reaction to the election was immediate. Public meetings were held in county after county and resolutions were adopted declaring that the election of Lincoln ought not to be submitted to, calling on all federal officers to resign, and recommending that a

⁷² The Quincy *Republic* classified the press as follows: For Breckinridge and Lane : Pensacola Tribune, Marianna *Patriot*, Apalachicola *Times*, Quincy *Republic*, Tallahassee *Floridian*, Monticello *Family Friend*, Madison *Messenger*, Newnansville *Dispatch*, Ocala *Home Companion*, Lake City *Herald*, Jacksonville *Standard*, Cedar Keys *Telegraph*, Fernandina *East Floridian*, Tampa *Peninsular*, St. Augustine *Examiner*, Key West *Key of the Gulf*. For Bell and Everett: Pensacola *Gazette*, Milton *Courier*, Marianna *Enterprise*, Tallahassee *Sentinel*, Lake City *Press*. For Douglas and Johnson (doubtful) : Jacksonville *Mirror*. Fernandina *East Floridian*, July 26, 1860.

⁷³ *N. Y. Herald*, Nov. 5, 1860.

convention be called to take Florida out of the Union immediately. At a meeting held at Madison Court-house, November 12, recruits were sought for a company of minute men and eighty-three men signed up. The company was organized and officers elected before the meeting adjourned.⁷⁴ Citizens meeting at Waldo, November 8, had pledged themselves "boldly to march to the assistance of the first State that may secede" and, in token of their sincerity, had resolved on the next day to burn Abe Lincoln in effigy.⁷⁵ Governor Perry declared for immediate and separate state action, as did Governor-elect Milton and Congressman-elect Hilton. The Democratic press almost unanimously urged immediate secession and called upon Perry to convene the legislature, as authorized by the resolutions of the previous year. There was little to be gained by such action, however, for the legislature was to convene in regular session in the last week of November.

Awaiting the legislature, when it did convene, was a letter from Yulee in which he declared that, upon the secession of Florida at any time before the expiration of his term, March 4, 1861, he would "promptly and joyously" return home to support the state to which his allegiance was due.⁷⁶ Until the writing of this letter Yulee's action had been conservative. Only a month earlier he had written that it was "most desirable" to preserve the Union, even with much sacrifice; he hoped that this could be done by new guarantees of southern rights in the form of constitutional amendments.⁷⁷ During the period of his involuntary retirement from the Senate he had

⁷⁴ Tallahassee *Floridian*, Nov. 24, 1860.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ Fla. Senate *Journ.*, 1860, 16.

⁷⁷ Yulee to W. H. Babcock, Oct. 18, 1860. *National Intelligencer*, Nov. 6, 1860.

become interested in a plan for building a railroad across the Florida peninsula. This had been done by 1860 and Yulee was president of the road, which ran from Fernandina to Cedar Keys. C. W. Yulee suggests that his father's economic interests made him averse to secession.⁷⁸ To this it might be replied, as the *New York Times* charged, that the "railroad class" wanted secession for financial reasons, hoping thereby to slough off a heavy bonded indebtedness to northern capitalists.⁷⁹ Neither position is susceptible of proof with the evidence at hand. Yulee wrote after the war, under conditions not conducive to absolute candor, that he neither advised nor stimulated secession, though he approved the act as a social and political necessity after he had despaired of a solution through action of a constitutional convention.⁸⁰ This statement is confirmed by S. S. Cox, who says that "the Senators from Florida were never regarded, however they seemed, as favorable to the secession movement," and that neither Mallory nor Yulee "exerted any considerable influence at Washington in the direction of disunion during the winter of 1860-'61."⁸¹ Yet Yulee's letter, though perfectly consistent with his long-held belief in state sovereignty and his conception of a senator as the ambassador of a sovereign state, was tantamount at that time to an entirely gratuitous blessing on the secession movement.

The legislature did not need encouragement from Yulee. Governor Perry's entire message was de-

⁷⁸ *Fla. Hist. Soc. Quart.*, II, No. 1, 37.

⁷⁹ Cited in W. W. Davis, "The Civil War and Reconstruction in Florida," Columbia University *Studies in History, Economics and Public Law*, LIII, 66.

⁸⁰ Yulee's application for amnesty to Andrew Johnson, June 24, 1865. *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*. Series II, Vol. VIII, 669-70. (Cited hereafter as *O. R.*)

⁸¹ *S. S. Cox, Three Decades of Federal Legislation, 72.*

voted to an argument for immediate secession. To await some overt act of unconstitutional power on the part of the North, he said, was only to court the fate of Santo Domingo.⁸² A bill calling a constitutional convention to meet January 3 in Tallahassee was introduced simultaneously in both houses. It was rushed through without an adverse vote and signed by Governor Perry on November 30, the fourth day of the session. Sentiment in favor of secession was not so unanimous as this vote would indicate. Motions in both House and Senate to defer the convention until January 17 failed by votes of 31 to 16 and 12 to 7, respectively. The conservative vote in the Senate came from six members of the "Opposition" into which the old-line Whig element had degenerated and one Democrat, while two of the "Opposition" voted with the Democratic majority. In the House, seven Democrats voted with eight of the "Opposition" for delayed action, while one of the "Opposition" voted with the radicals. A motion in the Senate to table the bill failed without a record vote, while a resolution proposing popular ratification of the convention's action was defeated, 12 to 4. If the vote opposing precipitate action can be taken as a measure of anti-secession sentiment, conservatives constituted one-third of the legislature.

Before adjourning the legislature appropriated \$100,000 for the purchase of arms and munitions. Perry left at once for South Carolina to arrange for the purchase and to confer with secessionist leaders from all over the South who had gathered to witness the Palmetto State's exit from the Union.

Governor Perry had designated December 22 as the day for the election of members of the conven-

⁸² Fla. Senate *Journ.*, 1860, 10-14.

tion. In the short campaign that preceded the election the issue was immediate secession as against cooperation, which meant delay until other southern states, especially Alabama and Georgia, had acted. General R. K. Call, a personal friend of Jackson who had been thrown into the Whig camp by a quarrel with Van Buren, seems to have been the only person to have voiced disapproval of secession under any and all circumstances. In a pamphlet addressed to the people he stated that secession was nothing short of treason. The disunion movement in Florida was not the result of Lincoln's election, he said, but the work of the state's leading politicians, who had long hated the Union.⁸³ The secession of South Carolina came two days before the election and must have contributed greatly in certain sections to the success of the immediate secessionists. As the election returns are not available, results can only be estimated. Judging from the way in which they cast their votes in the convention, twenty-five of the sixty-nine members were firm cooperationists and five wavered between cooperation and immediate action. On this basis, the cooperationists comprised from 36 to 43 per cent of the convention. If it could be assumed that the vote on December 22 was as heavy as that in the presidential election, an estimate might be made of the shift of votes from radical to conservative positions on the basis of counties which gave Breckinridge majorities and yet sent cooperationist delegations to the convention. A minimum shift of nine per cent is indicated, though the validity of the estimate is open to question.

While the radical movement in Florida was gaining a momentum that placed it beyond conservative control, Hawkins in Washington was reflecting the

⁸³ Cited in Davis, "Civil War and Reconstruction," 50.

opinion of the immediate secessionists. When he was appointed to serve on the Committee of Thirty-three to consider federal relations he refused to take part in its deliberations. Stating that he had no confidence in congressional legislation as a means of restoring harmony, he declared that the time for compromise had passed.⁸⁴ A few days later he joined other southern members of Congress in a letter to their constituents declaring that all hope of relief for the South through constitutional action was exhausted. Speedy secession of all slaveholding states and the formation of a southern confederacy were recommended.⁸⁵

Neither Mallory nor Yulee signed the letter, though a newspaper report said that Yulee would do so. By this time Yulee seems to have accepted unreservedly the idea of secession as an imminent fact. What may have been in his mind is suggested by a newspaper statement that he had announced openly that Florida would secede for the purpose of returning after obtaining new guarantees.⁸⁶ C. W. Yulee says that his father's memoranda show that he had several possible results of secession in mind. His real desire was that the South, by presenting a united front, might bring the North to concede constitutional guarantees under which the Union might be restored. Failing this, he thought of a defensive and commercial league between the Union and the new confederacy, in which the West and South might

⁸⁴ *Cong. Globe*, 36 Cong., 2 Sess., 36-37. D. L. Dumond, in his recent monograph, *The Secession Movement, 1860-1861*, 156-57, shows that the Committee of Thirty-three was composed mainly of Republicans opposed to conciliation who "converted it into a graveyard for every proposal of compromise" introduced into the House. Dumond intimates that Hawkins' refusal to serve was due to the belief that the Republicans never would accede to measures of conciliation.

⁸⁵ N. Y. Herald, Dec. 14, 1860.

⁸⁶ N. Y. *Daily Tribune*, Jan. 15, 1861.

unite on the basis of their common interest in the Mississippi river.⁸⁷ Whatever the springs of his action might have been, his words and deeds thenceforth were those of a resolute secessionist.

Mallory's failure to sign the letter must be attributed to an utter lack of sympathy with its tone and purpose. There is little evidence as to his opinions and actions, but what there is indicates that he was sincerely opposed to secession. He had been able, in 1858, to look forward with equanimity to Republican political control. He had said then that if he thought such control would mean infringement of southern rights, he would exert every effort of which he was capable to induce the South to leave the Union at once. It were folly for a man, when he saw his doom ahead of him, to wait hour after hour until the stern reality was upon him. The fate of the Union, he had said, rested upon the constitutional action of the Republican party.⁸⁸ And the implication was that he thought its actions would be constitutional. Writing in 1865, he said that though he had believed in secession as a right resulting from state sovereignty, his conservatism made him regard it as only another name for revolution. He never believed that there would be bloodshed and he expected compromise and conciliation even after the secession of South Carolina.⁸⁹ His political associates during the trying days in December were such sincere advocates of conciliation as Crittenden, Pugh and Vallandigham.⁹⁰ It was not until January, when the secession of Florida was only a matter of hours, that Mallory was found cooperating with

⁸⁷ *Fla. Hist. Soc. Quart.*, II, No. 2, 3.

⁸⁸ *Cong. Globe*, 35 Cong., 1 Sess., 1138-40.

⁸⁹ Mallory to Zachariah Chandler, July 2, 1865. O. R., Series II, Vol. VIII, 737.

⁹⁰ N. Y. *Herald*, Dec. 24, 1860.

those southern senators who desired secession or had come to regard it as inevitable. He and Yulee took part in a caucus of senators, January 5, 1861, in which resolutions were adopted advising secession of all southern states and formation of a southern confederacy by action of a convention to meet in Montgomery not later than February 15. The senators asked the states to instruct them if they should remain in Congress until March 4 for the purpose of defeating legislation hostile to the seceding states.⁹¹

Though hoping that secession could be effected peaceably, the Florida senators acted with the possibility of war in mind. They sought, with some degree of success, to ascertain the strength of the garrisons and the amount of arms and munitions at the several forts and arsenals in Florida and, on January 5, Yulee wrote Joseph Finegan, a member of the Florida convention, that the immediately important thing was occupation of the Florida forts.⁹² Governor Perry had already arrived at the same conclusion and obtained unofficial consent of the convention for such action at an informal conference, January 4.⁹³ The arsenal at Chattahoochee and Fort Marion at St. Augustine were seized by state troops even before passage of the secession ordinance.⁹⁴ The Federals were in sufficient force at Pensacola to offer resistance, and the political situation made unwise what military considerations would have dictated. As Mallory wired Perry and Chase, January 16, Davis did not think that the Pensacola forts were worth one drop of blood under the circumstances then existing.⁹⁵

⁹¹ *O. R.*, Series I, Vol. I, 443.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 442.

⁹³ Edmund Ruffin *Diary*, Jan. 4, 1861. Ms. in Library of Congress.

⁹⁴ *O. R.*, Series I, Vol. I, 332-33.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, Vol. LII, Pt. 2, 9.

Pursuant to Governor Perry's call the convention had assembled January 3 in the state capital. The little town was so thronged with politicians from neighboring states as well as Florida that the two hotels could not accommodate them, and the old Virginian fire-eater, Edmund Ruffin, was constrained to accept the hospitality of Major John Beard. Ruffin was an ardent secessionist who had come to Tallahassee for the pleasure of seeing Florida withdraw from the Union and his diary reflects the hopes and fears of the immediate secessionists. The election had been close enough to make an immediate secessionist majority doubtful when the convention met. But powerful factors were operating in favor of the immediate secessionists. Out-of-state politicians, including E. C. Bullock and L. W. Spratt, official commissioners from Alabama and South Carolina respectively to Florida, constituted a strong secession lobby. The churches seem to have favored secession and the state administration was in the hands of immediate secessionists. Organization of the convention showed that they also controlled its machinery.

John C. McGehee, of Madison county, a locality settled largely by South Carolinians, was elected president. McGehee was born in Abbeville, South Carolina, in 1801, and moved to Florida thirty years later.⁹⁶ A pious Christian as well as a large slaveholder, he was convinced of the moral righteousness of slavery and this sentiment found expression in radical political affiliations. In 1848, as a member of the Democratic convention, he joined with W. L. Yancy in insisting, unsuccessfully, upon incorporation of the doctrine of non-intervention into the platform. He accepted election as a delegate to the

⁹⁶ *Fla. Hist. Soc. Quart.*, IV, 186 ff.

adjourned session of the Nashville convention in November, 1850, and the next year was instrumental in the organization of a Southern Rights Association in his county. In an address before that body, June 7, 1851, he had declared the right of secession to be "not only clear beyond the possibility of a doubt but the duty absolute and unavoidable."⁹⁷ His brief remarks in accepting the presidency of the convention showed that the passing years had not made him more conservative.

Organization of the convention was not effected until Saturday, January 5, the intervening day having been devoted to a day of fasting and humiliation in compliance with a proclamation of President Buchanan. This action greatly disgusted Ruffin, who saw the proclamation as "a rebuke & censure of the seceding states, & of their cause, & of the very action which this Convention is assembled to consummate."⁹⁸ The service, which Ruffin refused to attend, would have delighted him, for the rector of St. John's church preached a strong disunion sermon in favor of immediate secession. Francis H. Rutledge, Episcopal bishop of Florida, absented himself from the service for the same reason as Ruffin. Rutledge, a South Carolinian by birth, held that he had already seceded with his native state, but he was so anxious for Florida to follow her that on January 7 he transmitted to the convention a promise to pay \$500 to the State of Florida to be used in defraying the expenses of government, "whenever by ordinance she shall be declared an independent republic."⁹⁹ These Episcopal ministers were not alone among clergymen in their advocacy

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, V., No. 2, 78.

⁹⁸ Edmund Ruffin *Diary*, Jan. 3, 1861.

⁹⁹ *Journal of the Proceedings of the Convention of the People of Florida*, 1861. Reprint, 1928. 22.

of secession. The Florida Baptist state convention, in session at Monticello during the latter part of December, had adopted a resolution expressing "their cordial sympathy with, and hearty approbation of those who are determined to maintain the integrity of the Southern States, even by a disruption of all existing political ties."¹⁰⁰

McQueen McIntosh, of Apalachicola, who had resigned his federal judgeship upon the election of Lincoln, on January 5 introduced a resolution declaring the constitutional right of secession and stating that "in the opinion of this Convention, the existing causes are such as to compel the State of Florida to proceed to exercise that right."¹⁰¹ The resolution was adopted January 7 by a vote of 62 to 5 after an effort to insert an amendment delaying the proposed action had been defeated 43 to 24. A committee consisting of eight immediate secessionists and five cooperationists was thereupon appointed to prepare an ordinance for consideration by the convention. Two days later the committee submitted a secession ordinance accompanied by a report in favor of immediate secession. The cooperationists neither signed this report nor submitted one of their own, but they did not consent to immediate secession without a struggle. George T. Ward, of Leon county, and Jackson Morton, of Santa Rosa county, both former Whigs, led the opposition in an effort to amend the ordinance to defer action until after Georgia and Alabama had seceded and to require popular ratification of the measure. The first proposal was defeated 39 to 30, while the second one went down, 41 to 26.¹⁰² When it was shown that immediate action could not be blocked, most of the co-

¹⁰⁰ Tallahassee *Floridian*, Dec. 22, 1860.

¹⁰¹ *Jour. of the Conv., 1861*, 14.

¹⁰² *Ibid., passim.*

operationists declared that they would vote for the ordinance because they felt keenly the political necessity for unanimity.¹⁰³ On January 10 the ordinance was passed by a vote of 62 to 7.

Refusal of the secessionists to allow submission of the ordinance to the people might be interpreted as indicative of a belief that it would be rejected. On the other hand, it could have meant that they considered haste more imperative than compliance with democratic forms. One Florida Unionist who made his way north in January, 1861, declared emphatically that a majority of the people were not in favor of immediate secession.¹⁰⁴ Another bit of evidence in support of this view was the action of G. W. Parkhill, of Leon county, who, in deference to the wishes of his constituents, offered a resolution to require popular ratification and, his duty done, thereafter voted with the immediate secessionists.¹⁰⁵ The delegation from Monroe and Dade counties, too, though elected as cooperationists,¹⁰⁶ acted as often with the immediate secessionists as with the conservatives. Though it cannot be said that a majority of the people was for cooperation, it is equally open to question to assume that a majority was for immediate secession.

Even if the exact proportion of cooperationists could be determined, there would still remain the question of exactly what they stood for. The counties in the West Florida panhandle, which is geographically a part of Alabama, were most keenly cooperationist. From this it could be argued simply that they felt it inexpedient to act without the support of their neighbors. On the other hand, the

¹⁰³ *O. R.*, Series IV, Vol. I, 53.

¹⁰⁴ *National Intelligencer*, Jan. 21, 1861.

¹⁰⁵ *N. Y. World*, Jan. 15, 1861.

¹⁰⁶ *National Intelligencer*, Jan. 9, 1861.

cooperationist delegates came mainly from counties which had been preponderantly Whig and conservative before the dissolution of that party. Both Ruffin and E. C. Bullock reported that no member of the convention declared in favor of submission to the Black Republicans.¹⁰⁷ That about half the cooperationists in that body were really opposed to secession in any form, however, is indicated by the vote when the previous question was moved to bring to a vote McIntosh's resolution committing Florida to secession. Thirteen delegates voted against the previous question.

Before passage of the ordinance the convention had adopted a resolution instructing the Florida members in Congress to remain there and to discharge all the duties of their offices until formally notified that Florida had withdrawn from the Union. Informal news of secession was not long in reaching Washington and Yulee immediately acknowledged "with pride" the full sovereignty of his state.¹⁰⁸ On January 15 he and Mallory notified Governor Perry that they had ceased to participate in the proceedings of the Senate and only awaited formal notification of Florida's action to withdraw.¹⁰⁹ Their withdrawal took place on January 21.

Yulee spoke first. He dwelt first on the circumstances that had led Florida to recall the powers delegated to the federal government and to assume the full exercise of all her sovereign rights. Then he dealt with the fact that the State of Florida had been formed from territory acquired by the United States from Spain. One of the conditions of the cession of

¹⁰⁷ Ruffin *Diary*, Jan. 9, 1861; Bullock to A. B. Moore, Jan. 15, 1861, O. R., Series IV, Vol. I, 54.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 53.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 8. Hawkins, who seems to have left Washington early in January, took no formal leave of the House.

Spain, he said, was that the inhabitants of the territory should be admitted into the Union on terms of equality with citizens of the United States. In pursuance of this stipulation and of the established policy of the United States, the act admitting Florida had declared her to be a state and had admitted her into the Union on a footing equal in all respects with the original states. In seceding, Florida was but exercising the equal rights thus granted and acknowledged. He concluded his remarks by declaring his full approval of the act.

Mallory, too, insisted upon the full equality of Florida within the Union. Speaking with greater emotion than Yulee had, he made a moving plea for peace. Yet he expressed much of the confidence, even arrogance, that had brought the South to her present pass, when he said, "We seek not to war upon, or to conquer you ; and we know that you cannot conquer us." ¹¹⁰

The two men who thus presented Florida's valediction to the nation were playing their part in the consummation of an event which neither, at heart, had desired. Yulee, it is true, had helped sow the germs of secession in 1850, but he had receded from his original radical position and it is doubtful if he ever completely returned to it. No man who really desired secession would have supported Douglas in 1860. As regards his political theory, he was consistent throughout. He accepted the theory of state sovereignty, as did his colleagues, with all its implications. This may have accounted for his readiness after November, 1860, to go with the secessionists. Mallory, too, believed in the theoretical right of secession. He was probably more radical in 1850, however, than ever again, and even in that year he

¹¹⁰ Cong. Globe, 36 Cong., 2 Sess., 485-86.

was accounted a Unionist. Of the other members of the Florida delegation in Congress between 1850 and 1860, E. C. Cabell was always a Unionist and Jackson Morton, though he acted with the radicals in 1850, helped lead the fight for delayed action in the Florida convention in 1861. Only Maxwell and Hawkins reflected in their speech and actions the increase of radical sentiment at home. The pretext for radical speech and thought in Florida was found in the North, and frequently in Washington, but it cannot be said that members of the state's congressional delegation were responsible for the secession movement.

To locate the motivating force of that movement one must turn rather to local politics. As early as 1852 the radical Democrats captured control of their party, and dissolution of the Whig party, as a result of the slavery controversy, gave the Democratic party continuous control of the state administration. The press, too, subsisting as it did largely on political patronage, became more and more radical, and even the pulpit reflected the trend toward radicalism of those in authority. Thus, when the crisis came, the radicals controlled the machinery for action and the means of propaganda. Added to this was the fact that most of the conservatives felt that the South had been deprived of her rights and believed in the constitutional right of secession even though they doubted its wisdom. Many of the most conservative men had long held that there was a point beyond which secession was necessary. This belief greatly weakened the force of their protest in 1861. They were unfortunate, also, in their choice of cooperation as the basis of opposition to immediate secession, for it was evident by the time the convention met that the secession movement, steered by a well-organized, purposeful group of radicals, would

sweep the other cotton states out of the Union. Thus the conservative group, comprising certainly a large minority and possibly a majority of the people, was helpless to avert the disaster which impended.